

Growing Up in a Business Family –
An Analytic Autoethnography of ‘Subtle Coerced Succession’

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Helen Fürst

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Abstract

Family businesses are the backbone of the German economy (Otten-Pappas, 2015). The word ‘family’ makes these companies distinct and indicates their influence on other parts of life. My interest stems from the fact that I was the only child of a business family. For 15 years, I was in charge of the business, contributing to its strong performance. Nevertheless, having achieved all this, I am not proud of myself and feel somehow detached in not having lived my own life.

The purpose of this analytic autoethnographic study is to explore, portray and deepen understanding of the situation of growing up in a business family and what influences this has on the business, the family and the individual.

The research was carried out within an analytic autoethnographic framework, reflecting the desire to make sense of my experience and to give this phenomenon a name in an ‘academic way’. The abductive nature of this study is due to the fact that I draw on theories which have not previously been brought together under the umbrella of describing and portraying the situation in a family business.

This research argues that the phenomenon of ‘subtle coerced succession’, which is exercised by parents to groom the natural successor for taking over the family business, exists and has a strong influence on the generational interaction.

Being aware of the fact of being born in a business family may imply while being the natural successor brings a lot of stress to the individuals involved. Realising this influence on succession might reduce the number of family businesses not making it to the third generation or beyond.

My contribution to knowledge is that ‘subtle coerced succession’ has various impacts on the identity development of children born into family businesses and being the natural successor by birth.

This study advances the development of theory by demonstrating how theoretical frames borrowed from other research fields – the total institution, the double-bind, gender and symbolic interactionism – fit together to explain the phenomenon of the ‘subtle coerced succession’ in family businesses.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific references in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed Date

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Special thanks go to my mother. She took the time and courage to hear my story from a different viewpoint. Thank you, Mum, for always being there for me during my life. Without you, I would never have been the person I am. You showed me that through hard work and persistence, almost everything is possible in life. Perhaps I could show this through this work to my children.

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Opening Vignette

In March 2014, I had a conversation with my son, Patrick. He had been working for the family business for nine years. I told him that I had an appointment with an M&A advisor on the 5 March, and he was welcome to join me because I thought that this appointment would be of interest to him.

He answered right away: 'I am on holiday on that day!'

I said to him, 'I only wanted you to know, and perhaps it is an interesting event for you.'

Then he replied, 'Now everything is starting over again. I thought selling the business meant this would not be an issue anymore!' He was very sad, and his eyes were filled with tears. He shouted: 'Everybody is doing their own thing here. Nadja [his sister] is going away, and you are not willing to continue.'

'Yes', I said, 'I am not. I want to live a different life.'

He answered: 'What is so bad about yours?'

Yes, he was right, what was so bad about my life? It is not a question of good or bad; I think it is a question about whether this is my own life I am living. Alternatively, do I live the lives of others? As an employee, if you are not satisfied with a job or where you live you can change it. Not easy but it is possible. Nevertheless, changing my job as the owner-manager of a family business is not so easy, because I was raised to do this particular job. This is not only quitting a job after talking it over with your husband. It has a lot to do with breaking out of a cage, a golden one. Many people are affected by the decision, but they do not understand where my problem is. The company is very wealthy and is earning

money. However, I am not proud of what I have achieved. Perhaps this was never my way. I did it because it was necessary, a kind of chore.

If my father saw me, he never asked me: 'How are you?' His first question was always: 'How is the business going?' Moreover, when I answered, 'Good', then he would say, 'That is the main thing!'

1. Introduction – Locating the Research

Succession, in general, is crucial to the survival of family businesses (Brockhaus, 2004). Studies show that it is not likely that family businesses will last over three or more generations in the ownership of the founder family: only 3% of all family businesses will make it to the third generation or more (Beckhard & Gibb Dyer Jr, 1983; McMullen & Warnick, 2015; Poza, 2013; Zellweger, & Kammerlander, 2014).

In Germany, there is a saying: ‘The father builds it, the son keeps it, and the grandson destroys it.’¹ Alternatively, Lambrecht (2005, p. 267) describes the situation as follows: ‘A family business goes to the dogs in three generations.’

There are multiple reasons for this, and they lie more on the family side than on the business side. For Kets de Vries and Carlock (2010), emotional problems are a major issue in family firms. It is not only love; succession involves the issue of power, as this thesis will explore. The reasons for failed succession are multifaceted. Adizes (1999) calls it ‘the founder’s trap’, suggesting that bloodline is chosen over competence. Carsrud and Brännback (2001) see the failure in succession or governance and not as a problem caused by economic reasons. The *patron* struggles with handing the business to the next generation (Whiteside, Aronoff, & Ward, 1993). Miller, Steier, and Le Breton-Miller (2006) see the problem as an inappropriate relationship of the organisation with the past and the present. Mehrotra, Morck, Shim, and Wiwattanakantang (2011) state that failure in succession lies in the capability of the generation of heirs in general, where children of

¹ ‘Der Vater erstellt’s, der Sohn erhält’s, dem Enkel zerfällt’s.’

the founder display deviant behaviour, which negatively influences firm performance (Bennett, Thau, & Scouten, 2005; Cooper, Kidwell, & Eddleston, 2013).

Research into family businesses has explored succession in detail (Glover, 2014); however, to my knowledge it has failed to look at what, how and in which ways children are prepared for the succession of the family businesses. This pressure on the children could be a cause of family businesses not being stable over more generations.

Intra-family succession (De Massis, Sieger, Chua, & Vismara, 2016) does not necessarily mean that the chosen successor is content with their role of being in charge of the family business. In a recent study, Zellweger, Sieger, and Englisch (2015) found that of 19.7% of potential successors, only 4.9% intended to succeed five years after graduating and only 3.5% directly after graduating. These figures are alarming given the fact of the significance family business have for the economy, which I will explore in more detail in Chapter 2, section 2.1. On the other hand, the figures represent what it is like growing up in a family business family: potential successors do not see themselves as being a proper successor, as they do not always have the free will to be in charge of the business. Moreover, it seems that the majority of the heirs may have experienced the business as a burden, or find other career options more interesting (Zellweger, Sieger, & Halter, 2011). This research seeks to explore the phenomenon of the influencing factors of this paradoxical situation, as experienced by a girl growing up as an only child in a family business involved in manufacturing, in which her future was predetermined towards later taking over the family business. Regardless of her individual orientation towards future plans and career, these circumstances influence life, dreams and motivation; and the building of individual personality and self-identity are the main issues of this study. My motivation for this research stems primarily from my experience as the female owner-

manager of a family business which was present in the family as always coming first (Brockhaus, 2004; Kaye, 1992). After spending over 15 years in charge of the business, my current situation still does not compensate for what I sacrificed. Through the primary method of analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006), I will describe my experience in detail in my data in Chapter 5, to shed light on the situation for women in family businesses.

This chapter begins with an overview of the context and background that frames this study. The following is the problem statement and purpose of the study, as well as the research questions, including a short overview of the research approach. Also included is a short biography of the researcher. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the proposed rationale and significance of this research study and an outline of the thesis structure.

1.1 Background and Context

Wir sind die Wirtschaft! We are the economy! This is the confident slogan of the biggest German association of family businesses, *Die Familienunternehmer*. Moreover, it is correct: 92% of the business landscape of Germany is represented by family businesses, which are defined as controlled by a family with up to a maximum of three related persons holding 50% of the company shares. The percentage of the Germany economy in which family businesses are led by owners is 90% (Gottschalk, Eglen, & Kinne 2011). Viewing these figures, their macro economic significance can be appreciated and the sector can be called the backbone of the German economy.

Family businesses are recognised as being ‘familiar’ and ‘accessible’, even if they are operating worldwide. In recent times, there has been increased public interest in these businesses. Family businesses are in a positive sense associated with timeless values, sustainability over generations and long-term development (Waibel, 2016). Simon (2009) describes family businesses as ‘hidden champions’ because they are known on the one hand as good employers and on the other as the embodiment of sustainable capitalism. However, the word ‘hidden’ also points towards a secretive attitude they possess, and the problems and conflicts encountered within the family are often not displayed to a wider circle. Business families are often described as ‘patriarchal family clans’ and are recognised among the wider public as ‘odd’ (Stamm, 2013).

Women are still under-represented in leadership positions in German family businesses. A recently published article stated that 211 of 250 family business did not have a woman on their managing board (Koeberle-Schmid, 2016). These figures are alarming, given the discussion on the issue in the media in Germany, as since 1 May 2015 there has been a law about the participation of women in leadership positions, the main thrust of which is that a quota of 30% of the supervisory boards of companies should be made up of women. On first sight, this sounds promising. Unfortunately, this law is only applicable to listed companies of more than 2000 employees and only 101 companies are affected by it (Böhnke, 2016). Given this and the fact that only 45% of all listed companies are family businesses in Germany, this law will have little effect on women in family businesses. Moreover, laws are the last way to force companies to employ women in leadership positions. I will describe the academic attention paid to the role of women in family businesses in more detail in part I of the literature review, in Chapter 2, section 2.5.

Owner-managers, described by the German word '*Unternehmer*', are surrounded by a special 'nimbus': entrepreneurs and company founders are somewhat eulogised by society (Hamilton, Discua Cruz, & Jack, 2017), and the family business as an institution is venerated (Smith, 2016).

Given this, it is worth questioning why 97% of family businesses will not survive to the fourth generation (Poza, 2013). The lifespan of a family business is estimated at 24 years (Kets de Vries & Carlock, 2010). However, the experience of 'real' day-to-day life as an insider and family member of a family business often differs from the views of people outside of a family business.

There is a big gap between the inner feelings of one's identity and the views of one's parents, who constantly state that they only want the best for their children (Fleming, 2000). Also, the outside world thinks that taking over the family business involves glory and no work, only a lot of money. The image is somewhat different in the public due to prejudices of what they think life is like as an entrepreneur. A quote from a successful leader of Haribo Germany, Dr. Hans Riegel, is especially pertinent here, as he said to me personally, 'Everyone sees the flower bed, but no one sees the spade!'²

This 'spade' can take many different shapes. Most of the studies on succession in family businesses deal with those who are eager to take over the company, often talking about a 'free choice' (Zellweger, et al., 2011). However, this free choice can be viewed from a different angle if the parents state that they did all of this for their children. This is the point when the inner confusion occurs: in my case, I never wanted this company but felt

² '*Jeder sieht das Beet, aber Niemand sieht den Spaten!*'

the pressure, and because my parents did everything just for me, how could I reject their wishes?

Research indicates that family businesses struggle in a significant way to hand the business to the third generation or beyond (Bernhard, 2015). Although the literature confirms that succession is crucial for family business, it fails to explore in detail the perspective of the successor on how he or she experiences the situation and the process of being determined from an early stage as a successor of the family business.

Moreover, there is still little information and understanding of this situation for a woman. The issue of an only child in family businesses features in articles that note that more female successors may enhance the odds of family business continuity. This might be well intentioned, but to focus on daughters if the sons are not willing or not eager to take over a company sounds like a last option. Although women are often overlooked in the succession process (Ahrens, Landmann, & Woywode, 2015), Solomon et al. (2011) found in their case studies that none of the participants, when asked directly about the influence of gender, claimed gender blindness. I will consider this theme in Chapter 2, section 2.5, in more detail. The following section will outline the purpose and the research question, which will lead to the findings of this study.

1.2 Statement of Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this analytic autoethnographic study is to explore, portray and deepen understanding of the situation of growing up in a business family and what influences this has on the business, the family and the individual.

In the literature review, research gaps will be highlighted which indicate the problem of exploring in depth the development of identity and the relationship of individuals in the family business. Parker wrote in his article, 'Family firms and "The willing successor problem"', that:

Reciprocity concerns, filial piety, and family exchange norms may sometimes suffice to turn offspring into willing successors. However, these mechanisms may not always be available, nor are they guaranteed to work. (Parker, 2016, p. 1242)

This is a strong statement and represents how children are often viewed in business families, which do not take into consideration that this procedure greatly influences the development and well-being of the children. Bamberger and Pratt (2010) state that children are, on the one hand, an important stakeholder group and, at the same time, the least explored group in organisational studies.

Gender dynamics have only received scant attention (Hamilton, 2014). Michael-Tsabari, Labaki, and Zachary (2014) state that dynamics between all the individuals who are part of the family and their influence on the business should be part of future studies. 'We still lack theory that explains how family, business, and community logics interact in influencing family firm behaviour. This is an important gap in our knowledge' (Reay, Jaskiewicz & Hinings, 2015, p. 2). However, in their literature review, Long and Chrisman (2014) did not mention that for future research, it might be important to examine how the successor is somewhat shaped also on an emotional level within the family in taking over the family business. There is also a call for more research on the unexplored issue of the conflict that family managers have with themselves (Blanco-Mazagatos, de Quevedo-Puente, & Delgado-García, 2016).

My main objectives in this research are to describe how I lived the experience of being by birth the successor of the family business, first as a child and later as a woman and mother, and being an owner-manager in a family business in the third generation. To shed light on the problem, the following research questions based on my experience are addressed:

1. How are female owner-managers in family businesses currently understood?
2. What is the experience of a female only child growing up in a business family, in which their future is predetermined from the beginning?
3. What can be revealed by an analytic autoethnographic study of an existing family business from the viewpoint of a female owner-manager?
4. What insights and new approaches can be proposed for family businesses and, more precisely, for women in family businesses?

I will answer the first research question with the findings of my literature review. The second question is answered with my analytic autoethnographic data. I will demonstrate how this inheritance influenced my process of growing up. With the findings and discussion in Chapter 6, I will address and answer my third question. In Chapter 7, I answer my last research question by pointing out the implications my findings have for theory and practice and what recommendations I would make for families and successors, especially women, in family businesses.

In considering my research approach, I wanted a methodology which would allow me to incorporate my experience as a major data source. The reason was mainly that I thought what happened to me might be of interest to others and I wanted to explore the lived experience of growing up in a family business and of being somewhat determined towards

playing a role that was never my intention. The underlying problems and challenges I faced are not easy to grasp and describe. Due to my special position of being researcher and owner-manager of a mid-sized family business at the same time, I am naturally part of the research, and this enables me to provide first-hand information. The thesis is of a highly personal character, and the data collection is based on my reflective writing, which I present in the form of an analytic autoethnography to demonstrate how I experienced the situation in our family business. Moreover, in creating a narrative, the emotional dimension may be better transferred (Hamilton et al., 2017; Kets de Vries & Carlock, 2010). Therefore, I answer the research questions with the literature review and with this in-depth analytic autoethnographic writing, which is conducted with an abductive research approach using a pragmatist stance. The overarching research philosophy is interpretive.

As the methodology is an analytic autoethnographic one, I use the framework provided by Anderson, (2006) for the analysis. In addition I incorporated facets from memory work, (Haug, 2005) which is a vital link to symbolic interactionism through its focus on process, identity building and the view that the human being is an acting subject.

The theory used to understand the interaction on a micro-level basis is symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969), which I draw upon to guide my analysis.

Individuals interacting and giving symbols a definition together define what the business is for the family (Reiss, 1981). Therefore, it is the family which can actively define, act and create a good foundation for the business and enable a responsible interaction. As the business is a part of my life, the constant questioning is of how far the business has, can, must and may influence me and my family. All the desires that one individual family

member has – the decisions on where to work and whom to marry – all these choices influence the lives of each member of the family. To explore the complex phenomenon of the situation in the family business, I chose the following approach to collect and analyse my data. To illustrate the situation in the family business, I produced a diagram (see Chapter 4, section 4.6) and four different perspectives from which to look at it. (Charon, 2009, p. 36) describes a perspective as an ‘outline scheme defining and guiding experience’, and it is important to have different perspectives in order to put objects in place as we look at reality.

The first perspective is presented through my reflective writing, found in Chapter 5, which is the main source of data for this research. The text itself will provide the reader with a rich, detailed description and contains emotional and personal impressions (Geertz, 1973).

The second perspective is what I call my ‘reference group.’ I chose three different people, who know me and my life through different circumstances, to read and respond to the work; they describe if my reflective writing has meaning for them, and point out what I might have overlooked. This approach was chosen to assure conformability and to fulfil the fourth premise ‘Dialogue with informants beyond the self;’ of Anderson (2006). Additionally, it should ensure that my family, as far as possible, agrees with the content.

The third perspective is thematic analysis. As the method used for analysing my data, it was conducted with mainly themes and coding, dealing with concepts from the literature review.

The fourth perspective is textual analysis, which was carried out by interpreting the metaphors I used in my reflective writing and a word count. Metaphors express in a subtle

way things which perhaps are better left unsaid and illuminate the experience under investigation (Carpenter, 2008). The word count demonstrates what was so far seemingly important in my life, through a more quantitative lens.

With the combination of all these methods, new insights are possible for describing the experience of this phenomenon and the situation of the family business at first hand, which is what an analytic autoethnographic study is intended to do. In the following section, I will give some information on what I bring to this study as a researcher.

1.3 My Biography as a Motivation for Research into Family Businesses

I was born in 1968 in Erlangen, Germany. At this time, my parents had a family business producing injected moulding plastic parts for the electronic and automotive industry and also for companies in other industrial sectors in the region. In January 2002, I took the company over from my parents; however, taking over is not the right expression. I bought the company from my parents, as there is a price tag even in family businesses, even if this is a subject no one wishes to talk about. Since then, I have been the owner-manager of the family business.

The firm was founded in 1938 by my grandparents and my parents took it over in 1969. The business was not going well at the time, and my parents had to pay back all of the debts my grandparents left to them. The business is now being operated by the third generation. Between 2002 and 2016, the turnover tripled and it is a very different business from what it was under my parents. We are now a very profitable producer of rigid plastic packaging for the food processing industry, with the Fürst Group achieving a €30 million

turnover in 2016. Our clients are well-known, are among the best in their respective business sections and often work with us in a long-term relationship.

I have changed the corporate and family business identity to a great extent, but it has also changed me. I studied economics with a focus on family business part-time, as well as doing my job as an owner-manager. My experience guided me in selecting this subject of inquiry. I am contributing to the knowledge of the family business not as a financial or legal advisor, nor as a traditional researcher of a family business with a university career background nor as a therapist. I am an owner-manager who has been in charge of the business for 15 years, living the experience of owning and leading a family business into its third generation. Moreover, I am a mother of two children. As mentioned earlier, people are often envious when I say what my job is, but being an owner-manager is not as attractive as people might think, especially with my caseload of responsibility. The expected commitment toward the firm and my experience have led me to speak openly about the flipside of the coin (Kammerlander, Sieger, Voordeckers, & Zellweger, 2015). I hope to be able to offer readers of this thesis an overall experimental and experiential journey, and an account of a 'life experience' that allows them to better understand the family business and its dynamics.

I wanted to find out if there is already a word or explanation in the existing academic literature for what I experienced as a daughter in a business family. To the best of my knowledge, there is not. This thesis seeks to fill that absence.

1.4 Assumptions

Based on my experience and background as an owner-manager, I make five primary prejudgments.

First, what I believe is one of the major issues for why the family business does not make it to successive generations has something to do with the ‘grooming’ of the children of owners at an early age to be the successors. The goal of the parents or the *patron* is to have a suitable successor by birth, and they justify their goal with the thought or intent of this being in the best interest of the child. While the act of succession may seem voluntary to some observers, it can be an act of coercion.

Second, family businesses do not make it to more than the third or fourth generation because the family and, indeed, the children, experience how hard it is to work and live in such a construction as a family business. Moreover, the children suffer through being obliged to take over the family business later on.

Third, children growing up in an environment of a family business and constantly being exposed to the business find it difficult to form a distinctive identity. They may be good and suitable successors and leaders of the company if they are competent in doing so; however, it may be impossible for them to change their careers, because they never learn what their inner will and skills are. I have the feeling that I am not alone with this experience and that probably other children underwent a similar experience as well. The conflicting roles of the individuals, the paradoxical nature of the family business and the often used double-bind in communication is what, on the one hand, makes a family business unique. On the other hand, if not properly handled by the parents, the family business environment can turn out to be a horrible golden cage, with the strange situation

of it being almost impossible to save one's identity. The concepts mentioned above will be explored in more detail in Chapter 3, the literature review chapter. However, in being aware of the underlying invisible obstacles of the family business, new pathways can be created. I will bring new insights to the research on the family business, as this can be done only by an insider who is willing to provide the world with a look behind the curtain.

Fourth, symbolic interactionism and awareness of the social context have significant implications and benefits for putting oneself in the role of the other, limiting conflict in communication in family business.

Fifth, I expect that within the family business, the option of leading it into the next generation may not be the best solution for the family, the individual or the business. If the need to keep the family business in the family was not so great, the survival rate of the family business could be higher. If the only child was not the designated successor, other solutions could be found, such as an external management structure and dividing the ownership and management.

1.5 Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this work stems from my desire to uncover the phenomena that I experienced while growing up in our family business, showing my experience to a wider audience, especially family business owners in charge, potential successors and advisors to family businesses I want to highlight that it is important to focus also on the well-being of the children, who are 'chosen' to be the potential successors of the company.

This should be of wider interest for how the family business or the family in general functions, particularly with regard to succession, since we not only have many family businesses in the world, we also have many families and individual family members who are influenced or are influenced by such businesses (Sten, 2007). It is also of interest how the children were raised to take over the company and how much free will they had in doing so. Kets de Vries and Carlock (2010) state that the process of succession should begin when the children are young. In my experience, the parents do this, perhaps unconsciously. One example is the father who says to his children that they can do whatever they want in life, while in the next sentence admitting how he would be very happy if they chose to take over the company (Brundin & Pramodita, 2012). This can be called a ‘double-bind’, as Bateson describes it (Bateson, 1972).

Moreover, it is my intention to explore some new aspects of family businesses, which would not be seen if we did not shift our perspective. This shift will be achieved by writing from personal experience about what it is like growing up with the steady ‘grooming’ of being the only successor. This work, therefore, offers a conception of both the family business and its co-existing institution – the business family (Litz, 2008). While the family is allied to values of traditions and altruism, business stresses profit maximisation and self-interest, and the two spheres interact (Foreman & Whetten, 2002).

We can benefit from knowing more about what drives the succession process from the viewpoint of the child growing up in a business family. There are five aspects to my contribution to the literature of the family business.

First, I develop the understanding of the situation in the family business with first-hand information from a female owner-manager who grew up in the jungle of contradictory

messages and symbols and the invisible steady goal of the parents in planning the succession.

Second, I widen the view on the family business through the lens of literature and theory, which, to my knowledge, has not yet been brought together in direct connection with the family business and the succession process. With this work, I want to discover if the concept of the total institution may also be applied to family businesses, in combination with aspects of the double-bind, power relations, surveillance and governmentality which form part of the phenomenon of coerced succession. This concept will also take into account the highly dynamic background aspects that are not yet fully understood within the family business. Nordqvist, Hall, and Melin (2009) state that there is a necessity for more qualitative and interpretive research in the area of the family business.

Third, I provide information which could prevent family businesses from falling off the tightrope between the strengths and the weaknesses that arise from the paradoxical situation within the family business. The contradiction can grow too strong and might not be bearable for some family members. This damage lies not only in the business but also in the family, where good connections with children are destroyed for the sake of the business and success. The question of how much an owner-manager will sacrifice for the sake of the business can only be answered by the individuals themselves.

Fourth, I wish to see how the interaction of family members can create problems in identity building because of the so-called double-bind communication and to investigate the linkage between such differential treatment and its outcome on a child's interest in becoming part of a family business (Eddleston & Kidwell, 2012).

Fifth, I will inform family business practice by showing a possible way to deal with the many facets and interactions on a day-to-day basis. As the basis for this interaction model Chapter 6, section 6.3, I chose the theory of symbolic interactionism. This alternative approach to succession also informs the practice of family businesses in helping to detect learned patterns and to understand the interactions and go beyond them. In doing so, I will provide new insights into the understanding of this complex phenomenon of family business succession.

Showing all this develops the understanding of the dynamics and the family behind the business better. One should not forget that everyone has only one family and it is the root of where we come from – it is a ‘precious asset’.³ It should not be destroyed through the application of economic values – which a family business is capable of doing.

To conclude this introduction, I present an overview of the thesis structure, which is organised into seven chapters. The following two chapters, Chapters 2 and 3, present the review of the literature and show where I positioned my research within existing knowledge. It is divided into two parts, in which I demonstrate what is known about the family business. It starts with different definitions of the paradoxical view of the two spheres of the family and the business, afterwards looking at identity development within a family business environment. It concludes with the situation of children and women in family business. As the first literature review did not reveal what I experienced in a family business, a second literature review was undertaken. Part II of the literature review is concentrated on other theories, which express the situation in a family business from a

³ *‘Hohes Gut’*

different angle; however, it may enlighten some aspects of the family business which are not thought of so far. It starts with the concept of the total institution and power. The next section illuminates the double-bind and the theory of symbolic interactionism. Afterwards, the methodology chapter, Chapter 4, outlines the research approach and the research design. Chapter 5 presents my autoethnographic data. Chapter 6 demonstrates the findings and discussion section. The last chapter, Chapter 7, provides the implications for theory and practice and gives recommendations for families and advisors to family businesses. It finishes by pointing out some limitations of this research and providing the personal reflection of the researcher.

2. Literature Review Part I – The Family Business

This chapter aims to position my research regarding the existing literature on family businesses. I will examine what is already known about the situation experienced by individuals in the family business. Some authors relate the family in businesses to aspects that are still quite unexplored (Birley, Ng, & Godfrey, 1999; De Massis et al., 2016; Sirmon, Arregle, Hitt, & Webb, 2008).

I will begin by exploring the different definitions of family business and then move to see how the two spheres of business and family are connected and interrelated. The subsequent section will look at what influences growing up and living and working in a family business has on developing a self-identity versus a family business identity. Next, I will present what is already known about what effect early determination of succession has on children growing up in a family business. I will then look at what is already known about the situation of women in the family business. This chapter closes with a summing up of the main points found in the literature.

