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Retaining the adolescent workforce in family businesses

Purpose: To critically explore the linkage between adolescent work, parent-child relationships and offspring career choice outcomes in a family business context. It examines the above in light of the stay/go decision faced by adolescent family members.

Design/methodology/approach: Findings are derived from semi-structured interviews with 15 individuals from five Italian families operating family catering businesses in Yorkshire (UK). The approach represents a sample spanning four generations, designed to capture data from individuals who had experienced adolescent work at the family business.

Findings: The findings offer evidence that the 'familiarity' of family business impacts on offspring career choices, providing a safety net or a trap which can impede exit decisions. Returning after periods of study leave that represent the transition from adolescence to adulthood, offspring continue to use the family business as a base from which to explore their career options. Alternatively, when parent-child relationships break down, family business escape strategies assume priority for offspring.

Research limitations/implications: The study focused exclusively on migrant Italian families within the catering sector. The sample included different generational representations among the five families. It lays the ground for future research of a similar nature among other family business ethnicities and across other economic sectors.

Originality/value: This paper contributes to understanding offspring career choice outcomes in a family business context. The empirical evidence suggests that parent-child relationships are instrumental to understanding the stay/go decision as well as previous stages of the socialisation process of embedding in the family business.

Keywords: family business involvement; career choice outcomes; parent-child relationships; adolescent work; stay/go decision

Introduction

Adolescent work has both positive and negative impacts on adolescent development outcomes (Zimmer-Gembeck and Mortimer, 2006). Positive development outcomes are associated with the independence and character that adolescent work fosters (Greenberger and Steinberg, 1986; Mortimer, 2005; Staff *et al.*, 2009), with adolescents' ability to reap these benefits understood to be a function of the quality of the work (Rauscher *et al.*, 2012). Stress levels and the jeopardy it poses to adolescents' family commitment are among the negative impacts associated with adolescent work (Steinberg *et al.*, 1982) given that it reduces the time available for adolescents to spend with their own families (Ashbourne and Daly, 2010). In the context of family businesses, undertaking adolescent work and spending time with family are not mutually exclusive. Longitudinal research has demonstrated that, compared with their non-family working counterparts, adolescents who work in their own family business on a year-round basis report better parent-child relationships and better psychological well-being (Houshmand *et al.*, 2017). According to Miller and Le-Breton Miller (2005), family businesses constitute 60% to 98% of all firms in different regions of the world. The prevalence of family businesses suggests that the option of involving one's own children in the family business as adolescents is a decision faced by a large volume of parents around the world. Indeed, longitudinal data from Statistics Canada's Youth in Transition Survey demonstrates that 45% of Canadian adolescents report having worked in their family business at some point before they reach 15 years of age (Statistics Canada, 2012). Almost half of family businesses, in North America at least, appear to place great importance on involving their adolescents in the workforce.

Human capital is understood to be an important resource for family businesses owing to the composition of skills, knowledge, capabilities and sources of motivation that family and non-family employees combine to offer (Block *et al.*, 2015; Davis *et al.*, 2010; Dawson, 2012; Habbershon and Williams, 1999). Family employees specifically can offer skills and services that are difficult for non-family members to imitate (Dawson, 2012; Habbershon and Williams, 1999; Khanin, 2013). They can acquire deep tacit knowledge about the business (Miller *et al.*, 2011), an innate understanding of its processes, customers and competitors (Dyer, 1986), and offer an emotional attachment and identification with the business that can yield lower absenteeism (Block *et al.*, 2015) and extra effort without necessarily being paid extra to do so (Danes *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, much of the above can be acquired by family employees at a very early age through participation in summer jobs (Memili *et al.*, 2011) and exposure to 'at the dinner table' business conversations (Denison *et al.*, 2004: 64). Given the importance placed on involving adolescents in the workforce, it would seem equally appropriate that family business owners wish to retain them in it as they transition to adulthood.

From a parental perspective, much of the succession literature accounts for family business owners' desire for children who are both highly committed and highly competent (Richards *et al.*, 2019). For offspring, however, a career in the family firm is merely one of three career choices available to adolescents, founding one's own venture or seeking employment elsewhere being the alternatives (Zellweger *et al.*, 2011). As family business involvement can begin at a very early age, an important question therefore emerges about how this experience shapes parent-child relationships and, by extension, the implications of this for offspring career decision-making. It is the linkage between such familial relationships and the resultant career choice outcomes that is explored within this paper.

The findings challenge longitudinal research which has demonstrated that adolescents who work in their own family business on a year-round basis, report better parent-child relationships compared with their non-family working counterparts (Houshmand *et al.*, 2017). Based on qualitative research

on five Italian families operating in the catering sector, the paper demonstrates that when adolescent work is experienced negatively, parent-child relationships often breakdown. It is the desire to escape such relationships that is central to understanding the stay/go decision faced by next generation family members. The practical implications for parents who seek to retain their adolescents in the workforce are discussed, given their potential as a vital source of human capital.