Family business research is located within the boundaries of different disciplines like business research, economics, sociology and psychology (Craig & Salvato, 2012). James, Jennings, and Breitzkreuz (2012) found that the field of the family business is increasingly dominated by the business rather than the family lens. Family business research has tried to understand the phenomenon of the family business mostly with theories from the business perspective, such as resource-based views and agency and stewardship theory, to name a few (Pieper, 2010). These perspectives on the family business have shortcomings, because their focus lies in the perspective of the self-other relationship in

which the principal's interest has priority, and therefore they underestimate the influence of interactions in the family (Lubatkin, Durand, & Ling, 2007). For example, in the 225 scholarly family business articles published in 2010 by theory base, 48.89% came from the business-oriented perspective, 2.67% from the economic one, 19.11% were other and 28.44% were unstated. However, only 0.89% came from the family theory side. Given the importance and the uniqueness of a family business, it is important to involve theory from the area of family studies as this is what make these businesses different (James et al., 2012). One reason the literature review is split into two sections, with themes which are borrowed from other fields like family studies, is to shed more light on the family side of business. In relation to how families' emotions play an important role, recent research has made an attempt to systematise the emotional aspects of family firm performance (e.g., Astrachan & Jaskiewicz, 2008; Basco & Pérez Rodríguez, 2009; Zellweger & Astrachan, 2008). However, non-economic ambitions are an under-researched topic, and more research seems necessary to develop a complete theory of the family business (Debicki, Matherne, Kellermanns, & Chrisman, 2009).

In their literature review of 35 studies related to corporate social responsibility, Van Gils, Dibrell, Neubaum, and Craig (2014) found that none of the studies were based on a theory from family studies. For Gomez-Mejia, Cruz, Berrone, and de Castro (2011), this is insufficient for moving the field forward. Hence, a key point in family business research is to develop a theory or a paradigm that will frame fragmented findings and which allows one to explain the phenomenon of family business better. My aim is to stimulate new ideas and insights within a conceptual framework, including existing and new aspects to inform theory and practice, especially from the point of view of early determination towards succession.

This thematic literature review starts out with some key texts and was then developed out of my reflection of my experience and was extended to other concepts not seemingly related to family businesses; this is one reason for the two parts of the review. This chapter, which will bring new insights to answering my research question, examines the existing literature in family business-related research and economics. The second part was necessary as the existing literature does not reflect my experience from an insider viewpoint. Therefore, more literature was viewed from different fields to create new findings. Among other themes, the second part includes symbolic interactionism as this is the theory which is also used in family research and that I will build upon to inform practice. Aldrich and Cliff (2003) stressed that in sociology, we do not examine family business, we study families doing several sorts of things, which opens up a wide range of research options. What this study seeks to explore are new combinations of different fields which were not connected before and which will show new aspects of the multiple facets of the situation in living and working in a family business, deepening the understanding of the coercion in the succession process and what influences this has on the business, family and individual.

2.1 Family Business

*For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf,
and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.*

(Rudyard Kipling)

A hundred years ago, it was a given that almost all business were family businesses. The separation of ownership and management was a new approach in the 20th century in the business landscape (Daily & Dollinger, 1991). We live in a time when stock exchange-

listed giant companies lead our thinking of what is influencing our economy. On a superficial perspective, this might be correct, but not on a closer view. According to the Family Firm Institute (2014), family-owned companies account for two-thirds of all businesses worldwide, generating more than 70% of global GDP annually. Using the broadest of the definition, 90% to 98% of all businesses are family businesses (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003).

European family businesses account for €1 trillion in turnover; this is 60% of all European companies (Anderson & Reeb, 2003). In mature industrial economies, such as France and Germany, over 80% of companies are family controlled (Kets de Vries et al., 2008). The reality is alarming: only 30% of family businesses make it to the second generation, 12% to the third generation and 3% beyond that (Bernhard, 2015). The reasons for this development are various. However, living and working in a family business is a very challenging task, and over time, not all family businesses are able to pass on the entrepreneurial spirit to the next generation, and the next generation is not willing to live with the burden of being responsible for a family business. Großmann and von Schlippe (2015) investigated the influence of family-related conflicts and the demise of family businesses. Although there is no direct causal relationship, the way in which the special dynamics of family and business crises are connected still remains unanswered. Each succession contributes to the business experience. It is highest between the first and the second generations (Astrachan, Klein, & Smyrnios, 2002). Moyer and Chalofsky (2008) found that the first generation saw the business as an avenue to be and do what they desired. For the second and third generations, the choice of taking advantage of the family resources already in place gave or reinforced the goal of personal independence and decision making. Another perspective on why succession in family businesses is less

likely might be the fact that over generations, the business separates itself from the core family. The so-called ‘familiness’, which means the integration of family and business, which creates many significant and different characteristics (Salvato & Melin, 2008), is no longer strong. It is this close but separable nexus between family, business and ownership which makes the family business unique. Life in a family business reflects the intensity of living and working with the same people. Members of the family are at home and work, the picture of the grandfather hangs in the conference room and the family name is on the building and the product. Going shopping also reminds one of the products because they are on the shelves. The overall presence of the family business makes it difficult for the individual to distance oneself from the firm but at the same time experience a strong responsibility in ensuring that the business does not also harm the family’s reputation (Dyer & Whetten, 2006).

For family business members, personal and professional relationships may become indistinguishable (Lyman, 1988), and some of the family members experience the family firm as an extension of themselves (Dyer & Whetten, 2006). This specific family business context makes certain emotional aspects of ownership more prevalent. The experience of community in the family comes alive in the business. On the one hand, emotional benefits are the origin of the joint engagement and the secret of success because positive energy like continuity, trust, liability and solidarity are set free. On the other hand, there are emotional costs, that is, emotions that change to rivalry, envy, resentment, fear, jealousy or hate (Zellweger & Astrachan, 2008). In some cases, conflicts not only harm the performance of the business but have the potential to destroy individual relationships, the family and even organisations (Großmann & von Schlippe, 2015). Individuals can be broken as a result and families destroyed. Therefore, the continuity of the family business

is also highly endangered. However, if the family can transfer the advantages of the emotional benefits to the business, creating competitive advantage and neutralising threats, it puts the family business ahead of non-family businesses (Sirmon et al., 2008). Stakeholders like customers and employees recognise these close connections. Often there are long-term relationships (Kets de Vries, 1993), such as family members. These long-term relationships inside and outside the family business shape the family business identity, positively, if everybody is working together on a trustful basis and negatively, if the conceptions are different or personal tensions exist which are transferred to the business.

It has been stated that: 'Family business entrepreneurs are unique in that they seek to build businesses that are also family institutions' (Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2003, p. 442) and this is an intrinsic motivation of a family firm. Not for nothing are ownership and responsibility of high worth in family businesses. Family business managers are one of the groups in our society which are always affected directly within their roles and therefore constitute one of the last sovereign societal groups. Entrepreneurs are liable for their companies. How much an entrepreneur is liable towards banks – in the extreme with their entire personal assets, depends on the corporate form. To mention one point from the outside sphere, an owner-manager is responsible for his employees not only on the pure work level but also on a more personal responsibility. An entrepreneur must take responsibility not only for the company, banks, employees and other stakeholders but also for themselves. They have to look after their pension funds and insurance, and their lives and personal interests besides the company. Securing and increasing long-term invested own capital is a strong interest that arises from the fact of ownership as often the business is the only financial back up for the owner-manager and the family. Habbershon and

Pistrui (2002) refer to this as ‘transgenerational wealth’, which means that the family business can achieve a performance outcome that puts the family in charge in the position to generate wealth over generations.

All these aforementioned factors influence the family and the business. As family businesses are heterogenic, no one is like another, and as the phrase ‘family business’ expresses it, the most obvious perspective is regarding, on the one hand, the family and, on the other hand, the business (Carney, Essen, Gedajlovic, & Heugens, 2015; Miller, Wright, Le Breton-Miller, & Scholes, 2015; Randerson, Dossena, & Fayolle, 2016; Wright, Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2014). This means that the extent these factors have a positive or negative effect depends on the particular family business. These different criteria apply in the family business, even if the business is highly characterised by an owner-manager or managers, but it can only be successful in the market if rationality, performance, alignment, effectiveness and efficiency are clearly stated and long-term planning is established (Upton, Teal, & Felan, 2001).

Every outlined part is in itself a dynamic and complex system, and at the same time, the parts interact in a close manner. Different dynamics and fields of tension within and between the family business and ownership is therefore often an expression of effects of the interaction of those so-called systems which are often not intended. At the same time, the people as intelligent subjects have the potential to change old structures and procedures, processes or attitudes if it is necessary for the preservation of the family or business. The members of the business family must be clear about their potential and capabilities.

So, it is of great importance to keep all these factors in mind and organised in the business. The complexity of the family business phenomenon is enormous; family business research will remain a challenging field. I will now look at definitions of family businesses and state which definitions this study will build upon.

Definition of family business

Up until now, there is no agreement among researchers in the field of family business as to what a family business is, and there is no confirmed unified concept or theory of the family business that illustrates why family businesses exist and what determines their size, scope and survival (Trevinyo, 2009). Therefore, it is not surprising that a binding, consistent and accepted definition of the term ‘family business’ does not exist.

On the first page of a book printed in 2014 from one of the most important institutions in the field of family business, it is stated: ‘that one of the most discussed issues in the field of family business today is how to define a family enterprise, but that there are a few working definitions that have evolved over years’ (Family Firm Institute, 2014, p. 1). It is surprising that over the years, the field of family business is still without an overall accepted definition and theory.

Handler (1989) builds upon a summary of different definitions which were formulated at this time; he provides some of the main content on which a definition of family business should point to - ownership and management, involvement of the family in business and transferring between generations. Heck and Trent (1999, p. 209) based their data collection for the national study on a simple definition which was earlier suggested by Hollander and Elman (1988): That a family business is a business that is owned and/or managed by one or more family members.

This definition describes the family business in its broadest sense and is still current as it covers all family businesses, because they are the most prevalent and most complex form of business entity in the world today (Family Firm Institute, 2014). This definition is too generic and lacks major factors: there is no difference stated with regard to the company's corporate form or the majority of decision-making rights. Therefore, I will look at the existing operative definitions, which will narrow down the family business in a more detailed way.

In this study, the term 'family business' refers to the report of an expert group because this definition is more representative of the nature of family businesses from a practitioner's point of view. As ownership plays an important part in the identity of the family business, it is important that it is considered as one aspect of representing a family business and this definition takes this fact into account. In their final report for the European Commission (2009) the expert group analysed the existing definitions and proposed the following definition:

A firm, of any size, is a family business, if:

1. The majority of decision-making rights are in the possession of the natural person(s) who established the firm, or in the possession of the natural person(s) who has/have acquired the share capital of the firm, or in the possession of their spouses, parents, child or children's direct heirs.
2. The majority of the decision-making rights are indirect or direct.
3. At least one representative of the family or kin is formally involved in the governance of the firm.
4. Listed companies meet the definition of family enterprise if the person who established or acquired the firm (share capital) or their families or descendants possess 25% of the decision-making rights mandated by their share capital.

This operational definition was created by the expert group, which consists mainly of a researcher in the field of family business and represents a wide range of opinions. Vought, Baker, and Smith (2008) urge a definition of the family business that should be able to support a complex system of classification. Other definitions with a theoretical lens are as follows: Family businesses are those in which various members of the same family are involved as major owners or managers, either at the same time or over time (Miller, Le Breton-Miller, Lester, & Cannella, 2007). Family businesses are those in which the family controls the business through involvement in ownership and management positions. Sciascia and Mazzola (2008) stress the term ‘family involvement’, which is measured as the percentage of equity held by family members and the percentage of managers who are also family members. These definitions are more or less a good foundation, but somehow too special to cover all the specific and unique parts of the different family businesses. Another definition that is similar to the expert group, but more from the practitioner side is the definition from PWC, which they created and matched to the purpose of their recently published research about family business in 2014:

5. The majority of votes are held by the person who established or acquired the firm (or their spouses, parents, child, or child’s direct heirs);
6. At least one representative of the family is involved in the management or administration of the firm;
7. In the case of a listed company, the person who established or acquired the firm (or their families) possesses 25% of the right to vote through their share capital, and there is at least one family member on the board of the company. (PWC, 2014)

As family businesses are at the same time the most common and the most complex form of business entity, no one definition can encompass all of its forms (Family Firm Institute, 2014). Therefore, a widely formulated definition seems more appropriate. For example,

a definition by Heck and Trent (1999) describes it as follows: One or more individuals are involved in the family business at the same time or successively, and are working in and/or own the business. I differ from Heck and Trent in that working in a family business should be a criterion and not owning it. This definition was formally used in the NFBS study of 1997 (Astrachan & Lund, 2001), which included businesses that were owned and/or managed by one or more family members. Dividing ownership and management is not appropriate. First, this definition includes many more companies as being family businesses; second, ownership is indispensable because this is a critical difference with non-family business. A family business is a family business because the family owns it. The main feature of many family businesses is the presence of multiple family generations within the business (Brigham, Lumpkin, Payne, & Zachary, 2014).

The tension between who owns how much of the company is an important point for family business members: if ownership is not clearly demarcated, it might awaken greediness and therefore tensions. As Handler (1989, p. 261) stated, the ‘externally owned, family managed’ classification is a grey area, and some theorists do not consider this to be a family business. Also, an expert group, consisting of national experts on family businesses delegated by the European Commission, state in their report from 2009 (p. 4): ‘Ownership is fundamental to family businesses.’

Chua, Chrismann, and Sharma (1999) use an empirical, psychological and, therefore, behavioural position:

The family business is a business governed and /or managed with the intention to shape and pursue the vision of the business held by a dominant coalition controlled by members of the same family or a small number of families in a manner that is potentially sustainable across generations of the family or families. (Chua, Chrismann & Sharma, 1999, p. 25)

Chua et al. approach the definition differently. For them, the vision and intention are most important. This is the difference with the other more operational definitions. However, as with all qualitative data, it is not easily measurable, and, therefore, it should not be the basis for quantitative studies. One needs to be careful in taking figures from studies for granted. As there is no fixed definition of what family businesses are, each country or research group uses different definitions. However, overall it can be said that many businesses around the globe are family businesses.

The following definition is from a 2014 study of the *Stiftung für Familienunternehmen* in Germany.

They define family business as:

1. Businesses which are family controlled: In this definition, all businesses are controlled by a small number of natural persons are included. Ownership and management must not coincide (this definition is the one most used by the general public).
2. Businesses which are managed by the owner: This definition includes family businesses which are controlled by a small number of natural persons and in which at least one of the owners is also managing the business. (Gottschalk, Niefert, Licht & Wagner 2014, p. 13ff.)

Depending on which definition is used, the importance or relevance of family businesses for the national economy in Germany is based on the following: In contrast to other research, this data is not based on projections of samples but primary data collected from all German businesses. In this analysis, 2.7 million businesses were found.⁴

⁴ The analyses are based on the ZEW Mannheim Corporate Spreads (MUP). According to the company register, there are currently about 3.6 million legally independent companies, while the MUP identifies around 2.7 million "economic" companies consolidated at the corporate level. Micro-enterprises and sub-contracting enterprises are not recorded. The liberal professions and farms, which are generally not subject to the obligation to register the trade register, are underrepresented.

8. Family-controlled businesses: 91% of all German businesses are family controlled. They create 48% of all business turnover and provide 56% of all insurable employment in Germany.
9. Businesses which are managed by the owner: 88% of all businesses are owner managed. 53% of all employees in Germany work in such companies. Owner-managed family businesses provide 44% of German GDP. The report is from 2014 and has, therefore, topicality.

A family business here is if one or more families exercise significant control over the business in the form of owning share capital or through strategic influence. In Germany, this term is often taken synonymously with the term *Mittelstand*, which is not correct. Indeed, most German *Mittelstand* are family businesses, but the word *Mittelstand* also includes companies which are not influenced by a family. Basically, the difference is between family-controlled businesses and family businesses guided by an owner(s). A connection has been identified between the *Mittelstand* and the idea of a hidden champion (Simon, 1992) in that these companies are often world leaders. The management style has been described as ‘enlightened patriarchy’. Patriarchy refers to the fatherly concern most *Mittelstand* managers feel for employees and their employees and their employees’ families. Together, family-controlled businesses and owner-guided businesses constitute an overwhelming 95.3 % of the German economy and constitute the most significant type of enterprise (Haunschild & Wolter, 2010). Moreover, family businesses in Germany employ more than 54% of all socially secured (*sozialversicherungspflichtigen*) employees, provide 80% of all apprenticeship places and generate roughly half of German

turnover. The figures speak for themselves regardless of the perception of the big DAX enterprises by the public. Since 2010, the development of listed family business can also be tracked on one of DAX's indexes, the DAXPLUS: Family Index (TR) (Deutsche Börse, 2016). 'Family businesses can be very diverse: they can be small, medium-sized or large, listed or unlisted' (European Commission 2010, p. 4). As these partly diverse definitions show, it is not easy to capture the family business with a single definition. However, all of these definitions underline the complex phenomenon of the family business. The fact of ownership is important in the family no matter what percentage it comprises as ownership makes the difference between a family and a non-family business and the responsibility is very important.

The review of the status of family businesses provides some appreciation of the importance of such businesses. It has been noted that all such businesses emphasise personal relationships. In continuing the discussion, I will next draw on the perspective of seeing the family business as a paradox. This section will make clearer what is meant by the conflicting spheres and roles the individual is faced with in the daily life of living and working in a family business.

2.2 Family Business as Paradox – the Invisible Member

Those who do not move do not notice their chains.

(Rosa Luxemburg)

The family business is designated in the family business literature as a zebra (Hollander & Elman, 1988), as a Möbius strip (Litz, 2008), as a paradox (Schuman, Stutz, & Ward, 2010), as a three-circled system (Tagiuri & Davis, 1996), as an open system, as a Janus

(Miller, Wright, Le Breton-Miller & Scholes, 2015; Sjöstrand, 1997), as a hybrid-identity organisation (HIO) (Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 95), as a hybrid social system (Foreman & Whetten, 2002; Whetten, Foreman, & Dyer, 2014) and as an oxymoron (Ward, 2012).

All of these metaphors seek to narrow down the complex phenomena which underlie a family business. However, it can be stated that most of these authors see the family business as a conjunction of two components, the family and the business, which are normally separated categories. For Sharma, Chrisman, and Gersick (2012), the area of family business research differs from its sister disciplines for its unique attention on the paradoxes caused through the connection between the family and the business.

I will explore in this section how far the attribution of paradox does justice to family businesses or what other forms could be proposed. A paradox is widely viewed as the existence of two parallel incompatible entities. As Zellweger (2014) summarises it, the concept of paradox in family business tradition came through the widely-accepted view of seeing a family business as two indistinguishable systems, which is the core of these organisations and the challenge of facing and dealing with the seemingly competing and interacting demands that constitute the nature of these businesses.

The family and the business create a hybrid identity, within which family members need to embed themselves in the logic of both the business and the family (Brundin & Härtel, 2014). In the same vein, for Lerner and Malach-Pines (2011), the family is often labelled as an emotional scene and the business as a rational scene (Danes, Sharon, Zuiker, Kean, & Arbuthnot, 1999).

Trying to bring both logics together is a difficult task, often with conflicting objectives. The two systems, family and business, have different interests, which are not always

compatible. Inherently socialistic and capitalistic are mixed into one, which gives a very tough blend with fundamental differences. Aldrich and Cliff (2003) see the family and business as 'unnaturally separated' social institutions of the family and business. I cannot support this viewpoint as these so-called two separated systems are the nature of these businesses and exist in this form from the beginning or were connected through starting or the taking over of a venture by a family.

They come together naturally, but with their main orientation, they somehow follow different targets and can be described as a paradox, together but yet apart. They are apparent dilemmas which do not call for choice (Cameron & Quinn, 1988). The family and the business are not necessarily a dilemma, but it is very hard to manage the contradiction that might occur in day-to-day living and working in a family business. One is born into a family but hired into a business. This construct is present in family businesses. The conflicting spheres could be, for example, in a family where there are members we love, and in business, we have to work with strangers. In the nuclear family, one is accepted, usually; in a company, someone is only accepted if he fulfils the expectation of the company. In family businesses this is mixed up (Connidis, 2015). Family is bound up with emotions, which in the corporate world is substituted by the rational.

It is stated that companies become prosperous when some risk is taken in which the results cannot be foreseen. Naldi, Nordqvist, Sjöberg, and Wiklund (2007) found in their study that family businesses take risks, however inferior they appear compared to non-family companies. They also found that if family businesses take risks, it is negatively related to performance. However, within the family, security is an important aspect, which is associated within. Different roles like parents in the family will still be parents in the

company (Cooper et al., 2013) but are assigned additional roles like managing directors. This fact can result in role conflicts. What is often not clear for a child is who is answering their question now? The mother or father or the owner-manager?

Often the main goal of business families is stated to be to keep the business in the family, preferably over generations, when it becomes difficult to relinquish. Moreover, when it comes to succession and transition, which are issues every family business has to face someday, from a family perspective, the company should be kept in the family (Belmonte, Seaman, & Bent, 2016). Much history is, on the one hand, luck, but on the other hand, it can be a burden. Dealing with a legacy can be a huge chore. Swogger states that

Each new generation is the understanding and resolution of the hurts and conflicts of the preceding generation, at least as regards their impact on the new generation. (Swogger, 1991, p. 403)

Each family has their particular structure and history, which has been passed down through generations and modified along the way (Bowen, 1993). Kammerlander, Dessi, Bird, Floris, and Murru (2015) conclude in their study that it is possible that owner-managers can carefully utilise storytelling as a way to tie younger family members to the family firm, while at the same time making them open to innovation.

There is also a paradox in keeping the past in mind and settling the family business for future tasks. Employing family members does not necessarily imply that the family business forgets about innovation: ‘The innovation lies not so much in the structures *or* the firm’s system but the talents, motivation, and interactions of the family members involved’(Miller, et al., 2015, p. 19). Clearly, it is the people who make the business, not the structure. However, the formal and the symbolic remain present.

I would like to move away from the viewpoint of paradox for a moment, to look at the overlapping aspects of a family business, the two or more-circle diagram. Various authors present the family and the business as a two or three circle diagram (Hall, 2012; Lyman, 1988; Pieper, 2010; Tagiuri & Davis, 1996). The diagram shows the overlapping of the spheres associated with these sorts of businesses: family, business and ownership (Tagiuri & Davis, 1996). Overlapping systems do not necessarily support the theory of the family business as a paradox. The nature of a paradox is two spheres which cannot be brought together.

For Ward (2012) the family business has the inherent contradiction of an oxymoron, which means it is a contradiction but not necessarily separated. The paradox is, therefore, a paradox that is 'one', and it is not obviously solvable. It is not fixed, and so they are both not dualistic within their focus but parallel in the same direction. They are two components but one whole. Bateson (1972) suggests that in organisations which are simultaneous opposites, the tension is around what is important for holding the systems in equilibrium. The idea of paradox has been explored in business studies as a tension. This tension can often be seen as a creative one.

The danger lies in the fact that one part gains through self-reinforcement in which one action in the organisation becomes extreme and, with that, unbalanced. The creative tension which paradoxes produce is what can be used as a unique advantage for family businesses. However, if the family and individual family members can deal with it, an ensuing culture can accept stability and continuous change, which is a big success factor and advantage for the family business (Pounder, 2015).

Zellweger (2014) notes that there is a power in the anomalies and paradoxes idea, that a paradox perspective defines the family business as having inextricable and axiomatic ties that are at the core of the family business and are a challenge for the family member dealing with such interconnected spheres.

For Farjoun (2010), the two spheres are contradictory and complementary at the same time as the relationship of family and business. I suggest that business and family are one and interdependent, not paradoxical. However, this is a view from an insider seeing the two as one. From an outsider and more analytical view, the family and the business come originally from different points which are put together.

The term ‘duality’ is borrowed from philosophy to denote the twofold character of an object of study without separation. It can be stated that duality maintains the distinction conceptually without being committed to separation. (Farjoun, 2010)

It is the *both/and* not the *either/or* of family and business, with all the paradoxes and oxymoron’s (Ward, 2012), that is inherent in these dipolar spheres. The *both/and* and the *what* make a powerful difference between family businesses and non-family businesses. Kepner (1983) says the business and the family are dualistic, which supports opposition and polarisation. The understanding of the reality has to be negotiated with the others that are in the sphere. Consequently, the members of the family are constantly constructing reality through mutual interaction. The sequence of negotiation often depends on identified issues. It is the process of assigning the meaning of the individual to symbols, which creates an agreed consent. Miller et al. (2015) describe an *either/or* situation, but from my point of view, a *both/and* is more reflective of the day-to-day business of family business.

One of the main problems in a family business' day-to-day interaction and decision making is the fact that from both sides, the family and the business, the problems to be solved are valid and valuable, which could also be viewed as a paradox. Problems which are at first sight contradictory in nature are 'growth' versus 'stability' and 'individual freedom' versus 'loyalty', and for solving these problems, empathy is needed (Schuman et al., 2010).

This fact is challenging: it means researching and understanding the dynamic interaction between the business, the family and individual family members with all their histories, thoughts, wishes and expectations (Habbershon, Williams & MacMillan 2003; Nordqvist, Hall & Melin, 2009, p. 297). Later in Chapter 2, I will explain further what a family business is and what dynamics influence it.

Given the fact that individuals face paradoxical tensions and generate paradoxes, many conflicts result for the person who has two roles, such as being an owner-manager and a parent.

Business needs leadership, but families do not like leadership. Families like each other but hardly say thank you to each other. Some chores that a family member does for the family are not seen as important and are often taken for granted. The interests do not necessarily arise from a paradox of conflicting interests (Miller et al., 2015). Often it is the tension between the two which creates new power.

The consensual understanding of reality has to be steadily negotiated with the individual family members. Therefore, the members of the family are constantly constructing reality. It is the process of assigning the meaning of the individual to symbols, which create an agreed consent at the end. Rather than defining family as structure, it is seeing family as

a relationship of members in which ‘each member accords to the others the power of independent regard’ (Reiss, 1981, p. 170).

This brings together what is naturally not together. It is an opposite way of thinking put together. A decision is made in the family which is emotion-laden but also rational. The content of the decision is not exclusively for the family or the business. It is the ‘*and*’ not the ‘*either*’. Therefore, I see more colliding entities or duality within the incorporation of inseparable entities in decision-making instead of two separate systems. The power of the paradoxes lies in the fact that it is important to find a solution, and constantly weighing the two sides will gain a good result.

Family businesses are by nature replete with problems that other businesses do not have. These problems can be viewed as paradoxes.

It is more what happens on the micro level from within the core family which makes a family business unique – the business as an invisible member. Litz (2008) and Hollander and Elman (1988) ask if the family business is a unique form and not put together from two systems that we already can define. Therefore, the connection becomes dyadic. I agree with them, as from my experience, family members do not see and feel this as assembled from two components; for them, it is one, always present but not visible. Hollander and Elman (1988) raise the question of whether the family firm is ‘a pony with stripes or a zebra’, and I propose from an insider viewpoint that a family business is a unique form of business: in their words, ‘a zebra’ (Hollander & Elman, 1988, p. 162).

Within the closely interwoven spheres of family and business, building an own identity in this close interrelation is a difficult task for the individual to achieve. I will explore identity building in more detail in the following section, 2.3.

As the seemingly two entities, which are viewed from an insider perspective as interdependent and inseparable, generate two truths which are also interdependent, this fact needs to be managed (Schuman et al., 2010). However, there is also a power in contradiction which lies in a paradox. Kets de Vries points out in the following citation that this is a challenging task for the owner-manager in charge, and for the whole family.

This twilight zone where we find the boundaries of rationality and irrationality needs further exploration if we want to possess a better understanding of intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational processes, and strategy formulation and implementation. (Kets Vries, 2008, p. 2)

Nevertheless, the description of a family business is in many aspects detached from reality. This theoretical approach does not do justice to the insider view, which is not separate from the family but is experienced as a family member. All action is predetermined through the business family. Colli and Rose (2008) show that business historians have recognised that families and business are inseparable. Seeing the family and the business as one and not as unconnected spheres makes a huge difference in building up an own identity while growing up, living and working in the family business. As I will show through my reflective writing and autoethnographic data in Chapter 5, the family business is *one* and does not consist of two separate entities. The business is the so-called fourth member of our little family and was experienced as a living entity.

As there is a difference in seeing a business from the inside or outside, it is also a question of what cultural setting the family business is impeded by. Gupta, Levenburg, Moore, Motwani, and Schwarz (2011) find in their study that there are geographical differences in how the family business is experienced by the family. In Germanic regions, a family business reflects a quasi-hybrid form. In Anglo regions, a degree of delineation between the family and the business is exerted.

To enact one's life in a family business, the dominant view is one of fusion and not separation. However, the fusion creates its own paradox in conceiving how the inside becomes outward.

I see a great advantage in using symbolic interactionism in the day-to-day decision-making in family business, which I will describe in more depth in Chapter 3, section 3.4, because of the fact that putting oneself in the shoes of the other is *de facto* the key to solving the problem of solving the paradoxical situation.

In the next section, I will discuss self-identity versus family business identity. In symbolic interactionism, identity plays an important role because of giving meaning to objects through interaction. Moreover, as this study is conducted within the symbolic interactionist perspective, by individuals assigning meaning to an object through the interaction with the self and with individuals involved, such objects become 'social objects' (Mead, 1912).

2.3 Self-Identity versus Family Business Identity

*It is not the strongest of the species that survives,
nor the most intelligent,
but the one most responsive to change.*

(Charles Darwin)

A firm's identity or own brand is one of the most important assets for a company and if the brand is well developed, it is an advantage in the marketplace (Graig, Dibrell, & Davis, 2008). It could be argued that the identity of the family business be interrelated with the identity of the family. As I admitted earlier, from an insider position, there is no distinction between business and family; it is one. However, this does not mean that the

tensions which these different logics create will have a huge effect on the individual family members. On the other hand, this is what a family business is all about and these interwoven spheres, which are different in every family business as in every family, are each different from the other; this difference is branding the company. Customers, employees and other stakeholders experience the family business with the individuals owning and leading the business. It is the understanding (*Verständnis*) or the way of thinking and, therefore, of how to encounter customers in a certain way. Lyman (1991) found in her study that personal relationships towards customers are more important in family businesses than corporate values. The personal characteristics of the owner-manager, family member, employees and the family business spirit form the unique brand of the company. As family businesses have mostly long-term relationships with customers, the customers expect a special kind of behaviour through the person they are dealing with. If the mother or father has handled situations in a special way, the customer will expect similar behaviour from the son or daughter. The identity of the individual and the identity of the family business is the same and is called 'familiness'. 'Family firm identity is one of the key elements that facilitate the creation of familiness' (Zellweger, Eddleston, & Kellermanns, 2010, p. 61). Embodied familiness and family ownership is positively linked to a culture which is market-oriented and enhances the performance of the company (Tokarczyk, Hansen, Green, & Down, 2007). It has been noted that family firms benefit from signalling their family nature through the adoption of a family brand. This communicates their organisational identity (Gallucci, Santulli, & Calabrò, 2015). Kidwell and Kidwell (2010) suggest that a strong familiness, including identity and strong bonds, brings family members to see the family and business as 'one'. The results affect in a negative or positive way all participants. If we agree on seeing the family and the

business as ‘one’, this means that the individual in the family business is a person made out of flesh and blood and also a more abstract organ, the invisible but omnipresent member – the business which also has the intrinsic will to develop its identity, besides the interest of the individuals. Identity is how the individual sees his social self. It is developing and changing in an ongoing process. Working and living between those tensions is an aspect in which it is hard to keep track of one’s identity and, moreover, the different roles and identities are often competing demands. Even if as Churchill and Hatten (1997) state, ‘these role interrelationships are what make family businesses unique’. This uniqueness or, in other words, this worldview, loyalty and priorities, are influenced by the emotional connection with family members inside and outside of the business (Miller, Le Breton-Miller, & Lester, 2011). One is in danger of pursuing all of one’s life and identity for the business. Working for the business is a steady, invisible and not clearly stated role of doing everything for the business.

The nuclear family has the very important task of raising the children by giving them a safe and secure feeling of belonging to a family. Later on, it is also important for the proper development of the child to separate them from the family in seeking to build a distinctive identity. This requires an objective view of what has happened so far in the family. Smith and Berg (1987) describe how this tension of being part of the family and the separation as a paradox of identity. Moreover, when we extend this aspect to a family business, for Zucker (1987), one important aspect is the established rules, leadership and trust which make the individual contribute more to the community and family than to more selfish interests. I think it takes more than that, giving up part of one’s dreams takes a stronger force than only rules and leadership; it is more of an emotional force, which is only visible through a second and deeper view (Yarborough & Lowe, 2007). I will look

into this phenomenon, which may be connected to the theory of double-bind, in a later section. Reay (2009) proposed in her study that a 'meta-identity' will serve as an orientation for family members. This meta identity states 'who we are as a family' and who 'we are as a business.' It is a good start, but this is neglecting the individual in developing an identity of their own. In my view, this sentence is missing: 'who am I as an individual?' Giddens (1991) sees the self as a reflexive project for which the individual is responsible. Therefore, he or she sees we are not what we are, but what we make of ourselves. Self-identity is not a fixed construct. Given this view, which understands the self and, therefore, the identity as an active process, it is a positive perspective for not seeing all as a given and not changeable. Self-identity is the basis for active interaction with other people through the consciousness of one's uniqueness. On the other hand, for some individuals, it is also frightening. Here lies an important part of framing the family business through the individuals. As it is an active process, everybody is influencing the other and, therefore, the whole phenomenon of the family business.

Self-identity is developed through a process of socialisation, through special experience over the lifespan, and it is at stake, for example, in the crises of identity that can people affect who slips into unemployment or when a long-term partnership is breaking up. These kinds of crises can be easily connected to conflicts in family business. Goffman (1961) gives some examples of cases that can cause an identity crisis:

1. **Role dispossession.** Losing an already adopted role in society, or having to alter it because of a changing situation.

2. **Identity trimming and programming.** The programming takes place unconsciously but at a steady state and reduces the self towards a kind of tool which is formed for the needs of the family and business.

3. **Stripped of possessions ‘identity kit’** (Goffman, 1961, p. 21). As the way we dress is a very personal expression of our self, being restricted in what to wear, even as a child, will have consequences for one’s identity building.

4. **Contaminative exposure** is described by Goffman when an institution does not offer enough privacy.

5. **The disruption of the usual relationship** between the individual actor and his acts. Goffman called this the looping effect, meaning an agency that creates a defensive response on the part of the inmate takes this very response as the target of its next attack. The individual experiences their protective response to an attack upon the self as collapsed into the situation; they cannot defend themselves in the usual way by establishing a distance between the mortifying situation and themselves (Goffman, 1961, p. 35).

6. **Restrictions or loss of self-determination** (Goffman, 1961, p. 44), autonomy, and freedom of action. It might seem normal that freedom of action is restricted for a child.

All the above-mentioned are causes of identity crises and are issues for a family business, as the development of the individual is important for a healthy family and business and a succession process and outcome (Daspit, Holt, Chrisman, & Long, 2016). Keeping this possible confounding factor in mind, an active intervention on an open interactive process between family members is welcomed. Social identity theory states that in being involved in a group such as a family, the boundaries of the self and the group become blurred and

the interests of the family are transferred to the individual. Family members may more likely support the interest of the business than their individual interest (Pieper, 2010). Not seeing clearly their own interest and the interest brought from the outside can lead to problems for the individual. The interesting point might then be how a business family transfers the family-based identity to the family members. Being a person with individual needs wants and dreams, there are consequences in our acting and keeping the balance with the family, and social expectations will in some way result in conflict.

A significant finding of Foucault's work is that the processes whereby some people discipline or govern others are frequently closely connected to procedures of identity constitution or self-discipline. 'For example, if we take educational institutions, we realise that one is managing others and teaching them to manage themselves' (Foucault, 1997, p. 278).

In summary, the individual and the family will step behind the business in their development or stand in the shadows. The family supplies the economical and biographical actor with social, cultural and economic capital. On the one hand, the family appeals for the economic success of the business. On the other hand, the specific constellation is a pitfall for attempts for individualisation and for the growth and the innovation of the business. Cooper et al. (2013) also warn of what they call a spill over effect. This means the transmission of emotions, thoughts, moods and of displaying oneself to the outside world, like an employee in a business, might end with this in the family environment. This effect might turn out not to be easily separated afterwards for the family members where these outcomes have their cause. Solomon et al. (2011) state that sometimes business attachment becomes so powerful that identities seemed fused with the business.

Albert and Whetten (1985) propose that identity is important for the existence of an organisation. Given the need for a theoretical basis for the family business, a theoretical formulation called socioemotional wealth (SEW) was created. Berrone, Cruz, and Gomez-Mejia (2012) contribute to the literature and especially to SEW with FIBER,⁵ which allows one to more clearly show the dimensions of socioemotional wealth. This description captures some aspects of family business well, even if Gomez-Mejia, Larrazakintana, and Makri (2003) describe the possibility of viewing the family business as ‘family handcuffs’, which is a metaphor explaining somehow strong bonds and an indication of not being able to act. What it misses is how these binding social ties and the emotional attachments are created over time. This means that an individual can be loyal to the business and the family and at the same time betray his identity. With this study, I will contribute to this fact with my reflective writing and by applying different theories which would normally not be expected to be put together. Identity development is what takes place with the involvement of the other in a constant interaction (Billson, 1994). If the business family as a whole can support the healthy development of the identity of their children in a good and honest interactive environment, the individual can decide with a free mindset. In their study, Moyer and Chalofsky (2008) found that personal independence is a mindset and goal, and individuals see in the family business a possibility to fulfil this personal life goal. If the individual is ready to formulate that the family business can provide them with independence, the decision is taken freely and will be the best approach possible for the family business. If the identity of the individual

⁵ FIBER stands for Family control and influence, identification of family members with the company, binding social ties, emotional attachment of family members and renewal of family bonds to the firm through dynastic succession (Berrone et al, 2012 p.259).

family member is somewhat shifting, then there will also be a shift in values as well (Gross, 1978). Family businesses are often described as depending on intra-family altruism, trust and clan-based cohesion (Corbetta & Salvato, 2004). In the same vein, Björnberg and Nicholson (2012) found in their study that family members who own a business or are involved in management and have not identified themselves with it are likely not to be able to manage the challenges or not to persist, suggesting that having a ‘family business identity’ as an individual is important to support the business. As Kondo states, as identity is negotiated, the family needs to find a good way to interact fruitfully to create a path of healthy development for the business, the family and the individual: ‘Identity is not fixed it is negotiated, open, ambiguous, a result of culturally meanings and the open-ended, power-laden interaction of the meanings in everyday life’ (Kondo, 1990, p. 24).

To sum this section up, the identity of the family is the identity of the business; in parallel, the individuals are trying to develop their own identity. I will go on to show in my findings in Chapter 6 the consequences this will have for the conflicting roles and identity building in a family business. In the next section, I will look at what is already known, in the literature regarding children growing up in the environment of a family business.

2.4 Children in Family Business – Early Succession Determination

The purpose of this analytic autoethnographic study is to explore, portray and deepen the understanding of the situation of growing up in a business family and what influences this has on the business, family and individual. This section of the literature review will deal

with what is already known about growing up in a family business and experiencing early succession determination.

The 'family' is what makes family business distinct from other businesses (Habbershon & Williams, 1999). However, it is also a somewhat challenging difference for the individuals and children growing up in a family business that is detached in contrast to a family where the business is attached or connected. The family or members of the family are occupied on a regular basis with leading the business and caring for the demands of the family with all the influences that arise thereof (Hall, 2012). The impacts on the family and the individual are multifaceted, affecting the way of life, the choices they make and are allowed to make, the silent forced commitment towards the family business and the power that is accentuated through different means. These special interactions can only be understood if the inner experiences of the individuals, which are inseparable from them, are looked at (Gilgun, 2012). On the one hand, the family business is the source of the family income, and on the other hand, the children are in competition for the attention of the parents due to the fact that the parents are occupied with the demanding business, where the business always comes first.

I will focus in this section on the parents' determination to find a successor from within the family and what is already known in the literature about the consequences of this for the children. I will find evidence in my autoethnographic writing for this statement later in Chapter 7.

Kaye (1996) discusses the family business as a sickness. The problem is that the family business is not always on the bright side of life and that money does not grow on trees, just ready to be picked. In books and journal articles, the offspring are spoken of as 'silver

spoon kids' (Jaffe, 2003) often in the same vein as children of entrepreneurs. However, what these children really feel on a day-to-day basis is not recognised sufficiently by the public and in the family business literature. Moreover, it is also considered that taking over a family business is somewhat akin to finding the Holy Grail. Given this public perception, and bearing this in mind, it sounds somewhat strange or weird in family business circles if the only child, a well-educated and trained young woman, for example, is not happy with what her parents '*gave*' to her. It might be hard to believe that a potential successor might not want to have all this '*glory*'. This paradoxical situation might raise the self-doubts of the individual or the children concerned even more (Handler, 1992).

Besides this, and also in my case, it is the case that the successor is somehow '*buying*' the business. There is also a price tag, and this is not only an emotional price. There is also a monetary price to pay. Zellweger, Richards, Sieger, and Patel (2016) state that the literature is silent about the transfer prices of family business ownership, probably due to the inherently private nature of these changes under corporate control.

In the dynamic family business family, almost every part of the individual's life is involved in this process. 'It is as though they are bound by so short a rope that one party cannot make a step without pulling the other' (Sorokin, 1991, p. 445). The family business consists of individuals who are combined by trust, love, and a target of keeping the business developed, but 'the intensity of bonding within the family itself may be disguised or ambiguous' (Brundin & Sharma, 2012, p. 66). Directly or indirectly expected engagement in the family business, from the parents to the children over generations, has directly influenced the children. There is always an invisible member of the family – the business. It is suggested that families with strong bonds and a high level of cohesion have a more collectivist orientation and reciprocal altruism (Nordstrom & Steier, 2015).

However, these strong bonds do not necessarily come from positive cohesion; cohesion can also have some negative consequences, and often intra-family conflicts can act as a strong cohesive. This phenomenon is attributed to the conflict-cohesion hypothesis, which Benard and Doan (2011) describe in their book, where conflict has its role in shaping behaviour and this inherently destructive force can generate cohesion and solidarity.

If a child does not want to take over the company, which they have realised within the interaction with their self, and they are not able to state this in a clear way, then it is very hard to keep this mindset against the parents' opinion and against the outside world. They are experiencing the inner feelings of someone who is sitting in the wrong place as a potential successor. This discrepancy of inner feelings and the soft force of the parents – who only want the best for their child – is somewhat paradoxical.

The literature assumes that transferring the family business to the next generation is the preferred choice, and, therefore, keeping the business in the family is one of the main goals for the owner of family businesses (Lee, Lim, & Lim, 2003; Wiklund, Nordqvist, Hellerstedt, & Bird, 2013).

From an outsider viewpoint, it may be a good solution to sell the business if no adequate manager from the family can be found. However, deciding on selling the company if an intra-family succession is not possible is a hard step to take for the family. Mehrotra, Morck, Shim, and Wiwattanakantang (2013) found that the decision of filling a management position is led by the mindset that blood is thicker than water, and the preference is for choosing someone from the family rather than choosing talent.

As mentioned earlier in the Introduction, in research and in the popular press it is often stated that the family business often will not ‘survive’ to the next generation (Daspit et al., 2016). In Germany, this is an important economic problem as small and medium-sized businesses shape the business landscape, the ‘German *Mittelstand*’, and are often family held (Otten-Pappas, 2015).

What does ‘survive’ mean? In a quantitative psychological research, the implications for practice are to ‘point to the potential of female successors in securing the survival of the family firm’ (Schröder, Schmitt-Rodermund, & Arnaud, 2011, p. 318). What a challenge to take. If we look behind the curtain of the circumstances in family businesses, it might be a relief for the family that the business perhaps did not survive.

Miller, Le Breton-Miller, Minichilli, Corbetta, and Pittino (2014) found out in their quantitative study that a non-family CEO doing their best for the firm depends on the structure of ownership. If they are working under multiple major owners, they do their best; however, they do worse if they are working alone under a more concentrated ownership.

However, as the literature shows, succession, which mainly means intra-family succession, is an important and integral part of keeping the business in the family, and keeping the family business alive is one of the main reasons why the incumbents or parents look first to their close family relations, mostly their children, for a suitable successor (Parker, 2016). On the other hand, it is a high-risk operation, where the statistic shows that only 10% of family businesses make it from the second to the third generation (Family Firm Institute, 2016).

The reasons for this phenomenon are as diverse and complex as the family business itself. The literature on the family business has approached succession in many different ways. Because succession in family businesses is so complex, multiple perspectives have been used to understand and explain it (Miller et al., 2006).

One is that the family is not looking for a ‘willing successor’ (Parker, 2016) to take over the company. Second, the problem as an only child is that there is no choice about taking over the business – it is determined from childhood onwards, and perhaps not able to find their right vocation. In the German language, ‘*Beruf*’ (job) comes from the same root as ‘*Berufung*’, meaning a calling or vocation. This word indicates how far this decision of choosing the right work influences the well-being of the individual (Rawolle, Wallis, Badham, & Kehr, 2016).

For a long time in history, family businesses were overall male-dominated businesses. In former times, the rule of primogeniture was how the successor was determined. The eldest son took over the business that had been organised by the patriarch, who also never shared his power. (Belmonte et al., 2016; Humphreys, 2013). However, from the perspective of the successor, how they experience the situation or the process of succession is not taken into account much in the literature (Birley 2002), not to mention that the potential of daughters is still not given great attention in succession in general (Wang, 2010).

Successors are often viewed in the literature in a negative light, somehow ungrateful in not honouring what the parent or incumbent provides for them. Cater, Kidwell, and Camp (2016) state that children may take advantage of the generosity of their parents by free-riding, shirking and squandering the family’s money. Again, it is sad that it does not yet mention the position of the children in the succession process.

Tarling, Jones, and Murphy (2016) found in their qualitative study using a grounded theory approach that the influence of family business is good for the future career identification of entrepreneurship for the children. The reason is the personal exposure of the child to the family business and the ideas which are developed in this setting. They highlight the positive aspect of this exposure of growing up in the light of a business family. In the same vein, Mungai and Velamuri (2011) found that children whose parents were self-employed or owned a family business were much more likely to become self-employed than those without such a background.

Dyck, Mauws, Starke, and Mischke (2002) monitored the process of succession and called it 'passing the baton'. That the active role is on the owner/founder side, as described in Cooper et al. (2013), is often neglected in the literature. They state that the founder needs to identify a family successor (child) and prepare to pass on the business. They go one step further and describe: 'This exercise is considered an anointing but for the good of the business is hopefully based on merit' (Cooper et al., 2013, p. 460), and it is one more article which only explores the process of succession unilaterally, not taken into consideration how the children experiencing the situation are brought into connection with the 'anointing'. Cooper et al. (2013), however, admit that 'boundary violation' (p. 463) occurs when the *patron* is still treating the newly crowned successor as a child. McMullen and Warnick (2015) propose that children who experience autonomous motivation will more likely accept leadership when offered by the parent founder. Sharma and Irving (2005) explore the different mindsets of successors and identified four levels of commitment. They identified the normative commitment as one where the successor feels an obligation towards the business or the parents. However, they admit that the successor may not perceive this in a negative way and that a sense of duty or obligation

towards the family plays an important role in the career choices of family members, who are quite prevalent in family firms. Stewart (2003) call this filial obligation, in the same vein as Parker (2016), who calls it filial piety.

In contrast, Schröder and Schmitt-Rodermund (2013) found that the sense of obligation towards parents did not increase the likelihood of taking over the family company. This is to my knowledge the only study which shows almost no correlation with an obligation. The children surveyed in the study were on average 16.53 years old; at that age, it is not so obvious what is happening and this may be a reason for the contrast.

As there are different families and, therefore, different settings and succession approaches of parents, Wiklund et al. (2013) found in their research that a fundamental aspect is that parents in family businesses make long-term plans for children when they are young. It remains unclear if these children decide in a different way when they grow up; this could not be shown in this specific study as the researchers grouped young and adult children.

Chalus - Sauvannet, Deschamps, and Cisneros (2016) state in their introduction to their research that in the literature, only those cases were treated where the successor by implication was inevitable, foreseen and desired by the parents. Other themes were not looked at, as I have stated in this section, such as how the children experience this process of succession and how free the choice is and, indeed, if the process of succession begins in the early years of the child or children.

Grooming

This word is laden with emotions and bringing this together with the theme of succession in family business seems odd. However, Ward (2004) found that some founders chose their successor and actively groomed them over decades until they were ‘anointed’.

In synthesising different succession studies, McMullen and Warnick (2015) found that: 'The parent-founder grooms a second-generation family member to be not only just willing but eager to take the reins of the family firm' (p.1380). They found that an autonomously motivated successor would require less maintenance and would stick to the family business tradition. They also identified the conditions under which the successor could be easily handled and would internalise the attitudes, values and regulatory structures of a family business. They further identified the conditions under which children incorporate what is needed for leading the family business, such as attitudes, values and structure, not experiencing this as an extrinsic motivation but turning it into an autonomous motivation.

I agree with Parker (2016) who found that filial piety is a strong factor in doing finally what one is not willing to do from inner belief, bearing in mind that 'grooming' the child as a successor may jeopardise not only the family firm but also, more importantly, the parent-child relationship (McMullen & Warnick, 2015). So, once brainwashed into being a low-maintenance soldier of the family business, the ideal successor is ready to lead the business into the next decade. McMullen and Warnick (2015) also admit that the ethical implications are that emotional manipulation may occur when grooming a successor takes precedence over nurturing one's child, which reads like 'the end justifies the means'.⁶ Their approach to their studies was to use self-determination theory, which is discussed by Gagné and Deci (2005). They, however, admit problems that can result in psychological adjustment.

⁶ *'Der Zweck heiligt die Mittel'*

Solomon et al. (2011) found that ‘the adult children’ are one of other influences on the succession process, and examine in their research the role of having a natural (accidental, organic, passively groomed) successor. They found that the participants in their study felt they had good fortune in having a natural successor. Kets de Vries and Carlock (2010) found that leadership development starts in many cases – and, according to them, ‘should’ start – when the children are young and as an intrinsic part of the education process. In a family business, the existence of children who are young potential heirs will be shortly fuelled by the plan of the family to keep the business within the family (Wiklund et al., 2013).

Stavrou and Swiercz (1998) state in their article that career choices and succession planning start as early as in adolescence. However, they only interviewed university students from ages 18 to 28 and self-evidently only discussed ‘sons’ in their report. It seems that they never took into consideration the ability of a ‘daughter’ to be a successor. Wang (2010) concluded in his literature review on daughter succession in family businesses that this topic lacks an overall approach and direction.

Lambrecht (2005) found out that successors reported that they decided to work within the family business so as not to disappoint the transferor and that a ‘soft push’ (p.275) from behind had influenced the possible successors. However, as parents do not want to coerce their children unlike in earlier years, a transfer cannot be forced and coercion only serves to discourage the transfer.

Chalus - Sauvannet et al. (2016) differ on a commitment which is normative and based on duty and an imperative obligation based on need. They also admit that in some cases,

the heir is simply 'conditioned' to take over the parents' company and feels a strong obligation to do so (Birley, 2002).

As stated earlier, in the literature there are many different motivation goals noted for children joining the parents in the family business or who are ready to take over the ownership from their parents. The literature does not yet provide an answer to the question of how the children experience the earlier determination of being the successor. Despite not building on an own identity, the responsibility towards the business which lies on the shoulders of adolescent successors is enormous. Also, fearing the disappointment of the parents if the child is not successful is a strong pressure (Cichy, Lefkowitz, Davis, & Fingerman, 2013).

Humphreys (2013) confirmed the following statements from previous findings in her qualitative study: successor development can begin in childhood (Grote 2003; Iannarelli 1992), and a positive introduction to the business in childhood bodes well for a career in a family business (Iannarelli, 1992, p. 37).

Jennings, Breitzkreuz, and James (2013) called in their article for family scholars to explore certain effects of business ownership and families. One aspect also was the influence on children growing up in such an environment. They elicit many different questions which arise in this context; however, they did not focus on what influence an early determination on succession might have for the children, none of whom were inclined to go in the direction of the subtle push towards succession by the parents.