Adolescent career decision making: An overview

The question of whether or not to join the family business inevitably features in the career planning of adolescents with a family business background (Schroder *et al.*, 2011), though surprisingly little is known about the career choice intentions of these adolescents (Eckrich and Loughead, 1996) and the influence that family business involvement might have on their decisions (Murphy and Lambrechts, 2015). Adolescence is a key stage in career development terms as offspring begin to explore their career options and develop intentions which match with their own interests and abilities (Kracke, 2002), thus distinguishing imaginary options with more realistic ones (Hartung *et al.*, 2005). Adolescents from a family business background must consider the successor opportunities presented in the family firm alongside employment opportunities beyond its remit as well as the opportunity to found one's own venture (Schroder *et al.*, 2011; Zellweger *et al.*, 2011). In doing so, offspring from such a background must balance their identities both as family members and potential successors. Murphy and Lambrechts (2015: 34) state that offspring "*find themselves in a double bind*", noting that their career choices have important consequences for their own futures but also the fate of the family firm (Schroder and Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013). Adolescents with a family business background must tread a fine line when exploring their career aspirations, balancing their own personal career interests against family interests and the employment opportunities presented in the family business (Schroder, *et al.*, 2011). Parents, arguably the most important advisors of their children in the career decision-making process (Dietrich and Kracke, 2009), face a similar dilemma in balancing the desire to see their life's work continued through their children on one hand, against not wanting to influence their career planning on the other (von Schlippe and Groth, 2009).

The intentions of adolescents who seek a leadership position in the family business have been explored by Stavrou and Swiercz (1998), who conceptualise family business succession as a socialisation process consisting of three stages. Offspring in the pre-entry stage are exposed to family business activities through casual work and family discussions. The second stage represents entry during which potential successors become full-time employees at the family business. Finally, the third stage witnesses the appointment of offspring to a leadership position within the family firm. Should employees prefer against succeeding in the family business, they face the option of founding their own venture or seeking employment elsewhere. Noting that adolescents with a family business background share the same model of parental self-employment, research has explored how intentional successors differ from intentional founders and employees (Schroder and Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013; Schroder *et al.*, 2011; Zellweger *et al.*, 2011). Zellweger *et al.* (2011) studied students with a family business background and found that intentional employees share a lower independence motive than intentional successors. Moreover, intentional founders shared a stronger desire to innovate than their intentional successor and employees. In sum, a desire to be innovative and independent appears to distinguish intentional founders from those who prefer a career in the family firm.

Schroder *et al.* (2011) add to the literature by offering that personality, gender, identification with the family business and perceived parental job rewards all impact the career choice intentions of

adolescents with a family business background. Career choice intentions have been the focal point of academic enquiry in this area as previous studies have demonstrated the stability of career aspirations from adolescence to adulthood (Low *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, those who indicate entrepreneurial intentions have a significantly higher probability of being an entrepreneur in adult life compared with those who indicated no entrepreneurial intentions during adolescence (Falck *et al.*, 2010; Schmitt-Rodermund, 2007). Nevertheless, Murphy and Lambrecht (2015) highlighted that much of the literature in this area adopts a quantitative approach and focuses on intentions at the expense of actual career outcomes. The authors were able to support previous findings that family business involvement influences entrepreneurial intent (Carr and Sequeira, 2007), whilst demonstrating that 'helping' not only influences but alters the career decision making of the next generation. This study is aligned with Murphy and Lambrecht's (2015) study in that it is qualitative and focuses on the influence of adolescent involvement in the family business on career choice outcomes, though here the focus moves beyond involvement to explore the influence of parent-child relationships on career decision making.

With reference to parental influence on next generation career decision making, Birley (2002: 8) notes that there are "*no instruments in the literature that deal directly with this particular topic*" but instead a number of assumptions that exist about the early involvement of children in the family business as a means of training them for succession. The ability of family dynamics (e.g. conflict, attachment) to influence work and career decisions is well documented in the career development literature (Keller and Whiston, 2008), particularly in relation to children's vocational development (Bratcher, 1982; Lopez and Andrews; 1987; Zingaro, 1983). Adolescence is a pinnacle time for career development (Savickas, 2002) as offspring begin to explore occupations and develop aspirations (Hartung *et al.*, 2005), form beliefs about their ability to execute the behaviours required to achieve these (Turner and Lapan, 2005) and firm up their occupational interests (Tracey, 2002). Research has demonstrated that family factors influence the pursuit of maths and science career interests (Turner *et al.*, 2004), and parental income levels and life outlook inform adolescents' expectations for job success (Galambos and Silbereisen, 1987). In sum, irrespective of whether or not parents consciously attempt to influence particular occupational choice, research has demonstrated that they are 'active agents' (see Young and Friesen, 1992) in the process, nonetheless. The career development literature highlights that parents play an important role in next generation career decision making, though the strength of such relationships between generations is seldom the focus of academic enquiry. Furthermore, it is only recently that empirical work has begun to acknowledge the complexity that a family business background adds to offspring decision making (e.g. Houshmand *et al.*, 2017).

Parents who are family business owners not only face a balancing act in terms of offering career advice to their offspring (Schroder and Schmitt-Rodermund, 2013), but are likely responsible for them helping at the family business in the first instance. The dynamics among family members change each time a new generation becomes involved in the family business (Gersick *et al.*, 1997; Harvey and Evans, 1994; Schulze *et al.*, 2003; Sharma *et al.*, 1997) and the interactions between them become more complex (Dyer, 1986). An important question therefore emerges about adolescent work and its impact on both parent-child relationships and offspring career choice outcomes.

Research methodology

In order to explore the linkage between adolescent work, parent-child relationships and offspring career choice outcomes, an interpretative approach was adopted. Such an approach faces the question of what can be understood from studying the experiences of a handful of families. Whereas positivist research concerns itself with statistical generalisation and representativeness (Ram, 2001), interpretative research is more focused upon the 'cogency of theoretical reasoning' (Mitchell, 1983). Noting that qualitative research often lacks generalisability when viewed through the positivist lens of statistical inference, Smith (2018) argues that qualitative research can instead offer analytical generalisability (Yin, 1994; Chenail, 2010; Polit and Beck, 2010; Lewis and Ritchie, 2014; Simons, 2014) achieved through the transferability of concepts and theories resulting from the data. As such, the five Italian families in this study should be viewed as an 'opportunity to learn' (see Stake, 1994: 243) about parental influences on offspring career choice outcomes rather than whether these accounts are representative of families *per se*. The research was explored among migrant Italian families in Yorkshire (UK) due to the assumption that participants belonging to a common national culture will have a common understanding of the term 'family'. As Birley (2001) notes, families are interpreted differently across cultures. Therefore, this allowed the influence of parent-child relationships on offspring career choice outcomes to be explored without the interference of cultural variations. Being 'family oriented' is often thought to be the distinguishing cultural trait of Italian culture (Johnson, 1985; Litwin, 2010; di Leonardo, 1984) and it is not uncommon within the family business literature to sample cultural groups renowned for their strong family ties (e.g. Kim and Gao, 2013).

The study draws parallels with Murphy and Lambrecht's (2015) study in that the sample was purposefully selected to ensure that next generation family members had been involved at the family business as adolescents. The five Italian families were recruited by drawing on one of the authors' professional network of contacts, as his prior knowledge of the families ensured that they had been involved in the family business from an early age. This produced two Italian families working in the catering sector, from which four participants were included in the sample. Snowballing from these two initial families identified a further three families also operating in the restaurant trade. 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 15 participants. The number of 15 participants was not predetermined in any way but evolved with the need to collect more data from families with single representation, as prior research has argued that family relationships are difficult to detect if a single source is relied upon (Moen and Wetherington, 1992; Roberts, 1994). All participants are anonymous and referred to by a code which denotes: their family grouping (i.e. A - E); the order in which they were interviewed (i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc); and their career path (S = successor, F = founder, E = employee). For instance, participant A1F would denote the first member interviewed from family A who had preferred to found their own venture. It was possible in families B and E to obtain the accounts of two generations within the same family (see table 2). In such cases, participants had experienced adolescent involvement personally some years earlier, whilst now identifying as business owners (or successors) and parents who had bestowed similar obligations on their own offspring, thus a trans-generational approach was achieved.

Table 1 - Profile of participants

Participant A1S (Male, Age: 43) ran his father's shop aged 19. He studied a BTEC Diploma Electronics and succeeded the family's shop aged 20 operating this for 14 years before it wound up due to a downturn in this industry. He then purchased his parents' restaurant, allowing his father to retire, which he had always helped out at and has operated this since 2005, his main driver being that the nature of the business (an Italian restaurant) promotes his sense of cultural identity.

Participant A2E (Male, Age: 50) ran the family's exchange shop from 13/14 on the occasion that his father was called back to Italy for family emergencies. Since obtaining his A Levels in 1982, he has forged a career as an IT professional at a major UK banking group owing to a desire to serve larger communities than that offered at the family restaurant business. He left the banking sector in 2011 and moved to a major high street retailer, albeit still working as an IT project manager.

Participant B1F (Male, Age: 42) comes from a business-owning family: his father owned a string of restaurants. He worked at these as a teenager when non-family staff did not attend for their shift. Passing up the opportunity to purchase one of his father's restaurants, he spent most of his twenties working as a chef. After a brief career change selling wholesale flowers, he became the business partner to A1S when he purchased a 50% share of the restaurant in 2005.

Participant B2 (Female, Age: 18) is the daughter to participant B1F and has been dancing since she was eight years old. Her involvement at her father's restaurant is limited though she has helped out on rare occasions. She is currently aged 18 and completing sixth form college with a view to exploring a career as a professional dancer, having been actively encouraged to pursue a career doing something she enjoys by her parents.

Participant C1F (Female, Age: 32) helped at her father's restaurants from age 12 and continued whilst studying travel and tourism at college. Aged 19, she moved to Liverpool to be with her partner though this move was also about having a change from her father who she claimed was overzealous in his desire for his daughter to remain in the family restaurant business. Aged 23, she moved closer to the family and started a restaurant which she has ran with her partner since 2004.

Participant C2F (Female, Age: 29) is sister to participant C1F and recalls helping out in the kitchens from age 13. She pursued a childcare course at college but returned to work at the family restaurant business full-time on completion of the course. She met her partner aged 21 and founded a restaurant together in 2009 which they have operated since. Her motive for starting her own restaurant also stemmed from a reluctance to continue working with her father, something she reported as challenging

Participant C3S (Female, Age: 27) is the youngest of three sisters from family C and recalls similar involvement from age 12. Having witnessed both older sisters found their own restaurant ventures, she has no immediate desire to follow in their footsteps though acknowledges that she might inherit the restaurant currently operated by her parents when they retire as she works their full-time there currently as has done since leaving school.

Participant D1E (Male, Age: 52) left the UK for Italy aged 14 fearing that his destiny was to work for his father as his involvement at the family restaurant business was extensive, though he returned aged 18. 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. He returned to his catering background in 1996 having not been able to affect change the way he intended in social work and has had further catering-based ventures since 2011. He currently works for his brother on an ad-hoc basis.