The problem as an only child is that there is no choice in taking over the business – it is determined from childhood onwards. Research shows that the firstborn and only children

have a higher likelihood of joining the family business, which is attributed to a willingness to fulfil parent expectations (Goldberg & Wooldridge, 1993).

To the best of my knowledge, all of these articles fail to take into consideration what the individual successor feels and experiences through growing up in a family business and to what extent it is a 'free choice'. In this study, I will show through my autoethnographic data and analysis that the influence of the family business through the parents is ubiquitous and that raising the children with this heritage in mind has a huge influence on the development of the children, which they cannot easily escape from.

What does it mean to be from birth the successor of the family business and what influence does this have on identity development for children, family life and the interaction of family members and finally on the business and its longevity? Succession is often planned on a long-term basis by the *patron*, parents or father; however, as Solomon et al. (2011) describe it, none of the participants described an *active* grooming process. Because the process is disguised, it makes it difficult to identify that it is being seen as a passive and normal process for parents to have a 'natural successor' (Solomon et al., 2011, p. 159). Carr and Sequeira (2007) found in their quantitative study using a symbolic interactionist lens that exposure as a child to the family business serves as an important intergenerational influence on entrepreneurial intent. They left out the personal aspect of the greater intent to start a business or take over the family business, omitting a consideration of what this does to the individual involved. Far too little attention has been paid to the individual growing up and being not only viewed as their child by the parents but at the same time viewed as their heir, carrying their name as their natural successor in the family business (Solomon et al., 2011). So far, the current literature does not do any justice to the consequences of children being exposed from an early age to the idea

of later being the suitable successor. There is a gap in our understanding, which I will fill some way through my reflective writing and the subsequent analysis.

In the next section, I will describe the different roles, or contradictory views, which are becoming more complex due to the fact of being a woman in a family business, and will add a third dimension to the already paradoxical situation in the family business. It is anticipated that the new insights provided from the successor perspective will inform practice given the application of different concepts like the total institution, the double-bind, power and symbolic interactionism, which have not yet been brought together in the context of succession in the family business to detect the other origins of the feeling of growing up and living in a *golden cage*. If the circumstances of the phenomenon of succession and the interaction of family members in the business family could be better understood, it would lead to more care being taken over what influences children who are exposed from an early age to the family business and predetermined to being the potential successor, and what they experience and feel.

2.5 Women in Family Businesses

Nevertheless, she persisted.

(Mitch McConnell)

Family business is ‘a man’s world’; women occupy only 22% (Moran, 2015) of top management positions in family businesses. The Family Business Center of Excellence and Kennesaw (2015) celebrate the 22% of women in the top leadership teams of the world’s largest family businesses as a success, compared to 12.9% in public listed companies; it is more than in companies, but still not much. As my autoethnographic

reflection shows, it is common knowledge that people expect a man to be behind a bigger industrial manufacturing company. I experienced this often when visitors to the firm asked: ‘Who is the senior of the company?’ or on the telephone: ‘May I speak to Mr. Fürst?’ – Questions formulated on the assumption that only a man could be the boss. If I said ‘I am’, they immediately said something like, ‘Oh?!’ As Smith (2014) pointed out, the heroic male entrepreneur is the blueprint against which we measure other forms of entrepreneurship. According to a recent study on women entrepreneurs in Europe in 2014, the sector which is dominated by women is human health and social work activities (70%), other service activities (60%), and 59% in education. These stereotypes are still strong in the corporate world and these are more the areas which contribute to the numbers of female leaders. Only 28% apply their entrepreneurship to manufacturing (European Commission & Industry, 2014). Women are much less likely than men to run enterprises in manufacturing (OECD, 2012). What is alarming is that in the recently published Female Entrepreneurship Index in 2015, Germany is no longer in the top ten countries for female entrepreneurs (Terjesen & Lloyd, 2015). As one of the top economies in the world, this development is evidence of incapacity.

The family business environment seemingly provides a better place for women who want to be in top management positions. As noted earlier, 22% of the average family company’s senior management team is composed of women, and 16% of their board members are women (Family Business Center of Excellence & Kennesaw, 2015). It also has been suggested that ‘female entrepreneurs benefit from linkages of family-to-business enrichment and support’ more than their male counterparts (Powell & Eddleston, 2013). This is particularly the case in family businesses. Despite the large and growing number of women working in family businesses, in the media they are still presented as rare

examples (Lerner & Malach-Pines, 2011). Even though the number of women in entrepreneurship is growing fast, it is 'still significantly lower than that of men' (Langowitz & Minniti, 2007, p. 341). In the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) from 2004, it is stated that twice as many men as women are active entrepreneurs (Acs, Arenius, Hay, & Minniti, 2004). This means there are not many women yet in leadership positions in family businesses.

Moreover, even if women work in family businesses, as Marshack (1994) discovered, even wives of owner-managers are invisible in leadership positions in family businesses. It is like the saying: 'Behind every great man there's a great woman.' This does not mean that the role of woman is unimportant in family business, but they often work at the second tier level (Dugan et al., 2011). The focus lies on the word 'behind'. As traditional roles are displayed, women are kept 'invisible' in family businesses (Colli, Fernández Pérez, & Rose, 2003; Mulholland, 2003; Poza & Messer, 2001; Rowe & Hong, 2000). Being invisible does not mean they are not contributing with their work; rather, they are not present at the front and recognised as potential entrepreneurs. Instead, they find value in empowering husbands or fathers. Cramton (1993) found that the contributions to business of women were attributed in public to the husband. As Smith (2014) sees it, entrepreneurs get help from significant others. In other words, while the man stands in the spotlight and is presented as the entrepreneur, the matriarch is content to control and manage the family and the home, the invisible woman working in the background. For Smith (2014), the matriarchy could be a good option for women in finding their role, which also means not being that of a visible entrepreneur. This position makes it even harder for young women approaching to take over the reins from the generation in charge. Hedberg and Danes (2012) found that in high productive entrepreneurial teams, which

they call in their study ‘copreneurial’ couples, the women had equal positions to their husbands. In contrast in low productive teams, the husbands were in leadership positions and the women were in lower positions, having a low influence on the decision-making in their business. The study now, ten years later, supports what Danes and Olson (2003) found with the ‘tensions’ when a couple manage a business, that in many cases the man was the ‘general manager’ and the wife was in one way or another involved. Other studies look at the reason for this factor of the invisible woman, as how the mother positions herself in the business may have consequences for how the daughter decides on her possible scope for her own career choice. Overbeke, Bilimoria, and Perelli (2013) found that a high percentage stated that their mother stayed at home, suggesting a role model reflecting traditional gender norms. This could be used oppositely: if a girl sees her mother working and engaging in the business, it would be more likely for her to work later on. Children learn from the experience of family members (Smith, 2014). Another reason for this development is stated in other literature; researchers found that women were often viewed as having the job only because of their husband and not because of their own strengths and abilities (Cole, 1997). Even if this were the case (Westman & Etzion, 1995), little research has explored the impact of such demands on children. Indeed, children are very important but are not often included in studies, perhaps also due to ethical considerations (MacEwen & Barling, 1991). I will contribute to some extent to this lack of research in describing my experience as a child in a family business.

As some literature points out, the role of women in family businesses is extremely important in transmitting the values of the family and the business to the next generation through raising the children (Moskvicheva, Bordovskaia, Dudchenko, & Borisova, 2016). From the mother, the children learn to love the invisible family member – the family

business. Women are extremely loyal; this is an important asset for the business (Salganicoff, 1990). So, it is little wonder that the most important role of women in family businesses is still that of the confidante. Strauss (2008) states that women are dominant partners outside the business and help their children to take on visible role models in family businesses; what is not clear is whether in this study Strauss is referring to girls and boys as equal, or are only boys supported in taking on the visible role? The participation of women is seen as enhancing to a business, but they do not play an active role or work in important positions (Gupta et al., 2011). It is considered to be characteristic of women to display loyalty to the business and family and to be more sensitive of the needs of others, which also contributes to the manifest basis of family business success.

Women face many role conflicts and the family business is no exception. Even when women are aware of not being 'superwoman' (Martinez Jimenez, 2009, p. 57), they are often expected to strive for this role to suit all of their expected roles perfectly. This conflictual role is often accompanied with expectations like a double-bind: I will consider this issue later in Chapter 3.3. The different hats the woman wears sometimes are a big challenge to creating an own identity, combining the tension of being an employee, a daughter, a mother, and perhaps being also 'daddy's little girl' (Dumas, 1992).

Women are not aware of the problem, thinking it is a problem of them conflicting with the needs of the family. Later, when they need to do something for their career development, they find themselves in almost unsolvable situations, caring for the children, working in and for the family business and developing their career plans. 'Don't postpone your career and personal needs, but help the business now' (Salganicoff, 1990, p. 133). If the woman already has children, the situation gets even worse. She needs to

take care of her children, devote herself to the family business and also do something for her career. Hollander and Bukowitz (1990) say that 'over-nurturing' serves as an antidote to a business woman's sense of guilt over her success, perhaps because caring for children is still the more accepted role for a woman in our society. Being a successful businesswoman and having children, people are likely to think that the children will not be taken care of sufficiently. So, the over-nurturing can be understood as a natural response.

Given the fact of these diverse roles, women believe it is of interest how gender is socially constructed (Kantor, 2002). Women face more traditional gender roles when working with their families. Because the distinction between home and work is not clear-cut in family businesses, the traditional gender-based differences are displayed more strongly. This means childcare for the woman and working in responsible jobs for the man or husband. Lyman (1988) stated that women are more the subject of traditional gender roles when working with their families. In her book, Mulholland (2003) concludes that women are not properly rewarded and are not recognised for their work and contribution, while at the same time domestic ideologies emphasise traditional roles and overshadow their role in the family business. Poza and Messer (2001) detected in their qualitative study several roles that women in family businesses play, including the jealous spouse, the advisor and the caretaker of the family values.

Women are often not the first choice to be in line for a successor position. The hurdles which a daughter needs to clear are much higher than for a son. Because the firstborn gets the business, the son as the firstborn is the first person everybody looks to. If the daughter is the firstborn, she needs to make an effort to show her father her abilities (Korman & Hubler, 1991). Ahrens et al. (2015) found in their study that males are still the preferred

choice. The reason for this also lies in traditional role allocation on the one hand. However, the woman is also not brought up in the sense of taking on a leadership position in the family business later (Vera & Dean, 2005). If a woman enters the family business, she often has no clear-cut expectations because there is no succession plan or a wider plan of who from the family will work in the business. The reasons for this still lie in the old traditional roles of women and men. A woman who has a desire to maintain a work-family balance tends to look to an entrepreneurial career (Randerson et al., 2016). It seems that women combine the needs of the family better by being self-employed. However, women who realise this wish are still underrepresented in the modern world. Working in the family business could theoretically be a solution to not viewing work and family as enemies. Powell and Eddleston (2013) found in their quantitative research that women experience benefits from family-to-business support and effective family-to-business advancement, while men do not.

If a woman does not fully renounce her power and career and if she embraces radical identification with a masculine model, the door is open to study her professional identity based on the concepts of equality and difference. (Curimbaba, 2002, p. 251)

The role of women in the family business is still under-researched. Existing studies show that women are involved in gendered and stereotypical roles (Hamilton, 2006). In the same vein, for Al-Dajani, Bika, Collins, and Swail (2014) ‘gender and gender theory remain largely ignored in family business research’ (p. 2). They further admit that a new understanding of family business interactions informed by a gendered perspective is essential (p. 4).

In conclusion, there are studies which have found that not many women work in family businesses with as much reward as men do. They are rarely found in leadership positions,

being ‘invisible’. If they are leaders, they do not get the due recognition for their work. Women still get more rewards for their appearance or emotional contribution than for their work. Moreover, the many chores they have are not easy to fulfil. The literature reflects an assumption that the difficulties women have managing family businesses are reduced to their sex. These are the same struggles which they face and reflect the same gender issues which confront women in their work and family lives (Lerner & Malach-Pines, 2011). ‘Thus the stereotype of the caring, emotional mother – a socio-emotional role – might be regarded as incompatible with the stereotype of the effective, rational, performance oriented CEO – a task-oriented role.’ (Hall, 2012, p. 145)

The literature does not reflect the day-to-day situation and the emotional pressure of women working in leadership positions in family businesses. Not being recognised for doing this responsible job diminishes the feeling of doing something important and contributing to the business, family and the economy. If women do not get reward and recognition for their work, they will not find the burden of taking over the company worthwhile.

2.6 Concluding Comments

In this chapter, I examined at the debates over the definition of a family business, which is still a concern as the differences between family business are enormous for social, cultural and historical reasons (Colli et al., 2003). There have been recent calls for more research on the relationships in family firms and the forces which trigger these firms, thereby constructing the situational perspectives. Although the family business literature has emphasised the significance of kinship, there is still a lack of research (Milton, 2008).

This aim can be achieved by ‘gaining deeper understanding of the forces that underlie these firms’ (Sharma, 2004, p. 23). Self-identity versus family identity is not a hard-line distinction, as the family business is understood as a somehow paradox and hybrid institution. Women in family businesses have different roles, and the literature peruses primarily two different streams: the traditional roles where they are mostly viewed as important for supporting the family and the entrepreneur, and the professional roles in being ‘visible’, even if this is not the main role yet in the family business (Humphreys, 2013).

While all of the above gives a good picture, but a more theoretical picture of a family business, it does not fully demonstrate what I experienced. The review of the literature of the family business has identified gaps which my research will address. Just as I experienced the family and the business as inseparable, the literature calls for more research conducted from this perspective. Aldrich and Cliff (2003, p. 574) state in their article that it would be a good effort in seeing family and business as one: ‘Connecting the unnaturally separated social institutions of family and business will pave the way for more holistic and more realistic insights’. Reflective and emotional writing can display some possible reasons. Given the uniqueness of the family business identity, adding noneconomic factors like emotions and sentiments to family business research will bring new insights, as these areas are largely understudied (Berrone et al., 2012). Other authors emphasise that the family business phenomenon is vulnerable because of its special and complex combination. ‘We need to understand the conditions, which allow the sentient system (the family) and the task system (the business) to cohabit rather than to collide’ (Birley, Ng and Godfrey, 1999, p. 608). Understanding what influences the situation in a family business for a successful family story is what I will contribute in the next chapter.

I will view other aspects which could contribute to understanding the situation of women in family businesses in a wider concept. Therefore, I will move away from the family business literature towards other fields which could bring new insights and contribute to answering my research questions. As Zahra and Sharma (2004) stated, the family business is at the intersection of different domains. Therefore, I will expand my literature review to other perspectives which are not yet viewed together in family business research.

The first section of the next chapter will view the sociological concept of total institutions as living entities, and working in one place is characteristic also of a family business (Goffman, 1961). I will use this as a vehicle to see what similarities there are in a family business or, in a wider sense, in companies and workplaces, especially in terms of power relations, control and the aspects of identity and surveillance. There will be a focus on the work of Michael Foucault as it relates to power and governmentality. Subsequently, I will merge the concept of the total institution with the system of family business within the theory of symbolic interactionism. As a symbolic interactionist, I remain somewhat reluctant to address the thorny issues of power, inequality and conflict beyond the level of the micro (Gouldner, 1970, Smith, 2006). However, this approach can be combined with other models such as Foucault's (Jenkins, 2008). Therefore, I will compare and contrast the existing literature on these themes. 'As social beings, the actions of individuals are never independent, but can only be understood by reference to the contexts in which the individual is embedded' (Hall, 2012, p. 19). Having examined the research in family business, the next chapter, the literature review II, will move into exploring cross-disciplinary connections, drawing on total institutions (Goffman, 1961), power and social control (Foucault, 1994), surveillance (Bentham, 1995; Foucault, 1977), governmentality (Foucault, 2000), double-bind theory (Bateson, 1972; Bateson, Jackson,

Haley, & Weakland, 1956), and finally, the theory of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969). All of these perspectives display some elements that I recognised in my experience of growing up in a business family with the long unrealised succession plans of my parents.

3. Literature Review Part II – Concepts of Grooming

As noted earlier, the literature review of the so-called classic family business research fields has not revealed an overall picture which matches my experience. I thus decided to extend the review to other perspectives which are not seemingly connected to each other. Taking an abductive approach to generate knowledge, I will view in this chapter what my experience reveals, and apply a wider lens for the phenomenon of the family business, especially with regard to the succession process. Long and Chrisman (2014) found in their literature review that we still know little about the basis for the commitment of successors and as there is sufficient literature on individuals and interpersonal studies, I note the minimal focus on the inter- and intrapersonal aspects of how the individual experiences the family business in other research on power relations, the double-bind, the total institution and the limited work which combines these dimensions in one study. This is the research gap I wish to fill.

Pounder (2015) found in his literature review that the main cause of the challenges of running a family business stems from the interconnection of the family and business concerns. This uniqueness and complexity of problems mean that they need to be examined from diverse angles before some explanation can be provided. Zahra and Sharma express a view which is not positive but reflects the situation aptly:

However, given the complexity of the domain of family business studies, ever changing nature of human beings, who tend to learn every day and modify their behaviors and thoughts, developing an understanding of problems family business managers face, their causes, and effects makes the task of family business scholars a daunting one. (Zahra & Sharma, 2004, p. 337)

This zone of interaction is much more daunting when not only researching it but also growing up in it. I first review the literature on the total institution and what is written in

this context about family businesses. Next, I see how power relations can affect living and working structures and how surveillance has an influence on developing the individual in a certain way. Governmentality is a theory which reveals new aspects of the character of the family business. The interaction of the two different spheres, or as mentioned earlier, paradoxical situations, can be influenced in a stronger way by double-bind messages from parents to their children. Finally, the theory of symbolic interactionism should provide an overarching view of the dynamics of the family business.

3.1 Characteristics of Total Institutions

*But I remembered one thing: it wasn't me that started acting deaf;
it was people that first started acting like
I was too dumb to hear or see or say anything at all.*
(One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Ken Kesey)

Institution

In reviewing the literature, it is clear that no one clear definition exists for the term 'institutions'. There are many different perspectives of how an institution is defined, but it can be stated that these views have points in common.

A 'No Smoking' sign is an institution with legal status and implications, 'as well as an attempt to regulate smoking behaviour' (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, p. 341). This statement reduces the possible explanation of institutions to their core elements: legal status and regulation. Institutions are always something that includes a social component. 'Institutional theory is inherently difficult to explicate because it taps taken-for-granted assumptions at the core of social action' (Zucker, 1987, p. 443).

Scott (2011) argues that institutions are sociologically interesting as abstract organisational structures that are reproduced through the everyday lives of their members: 'micro' level routines, practices and interactions form the glue of 'macro' level socio forms. Similarly, Hinton (2005) found that one needs to consider the interaction between what is called macro/situational and micro/mental model causes in producing, for example, obedience. In the same vein, Balzer (1993) and Sjöstrand (1997) state that the institution is a human mental construct for a system of shared norms that serve as a medium regulating individual interaction on a daily basis. Indeed, this influence is so strong that the family has been conceptualised as an institution exerting a considerable influence on individual family members (Hall, 2012). According to some studies, institutions are represented as 'the rule of the game' in society, which govern its operation and shape human interaction (Hodgson, 2006; North, 1990).

Ménard and Shirley (2008) maintain that institutions are made up of groups of individuals which are held together by their shared objectives. In contrast, North (1991, p. 97) asks: 'What makes it necessary to constrain human interaction with institutions?' He answers with a view from game theory: if individuals are keen on maximising profit, and have complete information; however, if information is lacking and the game is not repeated, this will not be useful anymore. Binmore (2010) and other authors who also view institutions through the lens of game theory state that institutions are the rules of the game in which the rules need to be unbreakable. That is to say; the players must not have strategies available to them that can result in a rule being violated (Goodman, 2013). For example, if the consequences of overriding the rule were so severe, nobody would ever do it. In a family business, the family aims not only to maximise their profit, but also to maintain family ties which need to be kept.

Overall, these studies suggest that institutions are overarching rules and organisational abstracts which are rebuilt on the micro-level in interactions on a daily basis. From the macro-level perspective, the institution produces obedience. As the family is also seen as an institution, it exerts an influence on individuals. Hodgson (2006, p. 2) concludes: 'Institutions may be defined as systems of established and prevalent social rules that structure social interactions.'

In the following section, I will investigate how the word 'total' changes what is already known about institutions.

Total Institution

Erving Goffman (1922-1982) is usually associated with the term 'total institution'. He was first confronted with it during a lecture held in the University of Chicago by Everett Hughes in 1952 (Burns, 1992). The term 'total institution' was first coined by the architect, Louis-Pierre Baltard (1764–1846), but Goffman gave the term a concept. Total institutions are social hybrids, on the one hand, living and residential communities and, on the other hand, formal organisations or institutions, in which I see parallels with the family business, and which frame the contribution of this work. In Goffman's work, *Asylums*, he partly points out the relation between methods of presenting research and scholarship and their political content (Becker, 2003; Cox, 1978; Eisenbach-Stangl, 1978). Goffman (1961) described the total institution in this way: A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life (p. 11-12). A basic social arrangement in modern society is that the individual tends to sleep, play and work in different places,

with different co-participants, under different authorities, and without an overall rational plan. The central feature of total institutions can be described as a breakdown of the barriers (p. 17) ordinarily separating these three spheres of life. The predominant factor in any total institution is exercising power. Its many manifestations bind its members. It is crucial to note that the entire structure, right down to the smallest ramifications, is characterised by the exercise of power. The situation of staff and inmates within this framework is, therefore, 'asymmetric' (Goffman, 1961, p 28). In such a situation, people develop different practices to protect themselves against the overpowering access of the institution. One of them is resistance in a variety of forms. Following Goffman, there are various individual ways to cope with the conditions in a total institution. Thus, a certain behaviour is followed to compensate for the stresses to which the individuals see themselves exposed.

Goffman identifies six different forms of adaptation (Goffman, 1961, p. 65):

The strategy of withdrawing from the situation, '**situational withdrawal**': In this type, the inmate loses all interest in his surroundings, and he omits entirely to participate in interaction processes, known as regression and called prison psychosis or acute depersonalisation. This adaptation process is often considered as effectively irreversible because the inmate has not put great effort into changing its status and the resources are limited too.

Uncompromising stance '**intransigent line**': Inmates threaten and provoke the institution by apparently denying any cooperation with the institute's staff. Connected to persistent intransigence, this adjustment form requires a continuous focus on the formal organisation, i.e., a strong interest in the institution. These non-adapting inmates attract

the interest of the staff, who tend to focus on breaking the will of the inmate. The uncompromising position is regarded as temporary, an initial adjustment form; usually, the inmate chooses another form of adjustment later.

‘Colonisation’: The inmate reduces the tension between the outside world and the world within the institution by choosing from the maximum satisfaction that can be reached, which is building a relatively satisfied and stable existence within the institution. So, for the inmate, there are no longer any discrepancies between the inner and outer worlds. Typical is the statement that you will never have it so good as in the institution. The inmate loses his interest in leaving the institution and he will do everything to delay his dismissal. ‘Perhaps the low probability of escape should be accepted as one of the basic indications of totality’ (Wallace, 1975, p. 6).

‘Conversion’: The inmate makes the official judgment on his person to own and try to play the role of the perfect inmate, including a disciplined, moralistic and monochrome attitude. With this adaptive behaviour, the staff may at any time count on the support and enthusiasm of the inmate (e.g., long-stay patients in psychiatric institutions who mimic the behaviour and clothing of nurses and assist in the supervision of other patients).

‘Playing it cool’: This is the strategy most commonly used. The inmate avoids any conflict, so the likelihood of physical and psychological damage is minimised. He will apply an opportunistic combination of all adjustment forms previously described. He exercises loyalty to the group of other inmates to avoid difficulties.

The main aspect in the description of the total institution in Goffman’s book is that the people are working and living at the same point. What Goffman states can be compared with family businesses: a family business consists of a family, a kind of part-residential

community, and a business, which is a part-formal organisation. This combination makes the family business special and has led to it being a field of interest for researchers.

All the above can be bridged to the experience growing up in a family business. The concept of the total institution has been used for different working sites. However, it has not yet been used in the context of the family business.

There is no literature on family businesses in connection with the concept of the total institution. Therefore, I looked at what is written about the total institution and businesses or employment-based organisations. In the next section, I will review the existing literature on this subject.

Total institution worksites

Goffman only provides some examples of what form a total institution could take, that is, hospitals, prisons and boarding schools. Most of the literature dwells on the first two: mental hospitals and prisons. Some authors bridge the concepts of the total institution to worksites. Lucas, Kang, and Li (2012) describe dignity in the workplace of a plant of Foxconn Technology Group, a Taiwanese multinational company, whose biggest customer is Apple. In 2010, 14 Foxconn employees committed suicide, and 24 made suicide attempts that failed for several reasons (Students & Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour 2010). The research examined worker dignity at Foxconn, particularly in light of the all-encompassing ‘total institution’ (Goffman, 1961). The researchers found a difference in how Asian workers experience dignity in the workplace and how it is established in the western world. Hodson (2001) defines dignity as the ability to establish a sense of self-esteem or self-respect and at the same time comprehend the respect of others. In Foxconn, the workers work and live in Foxconn City, even though they are not

forced to. Hodson sees a similarity to what Goffman describes as 'batch living'. This means the workers' lives are organised through the bureaucratic organisation and control of blocks of people. The study by Lucas et al. (2012) provides new insights into how voluntary employees can experience the indignities embedded in a total institution such as a factory like Foxconn and also were exposed to behaviours that diminished their sense of self. This means that dignity is a phenomenon that is embedded within the very structure of organisations and manifested in interaction. In the same vein, Scott (2011) notes that re-inventive institutions are institutions without walls, that people are entering this kind of total institution voluntarily. Often, they search for their identity to advance their careers, political allegiance, social networking and community building. Re-inventive institutions are subtle mechanisms of power and social control implied in total institutions. People are free to leave, yet feel unwilling or unable to because of a deep loyalty that makes such a course of action difficult or undesirable.