Participant D2F (Male, Age: 49) is the youngest sister to participant D1E and helped out at the family restaurant business from 8. She admits that her father was controlling and, like her brother, left the country aged 20 returning a year later. She spent her early life a housewife and only began working in 1996 when she separated from her first husband. In 2012, she became self-employed as a cleaner to coincide with the arrival of her first grandchild, which she provides childcare for.

Participant E1S (Male, Age: 66) is the fourth generation of a family which migrated from Italy in the late 1800s. He remembers working in the family business from being eight years old and this involved ice cream production and retail. As he reached his late 20s, his father had moved the business away from ice cream and towards coffee shops with his three younger brothers now present in the family business. He is now retired but spent the last 40 years of his working life growing the family business to reach 130 stores and through his role as Director of Food Development.

Participant E2S (Male, Age: 60) is the younger brother to participant E1S and recalls similar obligations at the family firm as a youngster. Upon leaving school, he worked on the family's farm specifically with the horses until the age of 30 when he became involved at the coffee shops. By 34, he was working at the family business full-time and progressed within it to reach the role of Operations Director, which he occupies presently.

Participant E3S (Male, Age: 22) is the eldest son of participant E2S and was around 14 when his involvement at the family firm commenced. He studied an applied business degree at University during which time he worked as a relief manager at the family's Newcastle store. Having graduated recently, he is currently working full-time in the family business in order to decide whether it is the right career path for him.

Participant E4S (Male, Age: 21) is also the son of participant E2S and reports being sent to a coffee shop from age 15/16 whenever his father needed staff. He studies Economics at University and aged 21 is now working in the family firm part-time to help out during his final semester. He aspires to become self-employed as a foreign exchange trader.

Participant E5S (Female, Age: 35) is the daughter of participant E1S was about 12 when she began washing pots at the coffee shops. Graduating university with a degree in Business Studies, she spent a year working for a marketing company to gain some experience beyond the family firm before joining the marketing team of it in 2000. Several promotions later, she is now Head of Food Development and Marketing, a role she has held since 2013.

Participant E6S (Female, Age: 27) is the cousin to several participants from family E. She completed university in 2009 and began working in the marketing department of the family business with participant E5S a year later, covering her role during a period of maternity leave in 2011. She had a five-month sabbatical away from the family business in 2014 which she spent travelling Australia. She was promoted to Marketing Manager in 2015.

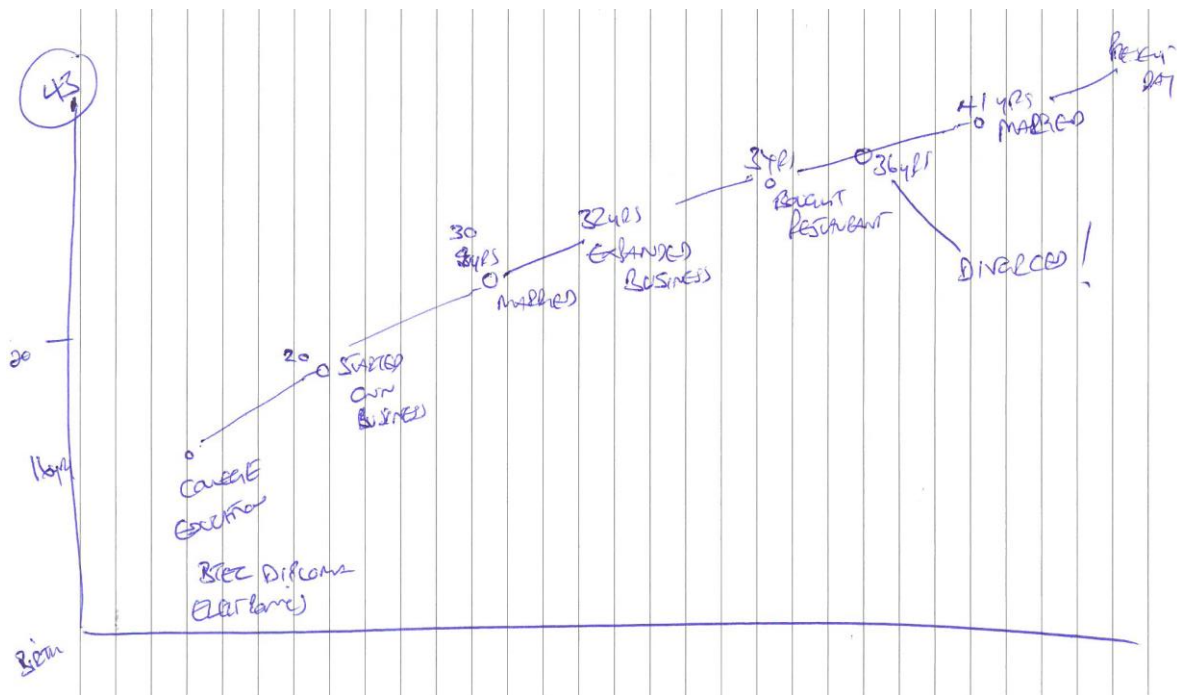
Table 2 - Generational characteristics of participants

Family Generation	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Founding						0
Generation 2	A1S; A2E	B1F	C1F; C2F; C3S	D1E; D2F		8
Generation 3		B2				1
Generation 4					E1S; E2S	2
Generation 5					E3S; E4S; E5S; E6S	4
Total	2	2	3	2	6	15