Coser (1974) describes in *Greedy institution: patterns of undivided commitment* how the organisation asks a lot more from the employee than normal. Lucas et al. (2012) and Sullivan (2014), in accordance with Coser (1974), warn that the greediness of institutions and workplaces has increased. Workaholics Anonymous publishes a list of tell-tale signs that someone is working too much. This list includes working more than 40 hours in a week, taking work with you to bed and talking about work more than about other things (Reiss, 2002). One cause today is the growing spread of mobile devices, which are often provided by companies, persuading the employees to be reachable all the time. In 1941 in Germany, workers were in factories for 50 hours per week. In 1943, it had risen to 70 hours per week. When Coser wrote his book in 1974, times were quite good for workers in that they worked 42.4 hours per week, and in 2011, they worked 36.5 hours on average

per week (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2011). However, what changed this and what Coser could not anticipate back in 1974, is what Sullivan (2014) terms ‘continuous connectivity’.

There are evident overlaps between ‘total’ and ‘greedy’ institutions; yet, these terms denote different social phenomena. Goffman focuses on physical arrangements separating the ‘inmate’ from the outside world, while Coser shows that greedy institutions, even though they, to some extent, use physical isolation, mainly rely on non-physical mechanisms to separate the insider from the outsider and to build up symbolic boundaries between them (Coser, 1974).

Göbel and Schmidt (1998) stated in their study that ‘hyperinclusion’ means that the individual has such strong obligations to the other part of the system and its logic of acting that he has to reduce all other inclusions. In my opinion, Göbel and Schmidt have turned the perception around from the concept of the greedy institution of Coser. A social role restricts access to other roles, which leads to the individual suffering the consequences of an incomplete separation of roles.

Tracy (2000) examined in her case study on a cruise ship the emotional labour and construction of identity in a total institution. She states that the inner emotions of employees differ from what they show to the passengers. In the total institution of a cruise ship, employee identities are constructed around virtually undeniable and inescapable emotional labour norms, implemented to increase profit. ‘On a stage where the curtain never falls, employees become characters for commerce’ (Tracy, 2000, p. 122). This metaphor, ‘where the curtain never falls’ can also be attributed to a family business. As business and family are so closely interwoven, the discussion about problems in the

business never stops at the kitchen table. Therefore, the identities of the emotions of family members are also shaped by the experiential process in the family business.

Some work has been done by Gomez et al., who see some connections within the Chinese family business. 'The family is a total institution off limits for the outsider' (Gomez, Hsiao, & Xiao, 2013, p. 61). However, they only see the family as a total institution and do not make the connection to the business.

Working and living in one place is what never stops this process of interaction of similarities of total institutions and family businesses. Social institutions and organisations are based on a complex networking of actions, a conglomeration of actors. Reay, Jaskiewicz, and Hinings (2015) stated that future research could view how the life cycle of the family affects the quest of logics and behaviour to change the rules of the game. For the scientific investigator of an organisation, this implies the determination of what actions individuals set in it. The framework for this consideration builds the premise that each member of the organisation accomplishes situation-dependent internal and external definitions and interpretations.

In summary, I have looked at what is known about institutions and how they influence our daily life. In the literature, different 'demanding' institutions are described which overwhelmingly influence people. To conclude, total institutions according to Goffman have these overarching characteristics:

- A combination of life spheres (working and living in one place)
- The absence of a private space
- Entry and exit barriers
- Information flow

Goffman's institutional model is at first hand descriptive; his negative content is only obvious through the negative consequences which an institution creates for the persons concerned. Total or other demanding institutions limit individuals' free time, harm their dignity, ignore their preferences and force adaptation to the rules of the organisation. The relationship between what Goffman wants to capture in the concept of 'total institution' and the sociological concepts of the organisation and the institution in a wider scientific context, is, at the very least, not self-evident or clear. In taking a closer look at the model of the total institution in relation to a family business, the outlines of Goffman's characterisation are quite visible in some aspects.

Little has been written about the total institution and business; no literature has been found in combination with family businesses. Some studies have found that even voluntary employees experience the total institution, which is operated through organisation and interaction. At this point, it is worth considering the three overlapping systems affecting family businesses, emphasising the significance of the interpretation processes and the making of social rules in interactions, which maintain or change the normative order, not the other way around (Hałas, 2012). This is a very central statement: individuals building an interaction with each other form the foundation of an institution. In other words, family members build the basis of the family; the family is one part of a family business, the (total) institution. However, the individuals to some extent mutually reinforce the game that the institution creates. Although an institution creates the rules of the game, there is a kind of relation to the double-bind (Bateson, 1972).

The point is how people interact with institutions and institutions interact with people and also how people find their place in an often-hostile portrayed world. Goffman aimed to

present the asylum as an exemplar of the total institution, using it as a vehicle to illustrate the main features of this model.

The next section will explore power in more detail, looking at how it is exercised not only in the total institution but different forms of our daily life. In close connection to this is surveillance and, in a special perspective, a panopticon. Governmentality is chosen, as it is a kind of power in which the power is not visible in the first place. Later in this thesis, I will connect these perspectives with my data from my autoethnographic writing. These aspects will form part of my analytical themes. As noted earlier, none of these perspectives have yet been applied in connection with the family business; I hope to elicit new insights with this procedure through the analysis of the themes presented in Chapter 6.

3.2 Different Faces of Power

*Power is the generalized capacity
to mobilize resources in the interest
of attainment of a system goal.*

(Parsons, 1956, p. 225)

In this study, I take Weber as a reference point for viewing power, while admitting other concepts of power. For Weber (1956),⁷ power means to take every chance within a relationship to enforce one's will even against resistance no matter how high the chances are. To view the definition, the other way around, it is the ability of an individual to

⁷ '**Macht** bedeutet jede Chance, innerhalb einer sozialen Beziehung den eigenen Willen auch gegen Widerstreben durchzusetzen, gleichviel worauf diese Chance beruht.' (p. 28)

achieve their goals when others are trying to prevent them from realising them. Power is a zero-sum game.

Both descriptions have to do with power, on the one hand exercising power over others, on the other hand, seeking to maintain one's position is a passive way to exercise power. These are in a narrow connection with what Goffman describes in his study of total institutions, which he calls 'under-life'. This term is further explained in this section. The term power has extended its meaning over the decade. It has many meanings and definitions, such as 'to be able to, to achieve, knowledge, spirit, force, unspoken agreement, superiority, money'. All of these attributes can serve as a tool for power if they are used like this.

Weber (1972) identified power as being either authoritative or coercive and distinguishes between charismatic and traditional authority, which is based on personal qualities: traditional authority wields power from a political manifestation. Similarly, French, Raven, and Cartwright (1959) describe power as reward power and coercive power. In the first form, one gets an incentive; in the second, someone will be punished. Expert power: Power is wielded by having knowledge or ability in a certain area. Referent power: A person has influence over another person. Legitimate power stems from internalised values. It can be stated that the five forms of how power can be exerted are actual and part of our daily lives.

In every kind of workplace environment, employees have experienced at least one of these forms of power (Wellman, Mayer, Ong, & DeRue, 2016). Legitimate power, which is the most complex form of the aforementioned typology and perhaps the most suitable for the family business, stems from internalised values, which is similar to the notion of

the legitimacy of authority (Weber, 1947). According to Weber (1956), people will not obey those who they think are not legitimate. Hence, authority exists in a group if people voluntarily obey their rulers. This means one has no problem playing by the rules if the individual sees some sense in the rules. Otherwise, he or she has to be forced. However, if he understands the rules, he or she will follow them on a voluntary basis. Translated to a family business, often the hierarchical structure does not allow for questioning of the rules, and one of the four secondary adjustments which Goffman states operate in total institutions, which I describe here in this section.

Goffman (1961) explicitly states that what he describes in the context of total institutional mechanisms in attenuated form can also be found in other institutions (Zwengel, 2012). So, there is a connection to the family business as a total institution because it employs such attenuated mechanisms. Power evidently plays a role in family businesses. As stated by Denzin (1978a), power, control, coercion and deception are central commodities that are negotiated in those arenas that make up the organisation. Family members stand in diverse degrees of control over one another. To what extent, is one important element which I seek to understand and describe in the empirical chapter of this study. While Foucault (1994) argued that institutions exemplified power relations, Goffman investigated institutions for specific power relations. He stated that if an individual cooperatively contributed required activities to an organisation with the support of institutionalised standards of welfare, perhaps through incentives and joint values, and with the promptings of designated penalties, he would be transformed into a co-operator: he becomes the 'normal', 'programmed' or 'built-in member' (Goffman, 1961). This description is similar to that of Bentham (1995) on his description of his panopticon. In his case, the prisoner feels that he is observed so that he will monitor himself. In the same

vein, Goffman (1961) speaks of conditions in which a person makes a primary adjustment to the organisation and disregards the point where it would be just as reasonable to speak of the organisation making a primary adjustment to them. For Foucault, knowledge is a main component of power:

Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense, at least, 'becomes true'. Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, 'there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations. (Foucault, 1977, p. 27)

The parents in a family business have an edge in knowledge. They often have a clear plan for the child's future. Perhaps, as stated earlier in Chapter 2, section 2.4, it is more of a goal for the parents to see in the child a potential successor, a career path which is not questionable on the surface, a certain kind of subtle power exerted on the child.

Goffman talks about the systematised counterstrategies of victims of power. A 'getting around the organisation's assumptions as to what he should do and get and hence what he should be' becomes possible through acting in 'secondary adjustments' (Goffman, 1961, p. 189). Here, he identifies three forms:

1. **'Conformity'** is present when the execution of an expected activity is done without identification with the task and mostly in a family with younger children; they often do not understand what the parents foresee for them. Often, they are told: 'look, we only want the best for you!' So, the child is doing what is expected of it but distances itself from it. In a family business, this influence will not stop; it is like a total institution. The child will work in the business, and the situation

persists, causing perhaps problems with identity development or a double-bind situation.

2. **‘Ritual subordination’** manifests itself in acts that serve solely to express distance from the institution and the implied self-image, resulting in a kind of cry for help. However, the parents often think they did not raise the child in the correct way. What should we do with it? The child thinks that if it develops its own ideas that are not right, the child is not right at all. It loses confidence, or cannot build it up from the start.
3. **‘Removal activities’** are the activities by which the person withdraws from inside the institution, for example, an escape into a fantasy world. This might be one of the extremes which are visible; the other reaction will only be seen by the close family. However, if a child tries to run away from home, the idyllic world will be broken. For family business families, it would be a hard sign as outwardly the family is ideal. It could be understandable, as the employees and customers or banks have close contact with the family and if they raise a child who is not ‘good’, everybody will finger point, and it could have consequences for the business.

Goffman (1961) then speaks of the ‘underlife’ (p. 199). This can be seen as the building up of counter-power, similar to the concept of power described by Arendt (1970, p. 45). What she meant by power was ‘to associate with others and to work in conjunction with them’ (1970, p. 45). It would be interesting to consider whether the systematic strategies of power and subjugation are practised in facilities that are not expected to be total institutions (Zwengel, 2003). This is a gap I will contribute to later, in analysing my data;

I will look what different faces of power are shown in situations in family business. Coercion, as one form of power, could be used from the family or the business for non-compliant behaviour. Hence, the relationship of power is more complex and is not clearly displayed (Pieper, 2010). Growing up in such a structure and with interactions like those in family businesses, power relations are often cross-linked and perfected over the years. I think all of the mentioned different kinds of power are not so clear cut in day-to-day life as in theory. The various forms are intermingled, as are the reactions of the victims and the roles of the actors and the victims. Their places might also change as Goffman describes it using the 'underlife'.

Central to the total institution is power, understood as a force embedded in hierarchical relations, authoritarian roles and coercive practices (Scott, 2011). This focus lies in daily life, even if it is not daily life in the common sense, where the human being learns to deal with situations, including exclusion and disadvantages. For those who are affected, the daily life of living in a total institution is a very rigid form of living. A discussion on social roles and human forms of interactionism if we see the extreme forms of power and powerlessness is much easier.

Obtaining the consent of subjects to be governed in the absence of coercion, or without obvious coercion, could be called panopticon or governmentality. I think that coercion can be hidden behind several forms of acting, like the force which is sweetly delivered through emotions, emotions in family and between individuals. Jenkins (2008) asks what leads people to follow rules, or why they 'put up with' regimes and sanctions. The answer lies in the interactional context of institutional life, with its inmates' cultures (Goffman, 1961; Scott, 2011). They are different as every institution differs from the other and in the goals they follow. Foucault's claim that disciplinary power is pervasive and

impersonal encourages us to move away from conspiratorial theories of coercion towards a subtle process of legitimation, whereby ideas and practices come to be taken for granted as normal, natural and inevitable.

All the above should be connected to symbolic interactionism, as this perspective starts with an active and positive approach and could serve as the understanding of a shared meaning of a situation, a good basis for daily life in family business. For symbolic interactionism, in the light of pragmatism, the main points are, first, how much shared understanding can be achieved and, second, what kinds of assigned patterns of behaviour are feasible from these mutual understandings (Pink & Morgan, 2013).

Thus, the discourses that circulate in an institution may be attributed to an original, inspirational leader, but are powerful largely because of their legitimation by the social body, in terms used in symbolic interactionism, a shared understanding, which is then accepted as an authority, as Weber (1972) notes, and that power is exercised over passive family members.

Cohen (1985) defines social control as follows:

the organized way by which society responds to behaviour and to people which it regards as deviant, problematic, worrying, threatening troublesome or undesirable in some way or another. (p.1)

This response appears in many forms: punishment, deterrence and treatment. Social control is an important aspect in organisations, especially in total institutions in the view of Goffman, as the institutions follow a rule and are operated with the means which are foreseen for this specific organisation.

This can be seen in the persistent battle between authorities and those whom they watch: it is unstable, localised and multifocal (Foucault 1977). In other words, power is a process,

not a possession. It is unavoidable, present in every relationship and gesture, but not inherently evil (Tracy 2000). We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: It 'excludes', it 'represses', it 'censors', it abstracts', it 'masks', it 'conceals'. In fact, power produces: it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth (Foucault, 1977, p. 194). Power as a process of control is continually constructed through interactions. French et al. (1959) see multiple variables as the basis of power. King (2013) states that one aspect Foucault left out in his work is the role gender plays in the game of power.

If we do not feel that power and control are in play, the manipulation of the individual is silent. It is more or less like the panopticon, which I will examine below, where the idea is that surveillance will lead people to improve themselves in the way the institution expects.

Kondo (1990) describes control in this way:

Caught in the webs of relationships, in which loving concern was not separable from power, where relationships define one and enable one to define others. (p.26)

The panopticon⁸ is a central element in Foucault's analysis of control and power. The term was originally coined by the British philosopher, Jeremy Bentham. The roots of Bentham's idea for the panopticon are based on the utilitarian 'utility principle', in which actions should be intended either to produce wellbeing or to reduce harm (Thomas, 2004, p. 72). In his concept of a panopticon institution from 1791, one watchman is able to observe all inmates. It is the architectural implementation of total monitoring, with

⁸ Greek. '*pan*', everything, and '*optikon*', sight or seeing

simultaneous ignorance about whether they, on the one hand, are being monitored immediately and the certainty, on the other hand, that such monitoring could take place at any moment. Assuming that the omnipotent watchman was always watching them, Bentham (1972, p.3) expected that this ‘new mode of obtaining power of mind over mind, in a quantity hitherto without example’ would ensure that the prisoners would modify their behaviour and work hard to avoid punishment. The idea of constant, domineering surveillance is certainly disturbing, but the panopticon and its central inspection principle have, as Bentham argued, multifarious benefits. Simply put, the idea of being constantly observed is enough to control their behaviour (Faculty of Laws, 1999-2017).

Although the notion of the panopticon as a form of disciplinary power can be attributed to Foucault (1977), the concept of a literal panopticon belongs to Bentham (1995). The principle is described by Foucault, and is worth quoting at length:

On the periphery, a circular building; in the middle a tower, which is punctuated by large windows, which open to the inside of the ring; the ring building is divided into cells, each of which extends through the entire depth of the building; they each have two windows, one inside, which is directed to the window of the tower, and an outwardly so that the cell is permeated on either side by light. Suffice it, therefore, to set up a supervisor in the tower and accommodate in each cell, a maniac, a convict, a sick person, a worker or a student. Thanks to the backlight the small prison silhouettes are produced exactly in the cells of the ring and can be observed from the tower. Each cage is a small theater in which each actor is alone, perfectly individualized and permanently visible. The panoptic system creates room units that make it possible, to see without ceasing and to recognize at the same time. (Foucault, 1977, p. 279)

Foucault saw Bentham’s panopticon as a symbol of how disciplinary power operates in modern society to control deviant behaviour. Essentially, the panopticon’s power stems from the idea that individuals will self-monitor when they feel they are under observation (whether they are or not) (McGuire, 2006).

Foucault (1977) investigates the relationship between discipline and the power-knowledge of people. The knowledge comes from observing the individuals, which results in a kind of self-monitoring and self-regulation. For Foucault, knowledge about the behaviour of the individual while he is observed reinforces power in a circular process. With this practice, suited behaviour is accomplished, not through total surveillance, but through the acceptance of the reality which the individual experienced.

In the panopticon, 'prisoners would be observed in their cells from a central tower, by guards who would themselves be invisible.' (Scott, 2011 p.46) The mind was controlled via the body. This creates a disciplinary power, as Foucault sees it. If the body is hurt, the mind is also hurt because there is nobody without a mind. It is not the question of watchtowers or prisons per se, it is more the concept of the panopticon. Currently, surveillance has many faces, due to the electronic systems surrounding us. When it comes to focused attention paid to people within surveillance-specific situations, behaviours are much easier to monitor than beliefs and premeditated actions. This situation could lead to a workplace where the workers are not able to separate themselves from the work they are doing. Given the circumstance of being reachable all the time puts a certain pressure on the employees. However, as we saw earlier, not all forms of power need surveillance to exercise them. The expert, referent and legitimate form of power is exercised without any direct surveillance. This sort of power has to assume an independent existence, and functions without physical observation. It is, therefore, a higher form of executed power. Obedience is also important beyond parent-child relationships and becomes significant when family businesses move beyond the first generation. The successor is expected to replicate and adapt almost the same models for the future (Björnberg & Nicholson, 2007). It is certainly important to move beyond the parent-child relationship which might need

obedience to a relationship based on equality. In this way, the power can also be transferred between generations.

There are many different forms of power, and Ling, Baldrige, and Craig (2012) found that if the family is close, family life is more harmonious and less characterised by egoistic decision-making by family members. However, this cohesion can be underlined by many other feelings. Often with ambivalent emotions, the dependence is so huge that nothing is said.

The feeling of being watched over when involved in family business can result from the shared identities (Zellweger, 2014). This statement from Zellweger could also be connected to symbolic interactionism as shared meanings can replace shared identities.

Governmentality is a widely understood term, which was developed by Foucault. It paraphrases the modern forms of leadership which were detected in the 18th century, which evolved together with the development of modern subjectivity and therefore shows tendencies towards individualism and totalisation (Bröckling, Krasmann, & Lemke, 2011).

La Mothe Le Vayer (1654 as cited in Foucault 1994) stated that there were three fundamental types of government:

The art of self-government, which is connected to morality, the art of properly governing a family, which belongs to economy, and the science of ruling the state, which concerns politics. (p. 206)

The family sets a good example in the way that they provide a ‘we-feeling’, and the force is not so obvious. As Foucault states in this lecture on governmentality, and ‘a good ruler must have patience, wisdom, and diligence.’ It is not the obvious force that will lead to a good solution but the knowing of how to combine things or objects in a correct way (La

Perrière, 1567 as cited in Foucault 1994, p. 205). Also, La Perrière cites the example of the head of the family who rises first in the morning and goes to bed last, who concerns himself with everything in the household because he considers himself as being in its service. This could be also extended to the family business; here, it is not only the household, but also the business which needs to be taken care of.

In doing so over a long time, disculturation can set in (Goffman, 1961, p. 13). By disculturation, Goffman meant that if an inmate stays for a long time within an institution, he/she is not able to follow the structure of daily life outside these institutional settings. This means the inmates get somewhat dependent on the institution because even the easiest chores are not possible to fulfil. Goffman considered surveillance and punishment as instruments for controlling a large number of people. For Foucault, surveillance was an important aspect of governing people in the 19th century. In a modern society regulated by governmentality, people are disciplined and follow the rules and are controlled by tactics. This mode of leadership becomes unnecessary if you can get people to lead or to manage themselves. Here are the parallels with the panopticon. The intention here was also that because of permanent surveillance, the prisoner regulate themselves and act as perceived. This is the basic concept of governmentality and appears on the management style of companies or in family businesses. This means that the employees, for example, find themselves in a nice working environment with nice co-workers and have close contact with the management, which is nothing rare in family businesses. Therefore, a close circle is created around these employees. This circle is invisible, but within it they understand well what is meant, but not to mention it too clearly. They do not recognise that, on the other hand, the price for this seeming individuality is paid by totalisation. In the art of leadership, domestic services and the art of leading a family are taken to other

forms of leadership. The lifestyle of the individual will be monitored and controlled, but with the caring attention of a father of a family (Foucault, 1994). The interplay of promotion and demand allows one to think of possibilities of personal fulfilment, but accompanied by expectations, for example, staying longer in the office to be reachable all the time. Since the choice of deciding on options for action is based on the free will of the individual – at least apparently – the consequences of their actions are also attributed to the person (Bröckling et al, 2011).

The instruments with which subjects are led are moreover intrinsic, but without being recognised. We live in a disciplined society that has three different forms of control: observation, normalisation and examination.

In contrast to losing almost every convenience in the total institution, which Goffman describes, there is much convenience in modern business. This is combined with implicit performance and expectations on performance for the employees and is also used for optimising the self. This phenomenon is orientated towards economic principles and can be compared with the governmentality Foucault describes. As total institutions are seeking to destroy the identity of the person, the governmentality is interested in optimising the self and the management of the self in the larger sense of business identity. The concepts of total institution and governmentality are not mutually exclusive. Total inclusion, which was achieved for Goffman through the modes of surveillance and punishment, can happen through the mode of governmentality. Governmentality is perfectly qualified for total inclusion because it is an overarching leadership style which can capture the person as a whole.

In this section, I have looked at the different faces of power and obedience. The panopticon and governmentality try to get people to manage themselves because of permanent surveillance, which is exercised directly in the form of the panopticon. However, in more modern forms, surveillance is in a subtle way a kind of consent in modern businesses and through our modern media.

Through this review, some research gaps were detected. These are, amongst others, the following: Scott (2011) stated that Goffman fails to consider how an inmate's voluntary admission and active pursuit of reinvention (especially beyond the psychiatric context) might engender different power relations to those found in the traditional, coercive asylum. In my opinion, the perspective of governmentality of Foucault could be an opportunity to fill the gap and be easily connected to family businesses. Further, Foucault suggested that we need to develop an 'analytics' as opposed to a 'theory' of power relations, or at least a 'theory as a toolkit' (Foucault, 1980, p. 145). In other words, instead of attempting to say what power is, we must attempt to show how it operates in concrete frameworks, in the sense of it being used by individuals. Deacon (2002) asked: 'By what means is power exercised?' Moreover, 'what happens when individuals exert (as they say) power over others?' (Foucault, 1994, p. 217). This is a very encouraging clue towards how power is operated in family businesses and families on a day-to-day basis. Foucaultian ideas of disciplinary power combine fruitfully with the symbolic interactionist theory of negotiated order and dramaturgical identity performance to elucidate what Lukes (2005) calls the third dimensions of power: Symbolic interactionist approaches remain somewhat reluctant to address the thorny issues of power, inequality and conflict beyond the level of the micro (Gouldner 1979; Smith 2006), and so can usefully be combined with other models, such as Foucault's (Jenkins 2008).

Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted distribution of modes.

All of the different forms of power can aid and be related to answering my research question of what is the situation in a family business and what can be elicited through an autoethnographic research method. These different sorts of power will be used as themes in Chapter 6. In the next section, I will look at what the theory of double-bind can contribute.

3.3 Double-Bind: ‘A No-Win Situation.’

*You're inches away from death every time you go on a mission.
How much older can you be at your age?*

(Catch-22, Joseph Heller)

In the journal, *Behavioural Science*, Bateson and his colleagues stated in 1956 that the origins of schizophrenia were not only genetic but could also be caused by family interaction, effectively ‘crazy-making’ (Litz, 2012, p. 117) relational entities. The theory was developed from a group around the anthropologist and researcher of communication, Gregory Bateson. The theory of double-bind describes how an individual is paralysed by the double-bind of paradoxical messages or signals and their effect. The signals can affect the content of the spoken word, the intonation, the gestures and actions. The character of coercion and the illusion of alternatives create in a double-bind a lose/lose situation for the victim or individual. A classic example of a double-bind relates to a situation in which the affected person (victim) is in a dependent position, in which adjustment is required and legitimate interests and basic needs are addressed for dominant caregivers but are in

the negative sense not appropriately satisfied, and as the case may be answered with pseudo-alternatives and moreover, leaving the situation is not possible. For Bateson et al. (1956), six elements are needed to define a situation of a double-bind, which are the following:

1. Two or more people are involved in a relationship.
2. They are involved in a repeated experience.
3. There is a primary negative injunction, which can have two forms (a) 'do not do this, or I will punish you,' or (b) 'If you are not doing this or this then I will punish you' (Bateson et al., 1956, p. 253). Here, a context of learning will be set which is more strongly based on avoiding punishment than aspiring to reward. This punishment can be the withdrawal of affection or the expression of anger or hate, which then creates the feeling of being left alone.
4. A secondary injunction conflicting with the first at an abstract level and which is enforced like the first with punishment. This secondary injunction is often mediated in a non-verbal way.
5. This tells the so-called victim of the two messages that it is forbidden to comment on this contradiction or flee.
6. The final condition expands on the preceding four and means that once the larger pattern connected with these characteristics is internalised by the victim as 'normal,' they will ascertain the world in 'double-binding patterns'. They can never challenge and exit from it (Litz, 2012). This whole series of single perceptions is not necessary any more if the victim has learned to recognise his/her universe in the template of the double-bind. All of these are the parts of a perfect

torture. With every intent to be itself, the child faces a more powerful other, which says it is different. The double-bind is a 'contradictory double imperative'(Grote, 2003, p. 118).

A person caught in a double-bind runs the risk of being punished for proper perception, and, moreover, to be described as malicious or insane, if she should dare to assert that there is a substantial difference between her actual perceptions and what she should perceive.⁹ (Watzlawick et al., 1969, p. 195/196)

It is undoubtedly, as in other aspects, a question of perspective what can be labelled as a paradox and what cannot. Perhaps in being born into 'unclear' social structures, one will search frantically search for answers and will head autonomously into obviously paradoxical situations.

In other words, if someone does not know which messages he is facing, he will protect himself, which is described as catatonics. The point is there is no alternative to choose from and to be clear about what people want from him. This is also a form of loss of identity or an impossibility of developing one. What the double-bind makes so dangerous is the fact that the pressure to adapt oneself is so great, it means to integrate oneself in a determined scheme. Being exposed to such a situation, one must go through a narrow gap of deviation tolerance and cannot afford to keep up with the original identity. The fear of punishment, torture and withdrawal of affection creates the readiness to give up the existing identity. This process of giving up one's own identity on a regular basis prevents

⁹ Eine in einer Doppelbindung gefangene Person läuft also Gefahr, für richtige Wahrnehmungen bestraft und darüber hinaus als böswillig oder verrückt bezeichnet zu werden, wenn sie es wagen sollte zu behaupten, dass zwischen ihren tatsächlichen Wahrnehmungen und dem, was sie wahrnehmen sollte, ein wesentlicher Unterschied besteht. (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1969, p. 195/196)

the development of an own personality or causes the deconstruction of an already existing one.

In some ways, the double-bind is also known to family businesses, especially when children are trying to develop a sense of their future occupation in a sense of the succession process. Potential successors are caught up in an entrepreneurial double-bind. They receive conflicting gestures from the father or owner-manager. They receive clear verbal encouragement to join the family business. On the other hand, what is experienced over the whole life span is a drastically opposite parental behaviour which signals that successful people do not need to join an organisation; they go out and establish a business on their own (Litz, 2012). The potential heir is caught up in a double-bind insofar as he faces a 'no-win' situation. It is as if the parents are saying, 'please I want you to take over the family business'. He admits this over and over again, and almost within this notion, he says, 'I will never give up working here'. As a woman in a working or leading position in family business, a double-bind message is for example: 'Give everything up for the business!' versus 'When do you plan to have children?' (Salganicoff, 1990).

There is not much in the literature which connects the double-bind with family businesses. Salganicoff (1990) describes the double-bind situations which women, especially, face with the concern of the sense of the self, bringing together their private life with the distress caused by the dedication to the business, doubts about their self-worth and their own identity. She gives one example: 'devote yourself to the business, however give birth to children!' (Cole, 1997, p. 367) She found out that many women manage to get by with the childcare issue. Grote (2003) sees the double-bind at the heart of family business succession planning and focuses on the conflict of the parent-child and employee-employer, which are often one and the same person. As Litz (2012) describes it in his

study, this theory in family businesses is relevant because of the two realms of the family and the business. Its double-faceted nature captures the social and the economic sphere resulting in double-bind messages crossing the generations. The reason for this could be the different roles an owner-manager has to fulfil, being the head of the family and, at the same time, leading the company. From this fact, contradictory messages are sent to the children. For them, it is not clear who is speaking to them. If the parents are transferring their intention to have an intense influence on the child in order to get the behaviour they want. The theory of the double-bind could be of interest in getting on with a lot of conflicting thoughts and impressions which a child or individual are exposed to in the family business environment. This goes quite well with the theory of the paradox of the family business, as often conflicting interests must be handled.

The feelings one experiences when facing a double-bind message are internal confusion and anger, hopelessness and helplessness, and often no idea of how to answer and act (Hilburt-Davis & Senturia, 1995).

The main difference between a paradoxical and contradictory action rule is that you can, in the case of the former, alternatively consciously perceive and choose, with the choice of an option, but in the latter, the other side loses and thus accepts the loss. A paradox is something which is not solvable, but can be discussed, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2.3, and it could be the basis of a rich development in dealing with these clearly unsolvable facts. On the other hand, a double-bind is something which is not fairly expressed. It comes to the 'victim' in some surprising situations, and the problem is pointed back to the person. For the 'victim', the problem only exists because of the existence and the somewhat bad behaviour of the child. In a double bind, the basis for further innovation and progress in the family business will never come about. These are

the expressions of somewhat helpless parents, who are unsure where their ways are leading and project this problem they have with themselves onto the children. This is not a good environment for the proper development of the family and the business. Moreover, it can create a destructive path, where nobody will win.

Potential successors are trapped in the entrepreneurial double bind. Uncertain signals from the owner-manager and/or the parents have given them conflicting objectives (Rogal, 1989). As already stated, these conflicting goals can be multifaceted. There could also be a link to a paradox, which naturally can also not be solved. As von Schlippe (2011) puts it, they are not solvable because they are not normal conflicts. Alternatively, they are a combination of logic and paradox (Blenkinsopp, 2007).

The result can be extremely unpleasant, but it remains a logical choice. The paradoxical action provision makes the choice (because of the impossibility of performance); for example, the metaphor ‘to have your cake and eat it, too’¹⁰ is impossible in itself.

Due to the double-faced system, the family business is at least an environment where children can develop their own identity, as there are always interests which need to be considered, as we saw earlier in Chapter 2, section 2.4. Litz (2012, p. 128) asks the question of how the next generation will handle parentally-issued double-binds and how they will respond to the conflicting requirements. How easily can a business child ‘let go’ of one role and then take it up again? Future research could clarify the practical relevance of the resolution strategy.

¹⁰ English version of the German saying: „Wasch mir den Pelz, aber mach` mich nicht naß!“, direct translation: „Wash my fur, but don’t get me wet!“

In the following section, I will explore how the theory of symbolic interactionism can be a basis for overcoming the contradiction in family businesses in the interaction of family members. I will provide a small framework which will sum up what is of importance to achieve a functional and peacefully working and living business family.

3.4 Symbolic Interactionism as a Perspective on Emotion

In this section, I look at the theory of symbolic interactionism which has notably influenced the debate of emotions in sociology (Charon, 2009) and as an action theory on the micro level the interaction and meaning making of individual family members can be viewed.

Habbershon, Williams, and MacMillan (2003) stated that the interaction of individuals who constitute the family and the business is what make family business heterogeneous, dynamic and rich in resources and potential. Viewed in more depth, the family's and, therefore, the individual family members' symbolic interaction is prominent in family science theory and can bring new insights to the family in family business. James et al. (2012) consider in their literature review that the lens of symbolic interactionism can extend resource based view oriented research. Because symbolic interactionism is more reflexive and the interest in meaning, symbolism and social construction may find that the same collection of distinct family resource, may be constrictive in a different setting. This could lead to the conclusion that familiness *per se* is not a comparative advantage for family businesses, as stated (Rutherford, Kuratko, & Holt, 2008; Tokarczyk et al., 2007). As symbolic interactionism views the situation in a detailed manner, greater differences than expected between family businesses could be elicited. Brundin and

Härtel (2014) see a great gap in understanding emotions in family business and Shepherd (2016) stated in his recent article that there are research opportunities to investigate the micro-level emotions of individuals in family business. Therefore, I found it important for this study to include the view of symbolic interactionism on emotions.

In the following section I will, in short, review the historical background of symbolic interactionism and the main points on why this theory is suitable for explaining and contributing towards a better understanding of the situation in family businesses.

George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) is credited with laying the foundations for the approach to sociology called symbolic interactionism (Giddens & Sutton, 2013). Mead himself called this theory ‘social behaviourism’ (Mead, 1934, p. 44). In seeking to present the main outcome of Mead’s work in one sentence, one would say that personality and social interaction are shaped by symbols, which are gained through the process of socialisation and are confirmed or changed by the acting individuals involved (Abels, 2010). Although Mead said little about emotions it can be concluded that Mead views the human being adjusting his or her behaviour toward the goal that things have for them in the situation (Turner, 2006). Blumer (1969) developed the term ‘symbolic interactionism’. The word ‘symbolic’ refers to the linguistic basis of human co-existence; ‘interactionism’ interprets the humans act as not only being projected towards their opponent but is also in a mutual relation with each other.

Mead (1934) and Blumer’s (1969) focus on conscious, active, and responsive gestures were a good starting point to include emotions in their theory, however the authors fail to declare the importance of feelings. The basis for the perspective on viewing the self as an active emotional manager stems from Hochschild (1979). As Holland (2007) notes,

‘There are “feeling rules” which guide our emotion work of management’ (p. 197). Shott (1979) makes use, in her symbolic interactionist research like Hochschild (1979) and in line with Mead (1934), of the concept of role-taking. Shott was one of the first, with Goffman (1959), to address emotions such as anger and guilt at the core of their inquiry. Moreover, Schott makes use of the concept of role taking which is the view most symbolic interactionist adopted today.

Symbolic interactionism is interested in analysing the trajectory of acting which emerges when two or more individuals modulate their lines of action in their reflexivity with the goal of achieving combined actions (Denzin, 2004). Blumer describes his theory of symbolic interactionism mainly with these three premises:

The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them.

The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.

The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters. (Blumer, 1969, p. 2)

In Figure 1, the main steps of the symbolic interaction process are displayed based on these three premises.

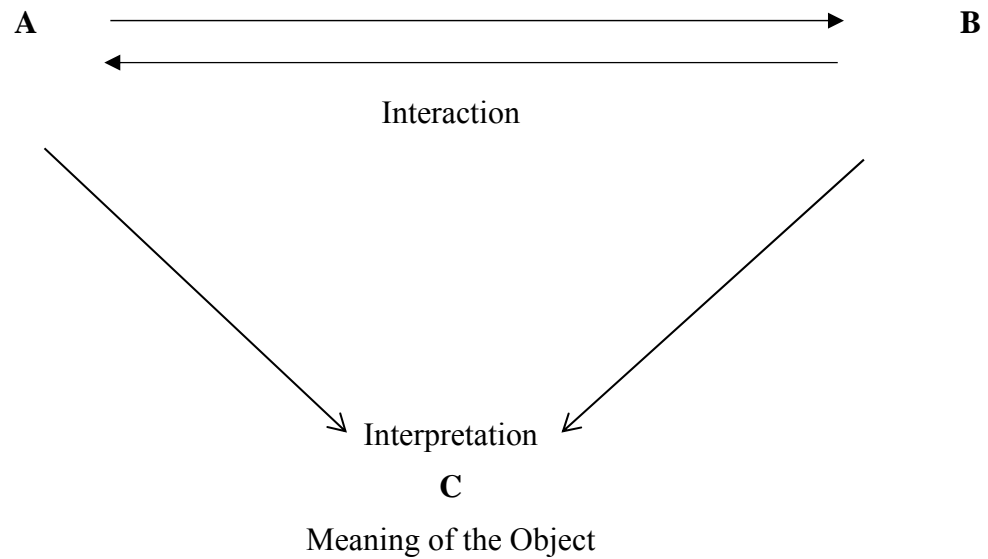


Figure 1 Process of Symbolic Snteractionism
(Source: The Author)

Humans are active in situations and manage them, action is based on our definition of the situation and directed toward the goals and objects, including social objects like emotions (C) we define as important. The importance of objects is developed from social interaction, interaction with self and interpretation of the situation we are in. The object itself has no fixed meaning, the object is anything that can be indicated or referred to (Blumer, 1969). Emotions are treated as social objects in symbolic interactionism and are part of our definition or interpretation of the situation. The use of meaning through the actor is created through a process of interpretation (Münch, 2003) (A and B) and the meaning of objects. We are in control through the ongoing definition of the situation and the organisation of our acting toward our goals (Charon, 2009) and at the same time, as Kippax, Crawford, Benton, & Gault (1988) view it, ‘meaning and practices are reproduced and transformed, emotions are constructed in the individual refections of the social’ (p.32).

As the meaning does not lie in the object itself; the actor cannot simply decide how he will recognise an object; the reactions of others confirm or refute the assignment of meaning.

The person who organises his response according to what the gestures mean to him or the person who presents the gestures advances them as indications or signs of what he is planning to do as well as of what he wants the respondent to do or understand (Blumer, 1969). For the school of symbolic interactionism, there is no fixed world; the world is constructed through people. The definition of importance is the result of the mutually agreed rules of conduct of the actors. Meaning is not a fixed quantity and varies from one situation to another depending on the definition process. Human society and group life consist of interactions of individuals. Blumer (1969) argues that 'causal' and 'structural' do not describe human behaviour in any substantial way. Symbolic interactionism is somewhat embedded in pragmatism and is concerned with meaning (Dennis, Philburn, & Smith, 2013). Mead selected a process approach to explain the relationship between individual and society, in which the individual is the active creator of his world. The active subject creates his world through communication with others (Abels, 2010) not considering the action after the success, but as a process that really lets us look at the perspective of the actors. Then, it is striking how the action depends on the concrete situation. The path is not clear or a straight line which moves to a fixed target. Meanings which the actors attribute mutually to the actor's action turn out within this perspective to be the structuring (interpreting) services of members. This type of interaction is important in seeing the family business through this lens. We are engaged in a steady stream of action influenced by decisions we make along the way, decisions which are built on social interaction, interaction with oneself and defining the situation.

As stated by Turner (2006), symbolic interactionist theories see the self and the identity as the main dynamics behind emotions. This theory views the human being as active in decision making. The most general level of symbolic interactionism is guided by the following generalisations:

1. The more salient an identity is in a situation; the more likely individuals are to emit gestures and behaviors that conform to standards established by this identity.
2. The more an identity is verified by the responses of others, the more likely a person is to experience positive emotions, the more often this identity is verified, the higher it is placed in the prominence or salience hierarchy.
3. The less an identity is verified by the responses of others, the more likely a person is to experience negative emotions. The more intense these negative emotions are, the more this person will attempt to bring into congruence behavior marking an identity, perceptions of others' responses, and cultural standards of evaluation.
4. The more an individual experiences negative emotional arousal from the failure to verify an identity, the greater the likelihood that this person will adopt defensive strategies; the more intense the negative emotions a person experiences, the more likely the person is to employ repression and external attributions as defensive strategies.
5. The more that individuals have employed repression as a defensive strategy in the past, the more likely that the negative emotions aroused and repressed will (a) increase in intensity, (b) transmute into new kinds of negative emotions like anger, and (c) erupt in sudden spikes of negative emotions that disrupt and breach interactions.
6. The more that individuals have been able to verify self and identities in a situation, the more likely that identities, behavioral outputs, perceptual inputs, normative expectations, and sentiments about self, other, roles, and the situation will converge and reveal congruity. (Turner, 2006, p. 32)

For Charon (2009) it is crucial to understand that taking the role of the other has a substantial emotional element. In taking the perspective of the other to recognise how one approaches the situation, we are also able to take on the emotions of the other, the way

others feel about situations. We adopt their feelings, we are able to feel their sorrow, anger, love. We are also able to ignore or manipulate what we feel. We might also understand their feelings and advance our own feelings about them: compassion, depression, fascination, jealousy. It is somewhat through taking the role of the other that we come to feel and act in situations. These descriptions are in line with Denzin's (2009) core view of emotions which can only be understood when they are contemplated as self-emotions. In taking the perspective of the other it is possible to describe and understand their complexity.

Perspectives influence what we see and what we believe in, and they influence what we do. Individuals have many perspectives and they are socially created. With a basket full of perspectives, we try to seek to understand objects, which is not possible with only one perspective alone (Charon, 2009). As individuals, we are thinking beings; we interact not only with others but also with ourselves. 'As such instances suggest, self-interaction exists fundamentally as a process of making indications to oneself' (Blumer, 1969, p. 13). This general capacity, therefore, permits the human actor to take the role of the other – in being able imaginatively to grasp how another action is stimulated. One can, therefore, monitor and adapt one's conduct in the light of others' perceived perceptions and judgements (Atkinson & Housley, 2003, p.7). Manning (2000) stated that in the integration of an analysis of the interaction order and a sophisticated theory of the self, a critical theoretical development is offered that promises to provide a way of analysing not only the enabling conventions of the interaction order but also the people who use them. We do not perceive our situations directly; we define the situation we are in. The environment might exist but our definition of it is important.

The important part and distinction from other sociological theories is the fact that in symbolic interactionism, social interaction, thinking and defining the situation take place in the moment. Our past influences our actions primarily because we think about it and apply it to define our current situation. 'Objects (in the sense of their meaning) must be seen as social creations – as being formed in and arising out of the process of definition and interpretation as this process takes place in the interaction of people' (Blumer, 1969, pp.11-12). The meaning of an object emerges out of 'using' it in its context; every situation creates a new meaning within the same object. The people involved in communication in symbolic interaction have to bring out the 'meaning' of a behaviour or object by seeing the world from the perspective of the other.

Taking the role of the other has an emotional component, it is not only through the perspective of the other the way one approaches reality (Charon, 2009). In fact, this includes emotions or the way people feel about a situation. Under certain circumstances we can feel like they do. We feel their love, sorrow, etc. in the way we interpret the interaction with them. 'They are initially learned in the social relationship in the primary group of the family' (Denzin, 2009 p. 52).

Heise and Weir (1999) see it as mandatory that individuals cannot understand emotional processes without understanding how emotions are categorized. Kippax, Crawford, Benton, and Gault (1988) describe it as one cannot experience sadness without a conception of loss, or experience guilt without some understanding of personal responsibility and wrongdoing (p. 20).

Individuals seek to confirm their self-conceptions as well as their context-dependent identities in all episodes of interaction. When the self is not confirmed, the mismatch

between the behaviour of self and the responses of others generates negative emotions such as anger, shame and guilt etc. When individuals are not able to confirm their identity they leave the situation, or if they cannot leave, they change their behaviours and adjust their identity to conform to the cultural expectation in the situation. If behavioural outputs and perceptual inputs become increasingly congruent over time this may result in an identity loss. Therefore individuals are motivated to bring their self into line with the responses of others to turn negative emotions into positive ones, (Turner & Stets, 2006). Haug (1999) views identity building as an active process with the goal of being able to demonstrate the self in a certain way to others. For Haug (1999) the linkage between contradiction and identity might provoke development in either way, either positively or negatively.

Therefore, interaction is always the interpretation of a situation. This means nothing has a meaning outside its use. All human action, then, is mediated by interpretation and definition, and that mediation involves a complex orientation both to the purpose of the action and to any other people who might be relevant to the action's development (Dennis et al., 2013). Symbolic interactionism is seeing individuals as acting and not only responding and being passive; we are active beings in relation to our environment. Although it is probably not possible to state that we are free, symbolic interactionism examines the preconditions and tries to explain an active being that is able to overcome whatever forces that the environment pushes on us. We form our own actions rather than responding to the physical environment.

By virtue of symbolic interaction, human group life is necessarily a formative process and not a mere arena for the expression of pre-existing factors (Blumer, 1969, p. 10). To understand this process or the action of individuals, it might be good to look at the

interaction, the thinking and the definition of the situation. This together forms the present and the active nature of the human being (Charon, 2009).

Perspective is dynamic; it changes from situation to situation. This is not only about interaction but also about identity. If I am looking at the standpoints of the other, I also trigger standpoints and perspectives in myself. I see how it would be in their position. Doing this, I become conscious of what triggers the own acting and why it would be the same for what the other is doing or something totally different (Abels, 2010). This general capacity, therefore, permits the human actor to take the role of the other – in being able imaginatively to grasp how another actor is stimulated. One can, therefore, monitor and adapt one's conduct in the light of others' perceived perceptions and judgements (Atkinson & Housley, 2003). Mead stated that this 'detour' to others is the premise for gaining identity (Mead, 1934). This sounds paradoxical; the individual gains consciousness about his identity by seeing himself through the eyes of others.

Based on my interaction with other individuals, my understanding of myself is a consequence of this social nexus, the interconnectivity of other individuals and me. This is normally a process which is done with the primary group, the family. The distinction between the social and the individual is very small. Symbolic interactionism is a microanalysis. If I come to an understanding of the me and I through other people, they also have an understanding of themselves in the interrelation with me. My relationship to others facilitates an understanding of the self. The relationship to me facilitates and understanding with themselves what is social and what is society. The social process is one of construction and reconstruction of the self and of social relationships, and, through these, of the larger system of social organisation in which they are embedded (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Through interaction in the world, we attain meaning. Being a person is built upon that which is inherent. Personhood is a consequence of our socialisation. Like a looking glass (Cooley, 1922), mirroring my identity of self. The first selection, according to Cooley, discusses the self-reflexive process in which individuals engage, specifically, human capacity, to see ourselves as we see any other social object. Cooley used the metaphor of a looking-glass to depict the nature and sources of the images of self which people see reflected in others. Individuals, then, develop self-conceptions through familiarity with the attitudes of others. The idea of a looking-glass self can be divided into three components: (1) we imagine how others view us; (2) we imagine what their judgments of our appearance are; (3) we develop some sort of self-feeling such as shame or pride as a consequence. Cooley's (1922) concept of the looking-glass self was instrumental in the development of modern interactionist conceptualisations (Herman & Reynolds, 1994, p. 194).

One important question can be asked: 'How do a family's symbolic meanings and interaction patterns affect how individual family members think, feel and act?' (James et al., 2012)

Seeing a family business as an organisation which is constituted by the interaction of the family and, therefore, its members, the perspective of symbolic interactionism is a suitable way of viewing individuals who negotiate, construct and define features of organisational structure (Denzin, 1978a). Organisations and, therefore, family businesses are viewed under an interaction lens as intertwined relationships, which constitute the organisation as it is sensed, experienced, acted and organised by the individual or their relation member. Selznick (1948) proposed that the interactionist examines and stresses the informal attributes of an organisation. As we saw earlier, many studies suggest

concentrating on the family could bring new insights to family business study. Symbolic interactionism sees the family as the building block of society (James et al., 2012) because of the smallest unit of individuals and the first contact with the significant other. In the same vein, Mead (1934) stated that all larger forms of human social organisation are ultimately based upon the family. It is a common way in family business research viewing the family business according to system theory (Frank, Lueger, Nosé, & Suchy, 2010; Habbershon et al., 2003; Pieper & Klein, 2007) and, therefore, at the macro level, viewing the forest not the trees. However, the distinction between macro and micro phenomena is rejected by the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Denzin, 1978b). It is a perspective from a more distanced or outsider role, seeing a family and seeing a business. As Großmann and von Schlippe (2015) stated, system theory focuses on communications and patterns, seeing communications in its own right rather than the person. Second, not much happens in practice on the macro level side; all interventions are made on the micro level side and, therefore, it is all systemic forces and components simultaneously. There is a gap between the theory and practice in the application of system thinking in family business research (Hollander & Elman, 1988). This research contributes to filling this gap not by thinking in systems but more by linking theory and practice with the application of the perspective of symbolic interactionism. As the theory of symbolic interactionism, in contrast to system theory, makes it possible to understand life stories and gives answers to the question of how the individual defines reality in the process of interaction with other individuals and how is identity built.

This has implications for the later analysis of the data. As Tamotsu (1988) stated, it is important to understand how the individual constructs his or her way of conducting themselves. The investigator must grasp his or her definition of the situation; research

must somehow capture the process of making conscious self-indications self-indications, and the researcher must be able to understand the roles of the people being studied. It is slightly different in autoethnographic writing, but for the development of a 'family interactive model', it has implications.

The processes that weave persons into and through one another's lives are made visible in the moments of interactional experience. The grounding of interpretation in the lives of interacting individuals ensures a continual and firm foundation in the world of lived experience. If the goal of interpretive inquiry is the examination of how persons give meaning to their lives, then the joining of lives with interactional experience seems mandatory.

Criticisms of symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a perspective. Like all other perspectives, it is limited because it must focus on some aspects of reality and ignore others.

No perspective, no matter how useful, can tell us all there is about any situation. This criticism is also true for symbolic interactionism. When the focus is on interaction, both personality predispositions and social structures fail to be examined in great depth. Unconscious reactions are de-emphasised. The choice of concentrating on interaction is a bias in the same way that perspectives must concentrate on some things at the expense of others – but this concentration is central to the understanding of what humans do. Symbolic interactionism is criticised for not seeing the social structure and only describing what happens on the micro level. Some authors have stated that there is a lack of a detailed analysis of the ratio of instrumental and social acting (Joas, 1978). Münch (2003) also criticises Blumer for not laying out in detail the circumstances in which

understanding is created. For Blumer, understanding is a kind of trial-and-error process in which interpretation in strategic actions is transformed. Mittelstrass (1979) asks in his book about the answer to the question of whether the understanding of actions is possible as a method.

Summary

This research explores the experience of the individual, in terms of how I experienced the situation in a family business and the family and how the predetermination of succession shaped my life. Symbolic interactionism is a view which focuses on how people define the world they are living in and how those definitions influence their actions. Through this lens, it is possible to understand the situation of individuals in family businesses in understanding them through interaction with each other and the meaning and emotions which are created through these acts.

The symbolic interactionist emphasises that humans are dynamic, that they are rational problem-solvers, and that society is a process of individuals in interaction – cooperating, role taking, aligning acts and communicating. The human engages in overt and covert actions in the present – recalling the past, planning for the future – and the actions that take place between individuals are an important influence on the direction individuals and societies take. This active acting and the creation of a shared perspective of a culture is necessary for understanding one another in order to accomplish difficult tasks. This is what an owner-manager and the family in a family business do on a daily basis, creating the present and the future together.

Symbolic interactionism could be a practicable possibility on a day-to-day basis to create an environment where the family and the business benefit. Therefore, I will provide in

Chapter 6, section 6.3 an interaction model which should comprise the main points for remembering.

Symbolic interactionism understands the human being as a subject of an action, and as an actor he is reflexive: He/she has a self. He/she has the capability have a conversation with himself/herself and he/she can be the object of his/her own acting, because he/she can be subject (I) and object (Me) for himself/herself. As an 'object', the individual has a meaningful significance, ways of seeing, feeling, talking and acting towards himself/herself. This is a result of the significant relation he/she has. He/she can interact with himself/herself, 'To make self-indications, identify objects and their relevance to his line of action' (Blumer, 1969, p. 14). As described, symbolic interactionism is able to overcome dualism so it will overcome the paradox which is, on the one hand, good for the family business and, on the other hand, a struggle. Only a good combination of both will create a good family business in an operative way and also a good and healthy foundation for the family. Symbolic interactionism is a good foundation to build up the formation of meaning. It could help to reduce structural flaws and, through interaction, the resources and the differences in age are lessened. Action depends on meaning – and meaning can change. Through change, it is possible to create something new, to re-invent the family and the business for the next generation.