Semi-structured interviewing was the primary research method employed in this study. The interviews took place over a 14-month period between June 2014 and July 2015. Interviews typically lasted for one hour with the longest lasting four hours. The interviews invited participants to speak about their experiences and in doing so *"talk about their life histories in a way that makes sense to them"* (Burrell, 2006: 16). By describing their lives, participants create sweeping narratives about themselves. What is messy or difficult to explain, once articulated, becomes simple and coherent (Ritivoi, 2002). These narratives further relay the interaction of the participant with their wider phenomenological world and the people in it (Portelli, 1998). As these narratives relate to the participant's environment, the researcher is able to appreciate what it is like to live in these worlds (Chamberlain and Thomson, 1998). Of the 15 interviews, six were conducted at participants' place of residence with the remaining nine conducted at participants' workplace. Interviewing participants in their natural surroundings proved advantageous as they were able to draw on their material possessions (both at home and at their workplace) to support their accounts. This mainly involved the use of photographs which, in this context, represented a social artefact (see Babbie, 2008) drawn on by the participant not to demonstrate the accuracy with which the content (e.g. event, scene) is depicted (see Byers, 1964) but to amplify their accounts and explain *"what should be attended to and what significances are located in the image, and providing contextual data necessary for understanding them"* (Musello, 1980: 39). Photographs were not collected to be analysed later but were drawn on by participants to assign significance and meaning to the topics they had already discussed, thus providing participants with a further means of bringing the researcher into their world.

Before interviews commenced, participants were invited to draw a timeline to demonstrate significant events that had shaped their lives and career choices. As Figure 1 demonstrates, this typically included a mixture of professional milestones (qualifications achieved, sale or purchase of a business) as well as some personal ones (e.g. marriage, birth of children). The timeline was not used to determine the nature of the questions asked or to act as a 'hook' upon which participants can 'hang' their accounts (Chell, 1998) as per previous studies which have adopted the Critical Incident Technique (e.g. Murphy and Lambrecht, 2015). Instead, it served the purpose of providing a snapshot of the chronology of events which would later unfold in the interview. This was advantageous to the researcher as it lent context to the accounts shared, but also served as a base which participants could refer back to on occasions that they lost their 'trail of thought'.

Figure 1 - Example timeline



Interviews were transcribed and analysed by a single author, thus removing the need to cross-reference, discuss and re-categorise interpretations as is often practised when multiple researchers are involved in the categorisation of interview transcripts (e.g. Altinay *et al.*, 2014; McIntosh *et al.*, 2011). 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 or parental influences on their career decision making. 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 (see Figure 2) which emerged from the focus of the study which was to explore the linkage between adolescent work, parent-child relationships and offspring career choice outcomes in a family business context. A total of 23 second order themes were identified, some derived from the raw information itself (inductively) and some from the existing theoretical ideas and literature (deductively). Six of these themes were instrumental in demonstrating the linkage between adolescent work, parent-child relationships and offspring career choice outcomes (see Figure 3), to which attention will now be turned.