3.5 Conceptual Framework and Concluding Comments

This chapter has so far shown that there are a number of areas which could possibly be linked to the family business to make useful contributions. My research will provide an examination of different perspectives that are possible to be interlinked with the family

business research field and to make it clearer what the situation in the family business is, especially for a female owner manager.

The review of the 'sister theories' for family businesses found areas which could be connected to them and could make a specific contribution. The many aspects which influence the situation in a family business were reviewed in brief. The most important point of this literature review is connecting all the aspects to a conceptual framework, which will guide the analysis of the data. That family businesses are somehow connected may be revealed or that two entities which would naturally not be together are connected. This paradoxical situation is what makes the family business unique and could result as a strength or weakness. Viewing the family business as a total institution also sheds light in regard to how one could manage to survive growing up in such an unclear environment. There was no literature found which deals specifically with the explicit interlinkages of family businesses and total institutions. Situations in family business communication are often linked and influenced by double-bind information. This brings confusion and distortion in the family and naturally also into the business and is not a healthy ground for future development. The often-unclear power relations and, furthermore, the theory of governmentality points to interesting directions for power to be exerted in a subtle way. Building up an own identity is not as simple as growing up in a family with no business attached. An additional point is the gender factor. Being a woman is still not an obvious advantage. The choice with regard to having children or concentrating on a career adds a somewhat spicy ingredient to the hot mixture of the above-described influencing factors. My study explores that complexity in the context of the family business, bringing the family to the heart of the inquiry because this is what makes it different from non-family businesses. The perspective of symbolic interactionism on emotions will serve as a good

starting point to providing a basis for the day-to-day interactions in family business. Searching for an understanding of the connections of the different influences and drawing on the perspectives from outside the field of the family business were outlined in this chapter. Out of this literature review, a conceptual framework has been created and is displayed in Figure 2 below. This will guide my analysis of my reflective writing and data. In the next chapter, the methodology is described. Here, I will make sense of the literature and the data. This interconnection will answer my research questions and will inform future practice.

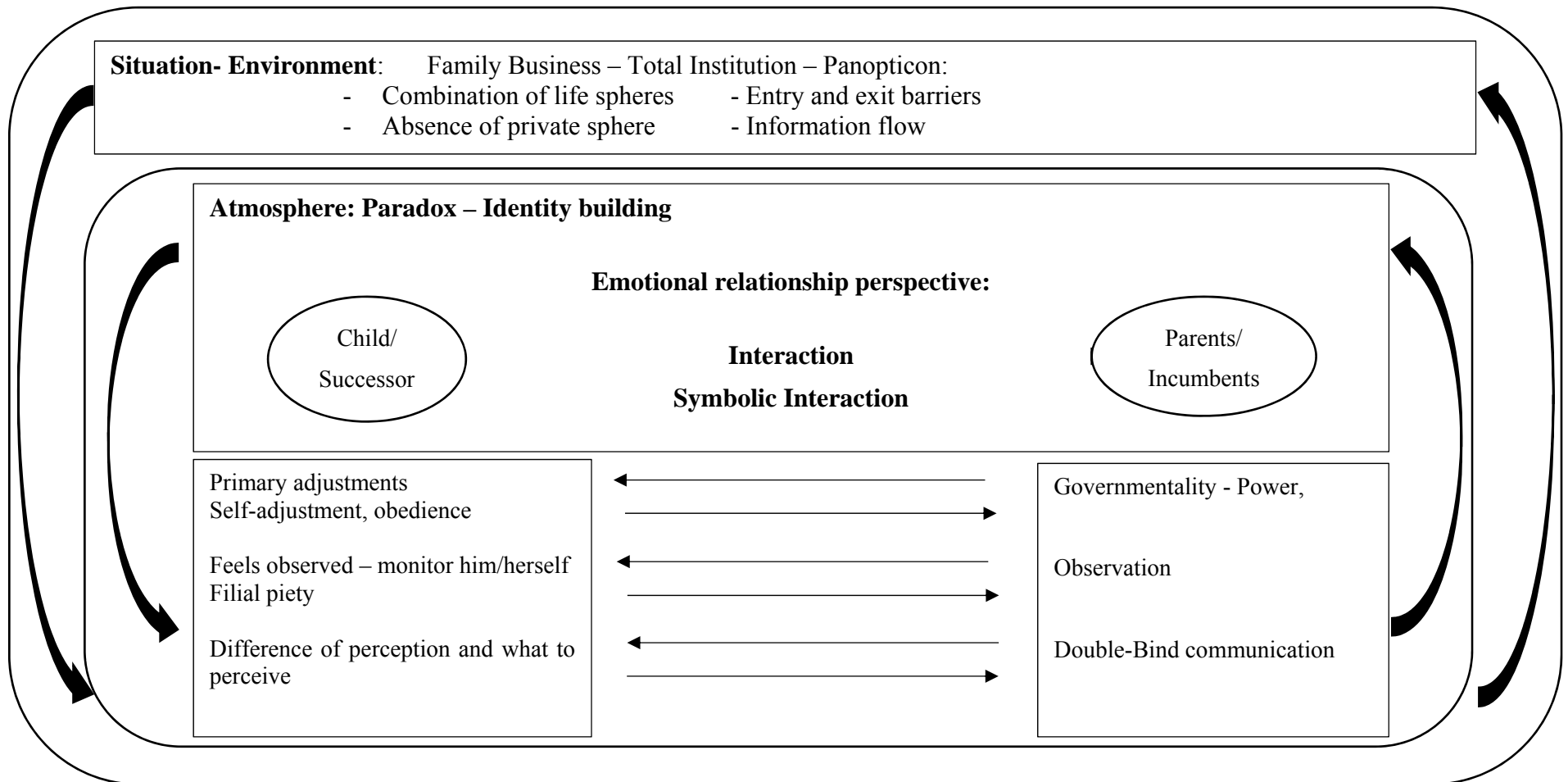


Figure 2 Conceptual Framework: the Situation in the Family Business
(Source: The Author)

4. Research Methodology: The Process of Exploration

In this chapter, I present the study's research methodology and a discussion around the following subjects: philosophical considerations, an overview of the research design, including the role of the researcher, ethical considerations and the issues of the trustworthiness of the data. To conclude this chapter, the data collection and analysis process is laid out.

It may be useful to start with the foundation of the research and therefore I will begin by describing what my ontological and epistemological perspectives are, and then what theoretical perspective guides this research. As pointed out earlier, the purpose of this analytic autoethnographic study is to explore, portray and deepen understanding of the situation of growing up in a business family and what influences this has on the business, family and individual.

In this process, I come to argue that analytic autoethnography is the most suitable approach to providing answers to the question of what the situation is for owners in family businesses. This also seems a methodology that is particularly appropriate for women in this situation. As I have, from a practitioner and insider point of view, the privilege to be in the position of providing first-hand information, it is cogent that the method of autoethnography is the way to go. As demonstrated in the literature review, the state of research has its gaps. In this situation, I want to look at the micro level and interaction of the family. The conceptual framework, which I had developed out of my literature review (see Chapter 3, section 3.5), will be the basis for the analysis of my data. In Chapter 6, an interaction model is presented in which the results are evaluated and will inform practice with a tool for understanding the situation in family businesses

better. In the next section, I will describe the worldview that underlines my thinking and with what philosophical considerations the further steps of developing the research design are conducted.

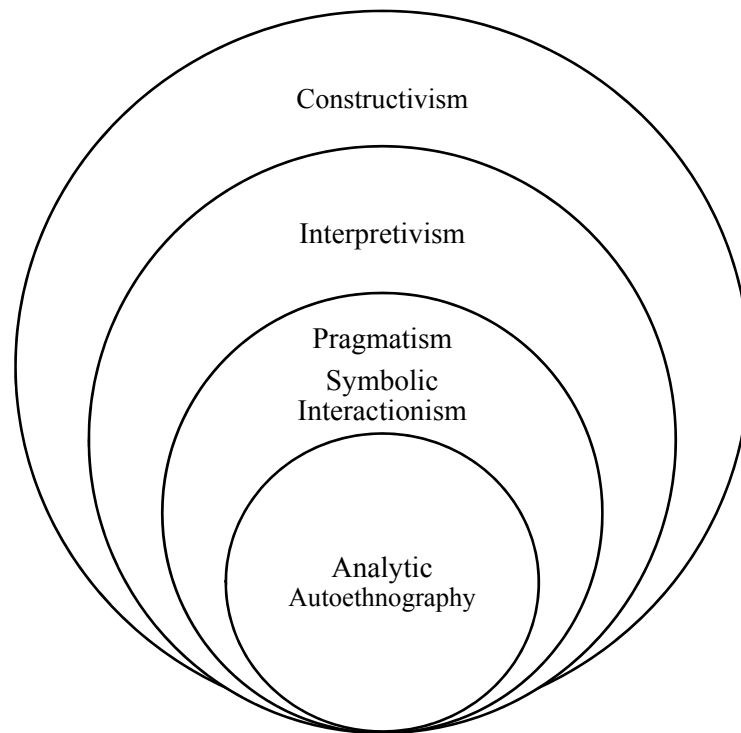


Figure 3 Philosophical Considerations
(Source: The Author)

‘It is often only by ‘venturing outside of the monastery’ that management researchers can observe or gain exposure to phenomena or relationships playing under- or unrecognised roles in shaping taken-for-granted intra- or inter-organisational dynamics.’ (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010, p. 666)

4.1 Modes of Access to Subjective Viewpoints

*Contradiction is not a sign of falsity,
nor the lack of contradiction a sign of truth.*

(Blaise Pascal)

A Perspective of Constructivism

I will start this section by describing in short how I view reality and what perspective I use to answer my research questions. The philosophical view determines how I explain reality, where I took the source of knowledge, and the perspective in research and practice. The adoption of the constructionist view implies that knowledge is both built and connected. A construction is in this way ‘built up’ over a period – it is not instantaneous – and there is a structural framework to this understanding. To this extent, it becomes holistic in that it has some form of coherence. Silverman (2014) stated that by doing this, an overarching framework for viewing reality is provided and this informs the concepts we use to define our research problem. Constructivism is seen as the original paradigm in which interpretivism, pragmatism and symbolic interactionism are placed. These become modes of exploring and examining the world view (*Weltanschauung*).

The approach that adopts a constructed view of knowledge often accepts that this produces meaning. From a social constructionist standpoint, the act of interpreting implies giving something a specific meaning, where the meaning is constructed by the interpreter or within an interaction in the specific setting within this very moment. This is important to keep in mind, as this is the main foundation upon which this work is built. It is a question, in a constructionist view, of whether the framework of knowledge implies the search for a ‘fit’ in developing meaning. The constructed nature

of knowledge can cut both ways: it can be seen as a personal worldview that enables someone to navigate the world; but knowledge can also reside in the operation of the group, in some kind of cultural milieu. This perspective notes the active nature of constructionism, not only what is constructed but how.

To be more analytic about revealing the construction, there is an opportunity to gather different perspectives through discussion. As part of the methodological approach, which is laid out in more detail in this chapter in the following section 4.2, I asked a small group of people (a reference group) if my writing had meaning for them. These responses to my autoethnography came from three people on the meaning events seemed to have for me and with what emotional intensity I wrote about what had happened.

For me, the individual is actively constructing their reality, definitions of the alleged truth and meaning and try within that to make sense of the world they live in (Collinson & Hockey, 2005).

Interpretivism

A basic question drives the interpretive project in the human disciplines: How do men and women give meaning to their lives and perform these meanings in their daily lives? There is a pressing demand to show how the practices of critical, interpretive, qualitative research can help change the world in positive ways. (Denzin, 2014, pp. x-xi)

Given the adoption of a constructed worldview, there is a need to either explore the resultant construction or to explore the modes of construction. Thus, an interpretivist position has to be considered. Nordqvist et al. (2009, p. 306) state: ‘interpretive research in family business can uncover hard-to-get phenomena at the micro-level of social interaction’. Autoethnography is aligned to the epistemology of interpretivism, which means that each individual construct their world through their inner view of the

world which they refer to (Anderson, 2006; Muncey, 2010). The paradigm of interpretivism focuses on generating context-based subjective meaning (Denzin, 1997). However, this is highly dependent on how the individual makes sense of his world and his abilities at interpreting his experience. I will track this thought a bit further and wish to connect the interpretive paradigm with pragmatism.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism may be presented as a down-to-earth perspective, posing questions like: ‘What concrete practical difference would it make if my theory were true and its rival(s) false?’ (Peirce, 1993). Page In the pragmatic sense, it only matters what difference the so-called truth of a certain concept would have to our lives and its practical utility (Atkin, 2005; Dennis et al., 2013). Pragmatism, according to Peirce, means that ‘true’ opinions are those which the researcher or reader will accept at the end of the research. Further, this means there are no interpretations offered as the ‘ultimate’ truth or ‘absolute’ knowledge. One must accept in pragmatism that it views truth as a set of correlations within the experience of each individual, and also stresses the practical consequences as the key parts of both meaning and truth (McDermid, 2006; Ruwhiu & Cone, 2010). Huber sees the consequences of this perspective in:

When the criterion for truth is what people do, when theory emerges from practice, then the biases of those who do and act are embedded in the theory. (Huber, 1973, p. 282)

As pragmatism adds a perspective of ‘usefulness’ to the research approach, which for me, as an owner-manager and also as a researcher, is important to inform practice. Therefore, pragmatism is the vehicle to transform my insights. Pragmatism as an epistemological approach emphasises learning by doing, which differentiates it from the reflective interpretation that can be performed through thought alone.

Given the active nature of investigation in pragmatism, it is only a small step to symbolic interactionism, which is used as a theory to guide my analysis and as the basis for a practical model for an understanding of the situation in family businesses.

If pragmatism is the intellectual foundation of symbolic interactionism, the self is the central concept. The interactionist self is itself an emergent phenomenon – a product of language and an outcome of the general processes of social interaction. The self is also a knowing subject (Atkinson & Housley, 2003). Here lies the connection to analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006) as a method which is mainly centred on the self and his/her experience at the centre of the source of data.

Symbolic Interactionism – What are the Symbols we live by?

Symbolic interactionism is embedded in the Chicago school and stems from the ‘sons’ of pragmatism. Symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) differs from interpretivism in so far as it extends the process of interpretation to an inner dialogue and within the interaction with others while the meaning is given to an object in the situation in which the interaction has taken place.

Symbolic interactionism is based on the pragmatic view that the world is not fixed but that it is ‘out there’ and exists independently of the perspective of the individual, however dependent on the experience due to the meaning an object has for the individual who is acting towards it (Mead, 1912).

As social interaction is an interpretive process, this will help in developing the interpretive conception and the influence of symbolic interaction for seeing and understanding the situation of a woman in family business. According to Silverman

(2014, p. 53), in the concept of symbolic interactionism is the ‘definition of the situation’.

Abduction – Inference

Based on my experience and the literature review, I linked themes which have not yet been brought together to gain new insights into the situation of the family business. A context of relation is created here which justifies the use of an abductive approach. This procedure is the nature of abduction (Reichert, 2010).

The autoethnographic method, even if I take an analytic approach, is from an insider perspective and, therefore, it has a value-laden preconception. With the preconceptions and facts in mind, the abductive approach allows one to look at seemingly unrelated facts to see how they may be related to find out something new (Minowa, Visconti, & Maclaran, 2012). Silver and Lewins (2014) stated that the general principle underlying abductive approaches to coding is a desire to prevent existing theoretical concepts from over-defining the analysis and obscuring the possibility of identifying and developing new concepts and theories. Using an abductive approach in my research allows a different perspective in analysing my data, the findings of which are described in Chapter 6. Therefore, there is enough room for the data to elicit new insights and it is not influenced by over-analysing with preconceived theories. In a German atlas on philosophy, Kunzmann, Burkard, Wiedmann, and Weiß (2009) describes abduction as follows:

The abduction is inferred from the result and the rule on the case. This method is used factually in every building of scientific hypotheses. In contrast to deduction, the result is only likely (as in the induction);

however, it extends knowledge because it produces a new idea in the mind and, therefore, allows new scientific conceptions.^{11*}

In other words, as Alvesson and Sköldberg (2010, p. 4) put it:

Induction has its point of departure in empirical data and deduction in theory. Abduction starts from an empirical basis, just like induction, but does not reject theoretical preconceptions.

This introduces the point of how I built up this research project, as this study has its starting point in my interest in understanding my situation growing up in a family business and which aspects influenced my development with respect to my development of identity. Table 1 below describes in short how abduction is implemented in this research.

Generic Scheme of Abduction:	Application to my Study:
Premise 1: A surprising fact, <i>E</i> , in need of an explanation, is observed	Premise 1: The fact <i>E</i> is that I did not live my life, and experienced a kind of force.
Premise 2: Background knowledge <i>W</i> , Which implies a hypothesis <i>H</i> : <i>H</i> is a potential explanation for <i>E</i> This means: if <i>H</i> is true so <i>H</i> explains <i>E</i> .	Premise 2: Background knowledge, <i>W</i> : <i>my experience first-hand of growing up in a family business.</i> Which implies a hypothesis: <i>H</i> (<i>This is part of the findings of Chapter 6, section 6.5</i>)
Abductive Assumption: <i>H</i> is true	Abductive Assumption: <i>H</i> (<i>This is part of the findings of Chapter 6, section 6.5</i>)

Table 1 Abductive Inference on ‘Subtle Coerced Succession’
(Source: The Author, adapted from (Niiniluoto, 1999; Peirce, 1903))

¹¹ *Die Abduktion schließt von dem Resultat und der Regel auf den Fall. Dieses Verfahren wird bei jeder wiss. Hypothesenbildung faktisch angewendet. Im Unterschied zur Deduktion ist der Schluss nur wahrscheinlich (wie bei der Induktion), erweitert aber die Erkenntnis, da er eine neue Idee im Denken hervorbringt und daher neue wiss. Konzeptionen ermöglicht.* (Kunzmann et al., 2009, p. 173) (*) Own translation.

Thus, it is used to bridge different theories which are all somehow connected to a lived experience in a family community. As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2010) describe it, abduction is a method which can be best used in real practice; this is what telling the own story is. This means that an interpretation of one situation can be strengthened by the new findings of theory or a new emerging situation. The process of interpretation is stimulated by the interplay between a certain theory and the thoughts and experiences coming to my mind while I am reading it. This is what Watson called ‘theorists in the field’ (Watson, 2012, p. 19), although it is a bit different in analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006) as the field is my own thinking and experience, in my case, with other family members.

Polkinghorne (1995) states that if the researcher is considering applying a theoretical perspective to his/her life story, it would mean moving back and forth from the part to the whole to discover the meaning that is in the whole. The individual experiences are understood and interpreted as the reader goes through the data in the context of what is already known. For Seiffert (2003, p. 131):

Proof (from the more complicated back to the simpler) and derivation, (from the simpler forward to the more complicated) are the two directions in which we can think mathematically. However, only the direction of derivation corresponds to the logical development of our knowledge. We first have to know the simple and can only then understand the complicated. Actually, for this reason, proof is superfluous. After all, a person cannot prove anything after the fact other than what has already been gained from the correct application of the underlying propositions.¹²

¹² *Beweis (vom Komplizierteren zurück zum Einfacheren) und Ableitung (vom Einfacheren vorwärts zum Komplizierteren) sind also die beiden Richtungen, in denen wir mathematisch denken können. Jedoch entspricht nur die Richtung des Ableitens der logischen Entwicklung unseres Wissens. Wir müssen erst das Einfache wissen und können erst dann das Komplizierte einsehen. [...] Eigentlich ist*

This would imply that the usefulness of pragmatism is the underlining theory of abduction. If the meaning of a concept lies in the consequences this has for practice, then the correction of this concept is only possible with reality. This happens within an experiment of thoughts in which the practical impact is thought through. These new insights must stand the test within a communicative and interactive process with each other. In this logic, Peirce's detection of abduction as a third reasoning modus significant:

Consider the effects that can conceivably be of practical relevance which we attribute to the object of our concept and idea. Then, our concept of these effects is the whole of our concept of the object. (Peirce, 1839-1914)¹³

To transfer this citation to my project means that new insights from other theories allowed me to discover the term of 'subtle coerced succession'.

As described earlier, in the literature review part I, I did not find anything to match the experience I lived through over different decades in the family business. All the themes mentioned in the literature review part II, in Chapter 3, total institution, power, double-bind and the perspective of symbolic interactionism point towards what I experienced but had no 'name' for. I hoped that a new result might be found through the abductive process and the analysing and interpretation of the data.

ein Beweis also überflüssig. Denn man kann nichts nachträglich beweisen, als was man bereits aus der richtigen Anwendung der zugrundeliegenden Sätze gewonnen hat (Seiffert, 2003, p. 131).

¹³ *‘Überlege, welche Wirkungen, die denkbarerweise praktische Relevanz haben könnten, wir dem Gegenstand unseres Begriffes und unserer Vorstellung zuschreiben. Dann ist unser Begriff dieser Wirkungen das Ganze unseres Begriffes des Gegenstandes’.* Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914).

Through the application of the analysis methods, the name for what happened to me was born.

Thomas (2007) sums this section up with the citation below, which expresses my central statement, as well as how I view the construction of knowledge that needs to be applied in practice.

In science, a model or theory may be mistaken – it may be a ‘wrong’ way of framing the world – but its test is in the kinds of consequence or practical knowledge that it produces, and it always produces reliable practical knowledge, or it would be dismissed. (Thomas, 2007, p. 7)

In the subsequent section, the research design is outlined and the analytic autoethnography approach is described, including the procedure of data collection and analysis.

4.2 Research Design – Living in a Golden Cage

First, I will repeat the research questions and lay out why I chose them and then link them to the methodology which I use for answering them. The research questions were formulated from my personal experience as a child, a natural successor and later as a female owner-manager in the family business. Living through all of the ups and downs this brought for me led me to seek answers to what happened to me during this process. This disquiet that I felt all my life that the succession process was somehow manipulated through the family, was only partially confirmed by the results and gaps discovered in the literature review. This led me to investigate my life story with analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006) and adapted parts of memory-work (Haug, 2005) to explore what was unfolding and to determine if this phenomenon has a name.

Smith (2014) called for narratives and stories as academics and practitioners stress the strong influence of family on business; therefore, stories from first hand can provide an insight into how a family business is seen and conceptualised. Given the fact that this study is a doctorate and that I am undertaking it as an owner-manager in a family business, it was important in the research design that my own experience could be demonstrated within the research. It is also important to note that the study was not conceived as my story of growing up in a family business, but as my story interrogated within the context of the literature. Taber (2010) stressed that autoethnography as a qualitative methodology offers an opportunity for the researcher to push methodological boundaries to answer research questions that cannot be explored with more established methods.

My main objectives are to describe how I lived the experience in part as a child and later on as a woman and mother while an owner-manager in a family business in the third generation, and my experience with my children who now want to take over the company at a later stage.

The research questions are as follows.

1. How are female owner-managers in family businesses currently understood?
2. What is the experience of a female only child growing up in a business family, in which their future is predetermined from the beginning?
3. What can be revealed by an analytic autoethnographic study of an existing family business from the viewpoint of a female owner-manager?
4. What insights and new approaches can be proposed for family businesses and, more precisely, for women in family businesses?

The core of my research questions deals with the interrogative verb '*how*'. Gubrium and Holstein (2010) stressed that the '*how*' in social experiences, put together by individuals, and not just the '*what*' of those social experiences, is important. As mentioned in the introduction, Chapter 1, section 1.2, I will answer my '*what*' questions with my findings and with my recommendations. The '*how*' questions are answered through my experience together with the themes from the literature.

The difference is important because in my belief system, we are not only shaped by our world around us, but we also in turn narratively inflect our worlds in their own right.

As mentioned earlier, this study will demonstrate that growing up in a family business is multifaceted, not easy to understand and cannot be fully observed from an outsider position. Moreover, family firms are also reliant on tradition; they will not show much from their inside interaction on day-to-day life to people from the outside (Stewart, 2014). With my autoethnographic data I will illuminate some profound facets of this complex and dynamic setting, which will bring us to the situation of understanding some aspects of family businesses better. These profound mechanistic processes are very important for shaping the identity of the family and business.

Analytic Autoethnography

The methodology which I used to interpret the situation in family businesses was analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006), I also adapt parts from Haug's (2005) method of memory work which will be described in more depth in this section.

Borrowed from Giddens and Sutton (2013), this research knowledge is viewed as '*social*'. Objects do not occur in the same way that physical objects do; they are not

subject unrelated. Self-conscious human beings and their interactions cannot be studied in the same way as objects or animals because they are capable of acting in ways that confound our predictions about them. Interaction includes social interaction and interaction with oneself (Charon, 2009). However, this should not imply that this study includes, directly, other people, except those from the reference group. The word autoethnography expresses ‘auto’, which stands for the self, and the ‘ethno’, for nation or group of other people and ‘graph’ to write (Doloriert & Sambrook, 2012). Or, in other words, autoethnographers research how the ‘self’ interacts with the ‘other’ (Holt, 2003).

As in other methodologies, in autoethnography different approaches are possible. As stated above, I will use ‘analytic’ autoethnography (Anderson, 2006) which extends the ‘evocative’ autoethnographic (Ellis & Bochner, 2006) through analysing the written data and does not exclude the possibility of theory development, which the evocative autoethnographer completely rejects. The more experimental and evocative autoethnographers have said that linking autoethnography to mainstream social science in this way would ‘tear its heart out’: an autoethnographic account tells a ‘unique’ story (to a unique reader), whereas social science theory has generalisation as its end goal (Margolis & Pauwels, 2011). I do not agree with this view completely, nor with Muncey's (2010) criticisms of analytic autoethnography as it would silence the more creative style of evocative narrative.

It is possible, as my study shows, to capture both sides that are mentioned. I include my reflective writing in the form of my autoethnographic data. So, the data can stand alone and the reader will reason it in their own way. This fact makes this research rich, and never out-dated, as people with identical information will interpret it in different

ways, depending on their previous experiences, worldview, culture and situation (Gray, 2009).