Figure 2 – Example data structure

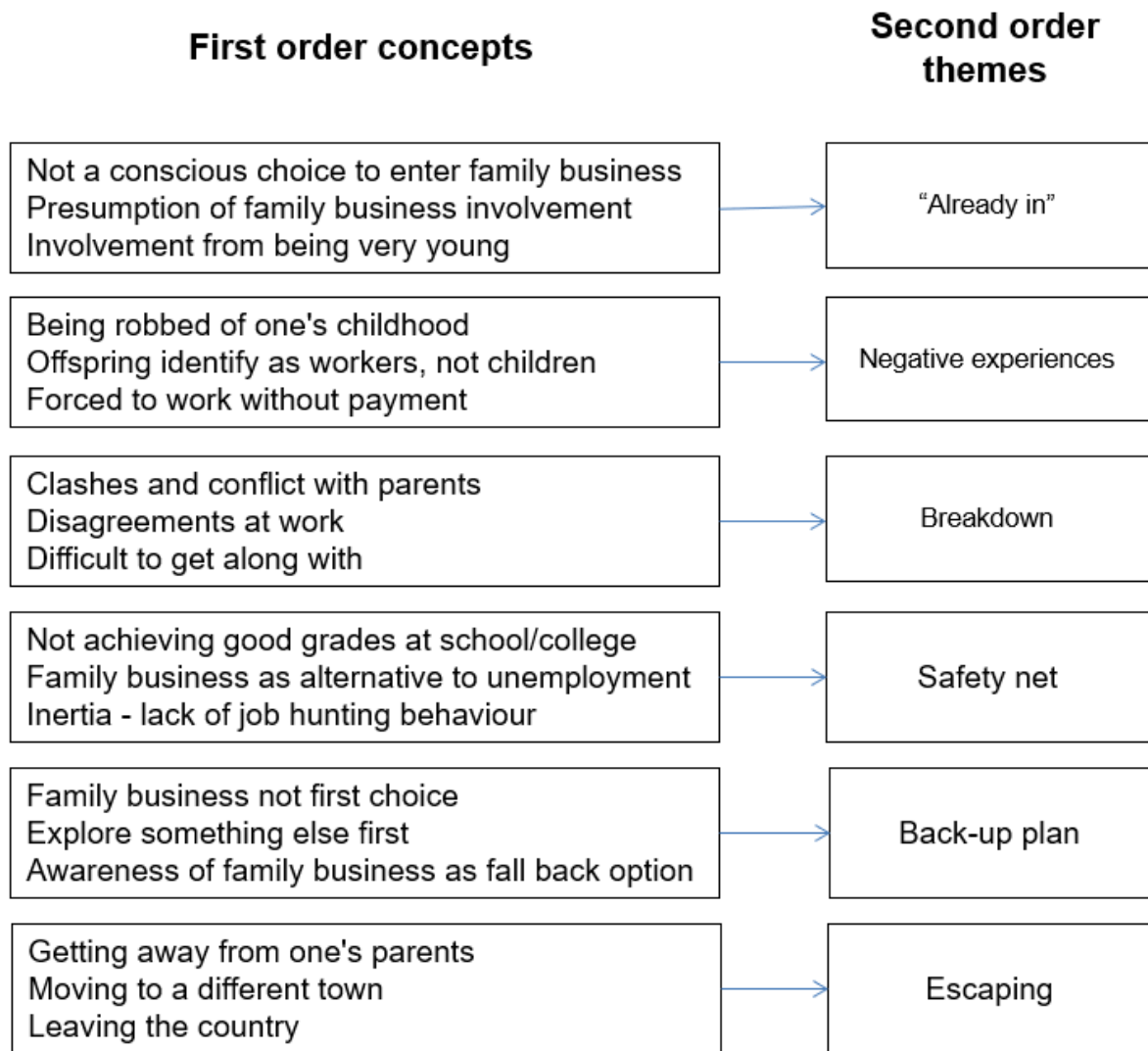
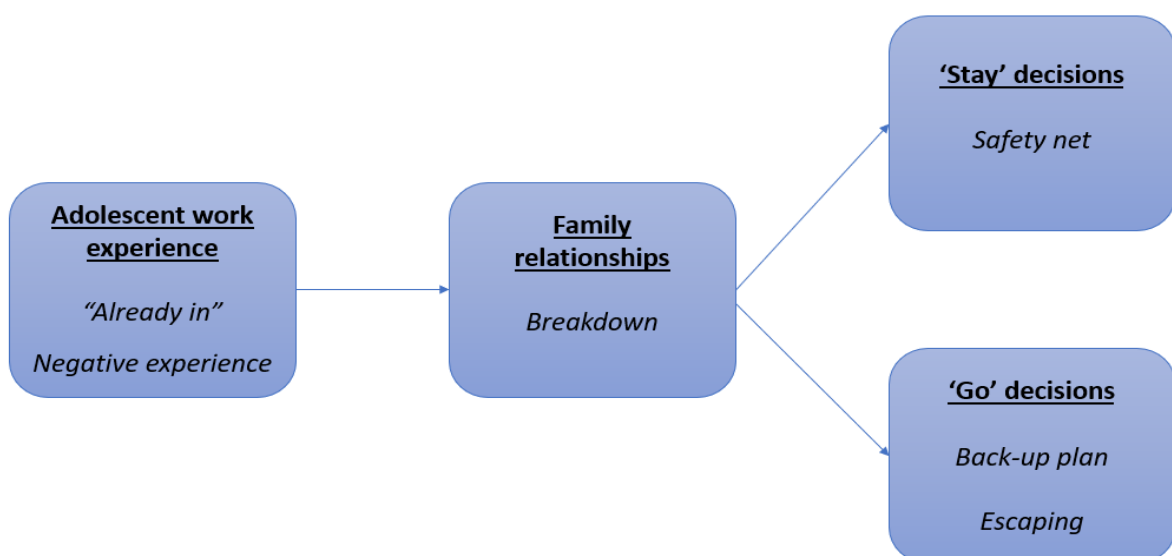


Figure 3 – Organising the second order themes



Findings and discussion

Adolescent work experience: "Already in"

Table 1 demonstrates that most participants in this study had experienced family business involvement by their early teens, in some cases from the age of eight onwards. As such, family obligations to undertake adolescent work predate next generation decision making. The implication being that offspring cannot choose to become involved in the family business if they already have been for a significant period of time, as participant E1S comments:

"Did I have a choice? Good question. Difficult to answer... I had always been in it, therefore it was never a question of did I expect to go in it. I was in it and always had been from being very young. Did I want to go and do something else? Yes, I'm sure there were times when I thought I did, and as we spoke earlier I did a few things but I was always more comfortable working in a field that I knew. I knew about ice cream, I could make it, I could go off and sell it. I had never worked in coffee shops before I started but I learnt about it. And the skills weren't much different...So no, I didn't expect to come into the business but I was always in it in some shape or form"

Researchers have suggested that adolescents are confronted with one of three career choice intentions: succeed in the family business; found one's own venture; or seek salaried employment beyond the family firm (Schroder *et al.*, 2011; Zellweger *et al.*, 2011). The reality, however, is that offspring identify as being involved in the family business prior to arriving at such a decision. Rather than a decision to enter the family business, the next generation are instead confronted with the reality of remaining in the family firm or exiting it. The feat of exiting the family business is of far greater consequence as it entails leaving behind a degree of comfort and familiarity, in terms of both the nature of the work undertaken (and the skills required) and the people (relations and otherwise) encountered in the workforce.

It is not surprising that in contemplating the less familiar employment landscape offered beyond the family business, offspring prefer to embed themselves full-time in a more familiar environment. This is evident in the tendencies of those leaving a period of education, even in the case where they consciously aspire to a career beyond the family business:

C1F: *"I have never really been ambitious in that sense or ever known what I wanted to do. I suppose it is because I have always been here, I have just gone along with it, school and everything else. I never felt the need to get good grades"*

E3S: *"I finished uni and went into Newcastle to take a management role there. I really liked it and enjoyed it. Then in a couple of months I think I am going to move around the business itself so that I have a good knowledge of everything in case I decide to go into it properly"*

E4S: *"I have just finished uni at the moment. I have applied for a few jobs and hopefully I will get one which pays pretty well but what I really just want is a job where I can earn a bit of money, save up a bit and then start my own thing...Since I have been off uni I have been driving the van going around the sites and doing little jobs. There is always stuff for me to do...So yeah, I have always been doing jobs for this company"*

E6S: *"I think my dad made it obvious that I didn't have to come and work for the company and it was our decision. At first, I didn't want to do it but was given the opportunity to come and*

work for the business. [I was not] trialling it but testing it to see do I actually want to do this forever and make a career out of it? Which I did in the end"

The above quotes illustrate that even when adolescents have graduated from university, and in doing so transitioned from adolescence to adulthood, they continue to use the family business as a base from which to explore their career options. Thus, the findings mirror those of Murphy and Lambrecht (2015) who offer that through the activity of helping, offspring are able to explore the family business 'arena' as a potential career path. Previous literature has noted the importance for offspring to balance the employment opportunities found in the family firm with their own personal interests which may exist beyond its remit (Schroder *et al.*, 2011), Zellweger *et al* (2011: p521) frame the choice facing adolescents as "should I stay or should I go". However, this paper has demonstrated that upon reaching adulthood some prefer to remain involved in the family business and demonstrate a tendency to figure out their career choices afterwards. Handler (1990) argues that if offspring spend too long in the family business, they may compromise their own personal goals. This notion is supported by the findings of the study as, having remained in the family business, offspring encounter difficulties exiting it even when they consciously aspire to do so.

The stay decision: 'Safety net'

Employment within the family business provides a degree of economic security in the case that next generation family members would otherwise face unemployment, as the following quote illustrates:

B1F: *"My dad never wanted me to be in the restaurant business. He wanted me to be the big solicitor or accountant. A profession. But me being me, there was no way. I was never, what's the word...academically gifted. I always knew that when I did leave school I would always have a job and perhaps that is what made me lazy at school. I was a rebel at school and it bit me in the ass. So I had to go and work for my father. He knew I hadn't accomplished anything at school so there was no going forward in that respect, so into the restaurant I went"*

The family business clearly serves as a safety net. This denotes that involvement in the family business provides a secure option of employment should the next generation lack alternative options. All three siblings in family C resorted to employment within the family firm when alternative employment prospects were not in abundance, the work offered there safeguarding them from unemployment. This does not necessarily prevent the next generation from realising employment opportunities beyond the family business entirely. For instance, participant B1F was later employed in a string of different jobs before purchasing a 50% share in a restaurant business. However, there are clear examples elsewhere in the data set of how leaving the family business is difficult. Whilst a 'net' is commonly understood to perform a safety function as per the above discussion, it may also serve as a trapping device. The family business is no exception to this notion and thus the net analogy continues. The familiarity inherent to the family firm discourages the next generation from pursuing their preferred employment path in the medium to long-term. This is perhaps best exemplified by participant C2F who aspired to a career in childcare:

C2F: *"I did a childcare course. I did enjoy it but because I didn't get such a good mark I think it scared me from going and looking and putting applications forward for jobs. I started working back here at the weekends after I'd finished (to get a bit of money) and I just never left. I didn't even send off one CV off to any nursery, I never applied for any job. I would have loved to have done it just because I like working with kids but I must've known, deep down maybe, that I*

would end up working at the restaurant. It has been my only job. I have never worked anywhere else"

In the above example, the pursuit of a career in childcare was eventually abandoned as the participant grew more and more accepting of their role in the family business. One reason for this difficulty realising a career outside of the family business could be the familiarity inherent in family business roles. Given that a family is a social group in which an individual can experience a range of intimate experiences (McKie and Callan, 2012), it is perhaps this intimacy that makes it difficult to leave behind the family business, as to do so requires individuals to forgo these intimate experiences and risk 'outsider' status (see Bauman, 1990). With the exception of participant C3S, the siblings in family C were able to realise career options beyond the family business eventually, however, suggesting that there is a temporal aspect to this decision.

The go decision: Back up plan

The family business is not always a trap from which it is difficult to escape. For some offspring, it can provide a back-up plan allowing next generation family members to explore their career decision making liberally. The term back-up plan denotes a situation wherein the next generation has a number of available employment options and intends to pursue at least one of them, though is equally mindful that involvement at the family business provides alternative means should the preferred option prove unfeasible or unfruitful. This is aptly demonstrated in the case of participant B2:

B1F: *"If my dancing career doesn't go to plan and it ends at a young age, I have thought about [joining the family business]. But it is not something that I'd really want to do, probably more like a back-up. I'd like to do something that I enjoy first...it is not something that I would want to do before I was 30"*

Relative to the other participants in this study, participant B1F's family business involvement is the most light-touch. The findings are therefore aligned with Handler's (1990) view that offspring who spend too long in the family business may compromise their own personal goals, as they indicate that there may be a relationship between degree of involvement in the family business and the extent to which offspring find it difficult to exit it. In sum, the family business serves as a back-up plan for the next generation who perceive to have feasible alternative employment options, whereas the family business functions as a safety net for those who perceive to have none.

The go decision: 'Negative experiences' leading to 'Breakdown' and 'Escape'

The discussion thus far has demonstrated that, in certain circumstances, exiting the family business is a difficult feat. This is not the case, however, when adolescent work is experienced negatively. In such events, parent-child relationships break down and a desire to 'escape' such relationships assume priority when career decision-making is concerned. This is no more evident than in the case of participant D1E:

"You can imagine that at 12 - 14 years old, I wasn't the normal schoolchild 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. So when I got to the age of 14 and coming to the end of my school

time, I pushed and wanted to get away as well. I wanted to leave home basically because I felt that if I had stayed there, my destiny was just to work for my father and that was it"

This sense of exploitation had a clearly negative impact on the participant's relationship with his father as D1E later elaborated:

"There is [tension] now and there always has been...We weren't allowed to express them growing up and having not being able to express views with someone you go that way [GESTURES HANDS PARTING] as you get older. And then it is a lot harder to come back."

The above narrative reveals that D1E left the country for Italy for a four-year period, aged 14. Elsewhere across the data set, participant C1F states that her decision to found her own venture was primarily "about having a change from my dad". A similar comment is echoed by her sister C2F who reports that "we started to clash and I think if we would have carried on, I don't think we would have the same relationship we have now it's sad to say. He can be hard sometimes". The primary driver for pursuing career opportunities beyond the family business can be a desire to escape parent-child relationships and an awareness that failing to do so may damage such relationships irreparably.

Conclusion, Limitations and Further Research

This study set out to explore the linkage between adolescent work, parent-child relationships and offspring career choice outcomes in a family business context. The 'should I stay or should I go' decision, as framed by Zellweger *et al.* (2011), is one faced by a significant number of adolescents as previously demonstrated (Statistics Canada, 2012). The research findings suggest that parent-child relationships are instrumental to understanding this decision as well as previous stages of the socialisation process of embedding in the family business (see Stavrou and Swiercz, 1998).

The findings of this paper mirror those of Murphy and Lambrecht (2015) who offer that the family business serves as an arena from which the next generation can explore their potential career options with clear examples of offspring doing precisely that in the data set. On the contrary, Handler (1990) argues that offspring who spend too long in the family business risk compromising their own personal career goals in the long run. Our findings reveal that the intimacy and familiarity inherent in the family business presents the next generation with a double-edged sword. Through the 'safety net' analogy, we demonstrate that next generation family members experience the family business as a safe-haven and platform from which they can plot their next steps, or an entrapment which prevents one from achieving employment options beyond it. However, there was evidence that this entrapment was not necessarily a permanent condition.

Next generation family members able to strike out beyond the family business are not always lured by the nature of the employment opportunities presented externally, but by a desire to escape the family relationships encountered at the family firm. Our findings reveal that parent-child relationships often break down following negative experiences of adolescent work at the family business. Once this occurs, a desire to escape such relationships embodies a career decision to seek employment options elsewhere. In such circumstances, offspring tend to exit the family business earlier than anticipated by the parent generation.

The contribution of the study lies in the notion that parent-child relationships are fundamental to understanding the career choice outcomes of the next generation. In cases that family harmony exists,

offspring can become trapped in the family business during young adulthood. Conversely, in cases that parent-child relationships breakdown, adolescents appear to engage in the stay/go decision much earlier in their life course as a means of escaping family relationships, and by extension, the family business. The study highlights the merit of family business research which places the family at the heart of the analysis and offers practical advice for parents who are family business owners. The adolescent workforce, as a vital source of human capital, should be retained given that family employees can offer skills and services that non-family employees struggle to imitate (Dawson, 2012; Habbershon and Williams, 1999; Khanin, 2013). Parent-child relationships should therefore be nurtured as it is when these break down that offspring begin to explore career options beyond the family business. Richards *et al.* (2019) argue that successor selection is characterised by a search for children who are both highly committed and highly competent and the study therefore has practical implications to this end. Offspring who defer to family business involvement may be competent but not necessarily committed. This is because their tenure at the family business is merely a result of their inability to realise an alternative career, despite often consciously aspiring to do so. Parents and family business owners should therefore take care before appointing children who are unable to realise their preferred careers, as this type of successor is not likely the ideal type. This study is therefore significant because it offers insight and understanding of family values and relationship dynamics, both of which are central to the retention of the adolescent workforce and by extension, the operation and success of the family business.

In framing the above findings, the focus and parameters of the study may serve as a limitation to its generalisability. It is therefore pertinent to highlight key issues that would in turn provide scope for future research. The first of these is the issue of a distinct cultural group. As Litwin (2010), di Leonardo (1984) and others have noted, 'family ties' is perhaps the most distinguishing cultural trait among Italian families. However, the relationships between family ties and family business may have different connotations among different cultural groups, particularly understandings of parent-child relationships within this family/business milieu. Accordingly, inter-cultural comparisons provide a fertile ground for further exploration. Secondly, the sample consists of catering business which form part of the wider hospitality industry. Studies on small and family owned businesses in this industry reveal a predominance of lifestyle and autonomy motives (Getz and Carlsen, 2000; Getz and Petersen, 2005), with businesses often reliant on inter-generational involvement in day-to-day operations and in which the family home often forms the basis of the business (Di Domenico and Lynch, 2007; Lynch, 2005). Getz and Petersen (2004) identified a number of industry specific barriers to family business succession among small hospitality and tourism businesses and it is therefore acknowledged that the appeal of the family business (relative to other career options) may be perceived by offspring in this study differently from other sectors. This issue provokes a potentially rich field of inter-sectoral research comparisons, between this study context on the one hand, and other family business contexts.

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