In addition, I analyse the data with different methods, which I will describe in more detail in section 4.6. I cannot see how this interferes with my original data, as the thematic and textual analysis process comes afterwards. For me, the analysis extends the autoethnographic writing (Geertz, 1973).

Moreover, it brings a great amount of transparency to the process, having access to the complete data and also in following the analytical process throughout.

However, I argue that positioning the analysis of the autoethnographic data within social science knowledge offers a more transparent process, supporting how insights are developed from the research. This is one advantage of autoethnography compared to ethnography, where the field notes and the observation or interview data are not a complete part of the final results chapter.

I, therefore, assert that leaving stories to only evoke feelings within the reader (as with evocative autoethnography) is limited due to the research or the reader only being able to access what is currently known to themselves. But what Denzin (2006) contributes to the discussion of evocative and analytic autoethnography seems important and that Anderson, on which I base my procedure on, embedded his approach in traditional symbolic interactionist assumptions. Adams, Holman Jones, and Ellis (2015) state that in the process of writing an autoethnographic work, the research does not flow in a linear manner. The reason is due to the interpretation of multiple sources. As the lived experience is the main source of data, the reflection often jumps in time and situations. The ongoing inquiry and the continuous asking of questions will reveal new aspects

which could not have been foreseen beforehand. Van Maanen, Sørensen, and Mitchell (2007) discuss the process as follows:

Abduction begins with an unmet expectation and works backward to invent a plausible world or a theory that would make the surprise more meaningful. (p.1149)

Using the literature to analyse the autoethnographic data elicits new insights into the understanding of the situation in a family business.

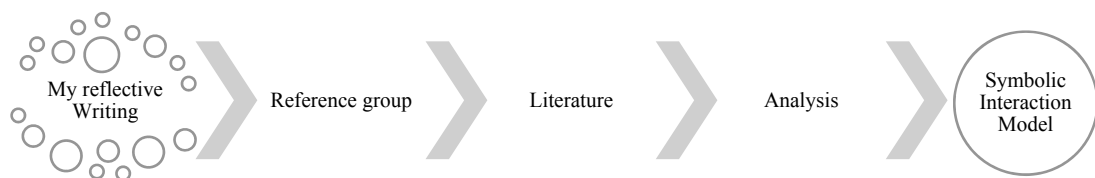


Figure 4 Process of the Analytic Autoethnography
(Source: The Author)

This involves seeing patterns in the written text (data) which are linked to one of the theoretical perspectives from the literature review. These can provide an, often unexpected, understanding, not only by applying a theoretical view, but also by reading through the text. The reader may be able to find parallels with their own life, and can approach the question with another perspective to their own story. This process is illustrated in Figure 4 above.

Analytic autoethnography is the method of examining one's own experiences in the context of emerging and always changing relationships with others and in the meantime understanding the self (Adams et al., 2015). For me, this means reflecting on my experience in growing up in a family business and looking at the different relations I had over time with other family members and people whom I met along the

way. Some were close to me some only barely touched on my life. However, all this interaction formed the view of how I view myself and how I felt towards the family business.

Autoethnography has the research methods of ethnography combined with the autobiographical part. It connects the individual to the others. The ethnographic aspect differs from narrative writing like autobiographies or journals (Chang, 2008). My written data emerged from a deep inner standpoint as I wrote down my experience and the interaction with the 'other', in my case more or less the members of my family. This textual orientation rejects the notion that the 'lived experience can only be represented indirectly, through quotations from field notes, observations or interviews' (Denzin, 1992, p. 20). For me, this method is a good way to describe first-hand experience in a deep way as far as I, the researcher, allows myself to and as far as I can stand it. Knowing the importance of the data I chose to go very far, as I am looking for meaning and understanding of the situation in a family business. I decided to do this research and I know that the data can only be as good as the extent to which I am willing to open up and write as honestly as I can.

Furthermore, the story of my life is an interpretation of it at the moment I tell it or write it down. Seeking to give meaning to the life lived in the moment, it is spelled out in the text through which it is told (Widdershoven, 1993). In this very moment, the story is true for the teller because he/she remembers it in this special way, which leaves the researcher with the interpretation of why the story is told in this special way. Here lies an important advantage in analytic autoethnography, as the researcher and the researched are one person. He/she can look at the story in a second round of analysis and interpretation and by checking with other people involved (the reference group)

why the story is told in this way. 'In autoethnographic methods, the researcher is the epistemological and ontological nexus upon which the research process turns'(Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 189).

My story should help to create an understanding of the social interaction and in what ways this influenced and shaped my life. This should also provide the idea that what might be possible for me might be also possible for others (Chase, 1995). This is what I hope the reader will see, first, through reading the text by itself and, second, through the reflective interpretation of my reference group, using the different analytical methods I apply. Even if one's experience in life is always unique, it is possible that others might see and find what could be useful for her/him. As the narrative of my life or part of my life is not the experience itself but rather an interpretation of it, writing down the experience organised my identity and all of the experience was somehow verified (Ochberg, 1994). As mentioned earlier, given this, there is also the interpretation the reader brings by reading it.

Here, I mean that by analysing my writing, I detected or made obvious what was hidden behind my non-concise experience. Thematic analysis of the theory did help me in eliciting 'my truth'.

According to Anderson (2006), qualitative methods can be more useful for identifying and characterising the interaction of people given a special set of circumstances, in my case the business family. An analytic autoethnographic approach was used to gain further in-depth information of the situation and the dynamic in family businesses. Anderson (2006, p.378) stated that five premises should be fulfilled for analytic autoethnography:

1. Complete member researcher status;
2. Analytic reflexivity;
3. Narrative visibility of the researcher's self;
4. Dialogue with informants beyond the self;
5. Commitment to theoretical analysis.

I will now describe how I fulfil the five premises in my research. Firstly, by virtue of the fact that I have grown up in a business family, I am already part since the birth of the family business. Full member status is given in investigating a family business and insider perspective is granted at its fullest as I am still owner-manager of the family business I explore. The second premise is analytic reflexivity. I integrated this with the use of my journals which go back to 1981. This was the time when I started journal writing. I did not write on a daily basis, but if events happened which touched on my inner self, I wrote something down. Beginning the doctoral journey, I intensified this practice (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The third premise is the visibility gained through the narrative writing, thinking that I am visible through my written text. Through describing my whole life story in great detail, I am convinced that I am visible in the text.

I address the dialogue with informants through a small group of people which I call my reference group. Haug (2005) finds it important to analyse memories in a "Kollektiv" as the memories of one's story will need experience from others which could also be opposed and be open to critical backtalk. I chose one who knows me well, one who do not know me well and one from my family (Forber-Pratt, 2015). Asking someone who knows me quite well is very important. My friend knows me

and my story since 1986. I included my mother in the reference group as she is part of the story but also someone who knows me from a different and critical angle. My son's fiancée is the person I asked who does not know me so well.

The last premise, the theoretical analysing, is fulfilled with a thematic analysis, with themes drawn from the literature review and through analysing metaphors and a word count. I extend the analysis with aspects from Haug's (2005) memory work as she provides a theoretical background to her method. For Haug, our own identity is constructed through stories from the past which the individual retains as important. Further she suggests that individuals tend to eliminate contradictions which we do not view as congruent to our presentation of our self which we wish to be viewed as consistent with our view and that of others. This means that we conceive a kind of picture from our self which we try to convey in all interactive situations with others. For Haug (2005) language is a 'Politik', which means that it is important how we use language to transfer our created picture from ourselves to others. How I approach language is outlined in detail in section 4.6.

Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, and Benton (1992) summarise memory work as follows:

The memories are true memories, that is they are memories and not inventions or fantasies. Whether the memories accurately represent past events or not, however, is irrelevant; the process of construction of the meanings of those events is the focus of memory-work. (p.51)

Like other qualitative methods, autoethnography and memory work (Haug, 2005) is concerned with meaning, and in seeking the connection of the self to the other, it is an excellent theory for analysing the dynamics of the individual and the other by giving meaning through the interpretation of objects, for example, the succession process, or

the family business as a whole. For Kuhn (1995) memory work is a method and a practice to giving voice to untold stories, to get recognition that the story one has to tell is important and has value for other people. It is important that the meaning of the self and the other only make sense in the cultural context of shared meaning (Chang, 2008). In the next section, I will describe how I am present in this research.

4.3 Role of the Researcher

I want to enlighten the situation as a woman growing up in a business family. Let me start by saying that I grew up in a family which was, above all, a family business family. I was the only child. Business was always first. This means all other things were secondary. As a child, I learned to control my needs; I thought that they might be important, but I quickly learned they were not. I take an insider perspective as a researcher because I am researching a field which is well known to me. It is a family business, the business of my family and my own business. I am researching the field as an owner-manager.

I do not wish to be a ‘silent researcher’. I decided to reveal the influence my previous experience has had on the representation of the data. After a long journey of thinking about how to approach the theme of the family business, some attempts were made through my connections I have with other owner-managers in family businesses. When I contacted them, and asked for interviews about their businesses, the families did not refuse in a direct way, but did not return calls. Or others just say, ‘No, we are a family business, we do not publish our balance sheet, and we do not want to present our business in any other way.’ I first thought this could be a good method, as I am in the

same situation as these managers, yet I detected that they did not want to speak to someone similar. Stewart (2014) confirms my experience about a process nobody speaks about, pointing out that it is very difficult to reveal personal information about and deep insights into sensitive family matters and, therefore, autoethnography is a good way for research in the family business (Stewart, 2014).

After this experience, I thought of presenting my own story because I had much to tell. I preferred to use autoethnography to break my 'silence' and explore at a personal and micro level the situation of woman in family businesses. On the one hand, being an insider, the knowledge is rich but also overwhelming. As the question about the situation is very broad, it was hard to choose where to begin. Based on the discussion above, this is about the development of narrative as a structure. One way to do this is to consider the process over time.

This was the idea of starting in a chronological order in writing down my life story, with all the missing bits and, on the other hand, perhaps described in too much detail. But this all has meaning and reasons for why it is told in that way. One might state that there is bias. Certainly there is, but it depends on how bias is viewed. As I write in a pragmatic sense, by the end, my contribution to knowledge should be useful.

In breaking my silence, I have been able to ascertain how my experience of growing up in a business family may lead to informed practices. Undertaking an analytic autoethnography enables me to explore my own lived experience and how it informs my decisions about myself in still working in the family business.

Studying one's own family and business may sound easy from this point of view, as the researcher has access to all the information which he wishes to relate. Not all family

members have the same openness and perhaps do not wish to be exposed to the public. Ethical considerations are discussed in more detail in the next section.

In the next section, I will describe how I face the ethical issues which are foremost in an analytical autoethnographic study.

4.4 Ethical Issues

Autoethnography makes it easy, on a first viewing, to collect data because one has access to all information which is at hand. Being the only owner-manager, with 100% of the shares, I could decide in a rational and legitimate way what to tell and what not. But this is a shortcoming as this is my own business and my story is, therefore, my research, and so ethical considerations are essential. It is not possible to separate my experience from the person involved in my story and my family. Nor is it possible to hide the individual's perspectives behind names which are changed because as I am conducting an autoethnographic study if I talk about my son, it is my son. My name is written on this thesis, and my company name is easy to discover. The story of my whole family is open for all to read. Taking this into consideration, I asked all of my family members included in the text and my reference group for their informed consent.

The ethical issue is a critical one in autoethnographic research. Delamont (2007) makes the criticism that autoethnography cannot be published ethically. To some extent, this is also true for my study. I approach the ethical issue in the following way. First, I have consent from the members of my reference group that their names can be included in my thesis. Moreover, as my mother is part of the reference group and part

of my reflective writing, I asked her if she would also give her consent. I cannot change the name of my mother because it will remain clear that it is my mother who is being referred to. After thinking this through, I also asked my children and my husband to sign the consent form. A problem occurred with my father, as he has Alzheimer's disease and could not answer or sign the consent form in a transparent way. As my mother and I have a power of attorney for my father, I agreed with my mother that my father would love to sign this form. Therefore, I signed it on his behalf. Other people involved are presented with pseudonyms, their original names were changed.

The study conforms to the principles of the ethical handbook of the University of Gloucestershire and, in addition, as there is no special chapter on autoethnography, I draw also on the 'Research Ethics Board Guidelines for Autoethnography', of the Ryerson University (2017).

I follow Ellis (2007) requirement to 'process consent' (p.23) by letting my family sign the consent form after my thesis was finished and they all had the chance to read through the text. My mother, as the only member of my family to be included in the thesis and in the reference group, signed one part of the consent form beforehand and had, as with the others, the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. This meant for me that she had the power to impose an embargo. However, all were happy with how they were mentioned and this also is a small contribution to the trustworthiness of this study. This is also the key for the transition to the next section, in which I will discuss how validation and trustworthiness are displayed in this study.

4.5 Validation and Procedural Trustworthiness of Data

In this section, I lay out how I approached the trustworthiness of my research. As described earlier, the research design of autoethnography has some content derived from a quantitative research approach, such as reduction of the data to themes and a word count analysis. However, the main focus of this research is qualitative in nature. The approach to trustworthiness (Creswell 2003) must be taken differently, as qualitative research stems from a different world view and philosophical considerations. However, as Silverman (2014) also states, this does not mean that qualitative research should not be judged by the production of valid knowledge. Critical questions should also be asked and these should not be any less probing than quantitative studies.

However, some literature suggests that qualitative research should be assessed with rather different criteria than quantitative studies. Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that conditions should be stated and an approach established and the quality of qualitative research assessed so as to provide a substitute for reliability and validity. They propose two primary criteria for assessing a qualitative study: trustworthiness and authenticity. Trustworthiness, in turn, is made up of four criteria, each of which has an equivalent criterion in quantitative research:

- *Credibility*, which parallels internal validity
- *Transferability*, which parallels external validity
- *Dependability*, which parallels reliability
- *Confirmability*, which parallels objectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2007, p. 411).

I transfer this from quantitative studies to this qualitative study as it represents the trustworthiness that should be applied in questions in an adequate way. Next, I describe how I see the four criteria applied to my study.

Credibility

Credibility equates to the internal validity in the quantitative orientation and refers to how truthful particular findings are. Credibility can, in essence, be questioned owing to the subjective nature of the data collected. Moreover, research can be considered credible when the suggested meaning is relevant to the informants. Applied to my research, this means I have four steps to presenting my data. This is outlined in more detail in section 4.6, but, in short, my data is present as ‘raw’ data in my study, the data is analysed with themes from the literature review, a word count is conducted. My reference group has been selected to apply different perspectives and read through the data, and their summaries will be laid out in section 6.2. With these different methods of analysis, I underline the credibility of my study. Creswell and Miller (2000) point out that the researcher, ‘I’ as the subject, and the researched, in my case ‘I’ as the object, and the reader will, based on their individual understandings of the context, make the final judgement on whether the findings are accurate or not.

I understand accuracy in a different context, as this cannot be the question in my specific research design. As stated earlier, it can only be the question of meaning or ‘truth’ in the context of a specific interpretation in mind and with the consequences of an impact on practice in the form of utility.

In other words, it has meaning for the person who reads it. This concerns my text or life story, but in analysing the data through my reference group, the themes I selected

for a thematic analysis and, in addition, the textual analysis should be taken into consideration.

Transferability

Transferability is concerned with the extent to which findings are or are not applicable to another setting or group. Indeed, the generalisation issue is often heard as a criticism; but as a matter of fact, in qualitative research, findings are often based on small non-representative samples stemming from non-random sampling procedures (Decrop, 2004). In my case, only one sample is part of the research. However, a distinction must be made between statistical and analytical generalisation. While statistical generation of qualitative data is usually not possible and not desirable either, the analytical application of propositions to other phenomena, people or settings is conceivable if the research report supplies sufficient details about the context of the study, the findings are integrated with existing literature and a description is produced about how related objects are similar. Elliott (2005) gives a very pragmatic comment in this respect: ‘Qualitative research therefore often adopts what we might call a “common-sense” view of generalisability such that the reader is left to make up his own mind as to how far the evidence collect in a specific study can be transferred’ (2005, p. 26).

This includes the reading through the data and the application to practice, and if the story has meaning for the reader. As in autoethnography, this is one life story from one person making sense of the world. Undoubtedly this cannot be generalised to other family businesses and families. But this is not what this research seeks to do. The main purpose is to display insights and possible connections in the highly dynamic and complex world of family and business. Perhaps other researchers will have ideas about

pushing some of the insights further in future studies with different methodological approaches.

Dependability versus Reliability

The issue of dependability versus reliability consists of looking at whether the results are consistent and reproducible. Consistent with the pragmatic stance of my research project, it is essential to realise that in interpretive research, there is no single reality but a multiple contextual one. Therefore, knowledge generated is bound by time, context, culture and value. Hence, replicability is nonsense because of the ever-changing nature of the social world (Decrop, 2004). Instead, dependability should be seen as the correspondence between the raw data ‘produced’ by the researcher and what actually occurred during reading through the data as it is presented in the study. Also, part of the textual analysis is the analysis of metaphors and the word count, which has been done with Nivio 10 and is as reproducible as the analysis of the themes. As Hammersley (1992) puts it, reliability or in my case dependability refers to the degree of consistency with which themes are assigned to the same category by different readers.

Confirmability

Confirmability pertains to how neutral the findings are. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) argue that research can never be totally objective. However, the data analysis process is made objective and the written data is also objective in the form that it is displayed as a whole for all readers by looking for a variety of explanations about the phenomenon and giving the readers access to factual data in order to re-enact the way major interpretations that emerge from the empirical material.

To sum up, what makes a life story a ‘trustworthy’ document? Generally, as displayed in this section the most important point is that my life story is part of the research. One could argue that no one can control if a life story is ‘true’, but reliability has to do with the extent to which questioning will yield the same answers whenever and wherever it is carried out. Validity is the extent to which inquiry yields the ‘correct’ answers or a quality of fit between the information received or observed and that expected (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

I want to enhance the confirmability or trustworthiness of my personal data, with a small group of people, which I call my reference group. I adjusted this process from Forber-Pratt (2015), which I found very useful. The members of my group have described the feedback they gave to me, and this is presented in Chapter 6, section 6.2.

These are the questions I wanted to have answered by showing the data to the people in my reference group:

Does it have meaning for me?

Foremost for me is not asking my reference group if the story before them is complete, because certainly it is not. The emphasis was not to write my whole life story with every single situation; this is also not possible. My aim was to write down what came into my head in a reflective situation of writing. I did leave out some points regarding my dead partner, and not paying too much attention to my friends around me, as this was not so important in the context of the research question. Moreover, it is also a small part of my life. The business took up so much time and space. Eliminating some parts of my story, is also a kind of presentation and construction of my past (Haug, 2005).

Does it have meaning for someone who knows me really well?

With this criterion in mind, I knew that from outside of my family, a person who knows me for over 30 years now is my best friend, Gisela. She has known me since 1986 and still knows me. So, it was logical to ask her to read through my story.

Does it have meaning for someone who does not know me very well?

I chose Maria, who is the fiancée of my son. She has known me since 2010, and we understand each other quite well. Maria knows a little about the family through my son but not my inner story going back over the years.

Does it have meaning for someone in my family?

I chose my mother and let her read my story. She knows me very well, I think like no one else. Bearing the feedback from Maria and Gisela in mind (which I explored above), I was a bit anxious to ask her. However, I saw it as necessary to get her feedback, as she is the only one represented from my family whom I could ask. My father has dementia; however, if he did not, he would not have been able to read English. As I am an only child, I have no sisters or brothers. My aunt is now 80 years old and living in the US, and I did not want to send her my data and leave her with it. Also, I was not sure if she would give the text to my mother, and my mother would be hurt even more.

The study also serves as a catalyst for those encouraging others to retrieve emotional memories to question their own practices concerning the choice of memories to select, what is important to reflect upon and who benefits, in what ways and who does not; and, to acknowledge responsibilities associated with the power to provoke emotional responses. (Sparrow, 2009, p. 574)

The basic issue of trustworthiness is simple: How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience (including the self) that the findings of the inquiry are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

Stories are like pictures that have been painted over, and, when paint is scraped off an old picture, something new becomes visible. What is new is what was previously covered up. A life and the performances about it have the qualities of *Pentimento*. Something new is always coming into sight, displacing what was previously certain and seen. There is no truth in the painting of a life, only multiple images and traces of what has been, what could have been, and what now is. There is no firm distinction between the texts and performances. (Denzin, 2014, p. 1)

In using the same metaphor as Denzin in his quote above, I will in the next section illustrated how I ‘painted’ my life with data, methods, and how I tried to analyse the images and traces that have been there in my life.

4.6 The Data Collection and Analysis Methods

In this section, I will describe the methods I used to collect my data. The method of collecting the data should be embedded in the research context. This section is short, as the process is not as complex as in other studies. The overarching methodology is analytic autoethnography. In my research, I limited the data collection mainly to my personal writing. The sample size, as mentioned earlier, amounts to only one person., meaning me as a person with my writing, besides the fact of asking my reference group to read my data and to say if it has meaning for them. As I stated earlier, I did this for two reasons, first, to fulfil the requirements of analytic autoethnography and, second, to enhance the trustworthiness of this study.

I started writing down the strongest image I had in mind, of me staring out the window towards the factory in the morning. I wrote on from this point, always seeing things in my inner mind, trying to create a chronological form. t Haug (2005) suggests, in her

guide to memory work, that one should use a kind of question which should guide the writing process and which the data tries to answer, this is how I experienced growing up in a family business. Haug (2005) warns, however, about describing more than one event, though for me this is an event that strikes my life throughout. My only tools were my diaries, which I have written since I was a child, but not on a regular basis. Also during my DBA journey, I kept writing a reflective journal. This was to aid my thinking through my research process and also for writing down what happened in the business. This was of great help, moreover, for the recent past to capture what had happened there. I always carried the diaries or the notebook with me and when I had a thought or something happened which drew my interest towards it, I wrote it down, often in no strict form. From the time, I started writing my reflective journal, at the end of 2014, I focused my thoughts. My diaries dated from my childhood up to 2008; however, I had not written them on a regular basis. I pulled them out and read them while I wrote my story down for this thesis. Afterwards, I threw them away. I felt like I did not need them anymore and they made no sense to me.

As I stated earlier, if the situation in a family business is to be captured, even only in nuanced form, it is important to do this through the members of the family. To see and understand the influence the business has on individuals, it is important to read how it is embedded in my life story.

The situation must also be applied to a wider context. This contextual view is important for the perspective of symbolic interactionism as the meaning of an object is situational and understood through interaction with others. Also, the construction of reality and the interpretation of a situation is seen with the insight of the history of individuals and my family.

Approaches to Data Analysis

In this part, I will discuss the procedures for undertaking the analysis of my data. The process of data analysis is divided into four different parts using different methods and approaches.

Ngunjiri, Hernandez and Chang (2010) suggests that the autoethnographer should concentrate more on conventional methods in their autoethnographic approach as there might be a lack of methodological transparency. Therefore, I wanted to lay out the process of data analysis in a way that allows different perspectives to describe the views. The figure below shows the different perspectives taken to narrow down the phenomena of what could portray the situation in a family business in a suitable way

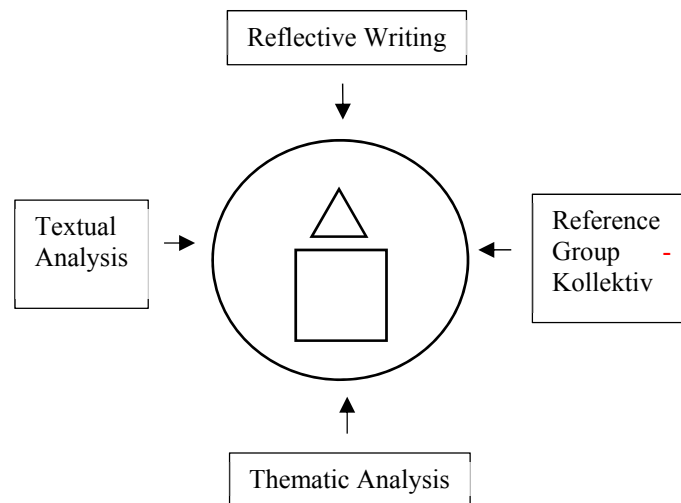


Figure 5 Perspectives for Analysing the Situation of a Woman in a Family Business (Source: The Author)

This figure illustrates that a situation can be viewed or interpreted from different perspectives in different ways. For example, in the perspective of the thematic analysis, there is no triangle. It cannot be seen because the square in front is too big

and blocks it; therefore, a free sight of the facts is not possible from this viewpoint. As this is a figurative explanation for the theme, it can make clearer that it is important to change the standpoints to capture a situation in full.

When viewing the experience from the perspective of the reflective writing perspective, the triangle is in front of the square. The reference group sees the triangle and the square and the perspective of the metaphor tells us the triangle is right of the square. This shows that it depends on the perspective from which one is viewing a situation and as discussed above, -ideas about perspective are an important part of symbolic interactionism.

I will now discuss the four steps of the data collection procedure in more detail.

First – My Reflective Writing

As this research is conducted as an analytic autoethnography, all the data is part of this research and is presented in Chapter 5. The reader is provided with a rich description of my experience and my life story and how I gave meaning to different stages of my previous life.

The reader has the chance to take away what is important for her/him and what has meaning for her/him. The reflective writing consists of data from my journals dated between 16 August 2014 and 23 June 2016 and also diaries dated back to my childhood. I wrote almost the whole autoethnography over one weekend. I did not always write the data from my journals in a special order. I did not think too much about how it would look and if it was consistent. It was more important to write what came to mind.

Second – Reference Group - Kollektiv

As mentioned earlier in section 4.2, I let my reference group or Kollektiv read my life story text, asking them if the text had meaning for them. I wanted to capture different perspectives; therefore, people with different backgrounds and relationships to me were asked. This should stand as a ‘reality check’ -though, not to check if the writing is true or false, even if one of my readers did judge the text with this criterion, but to prove that my view of point is right within the perspective of how that reality is constructed and interpreted. As everybody comes up with their own experience, they understand but also interpret within their line of meaning. As I explored extensively above. This is what it makes this research a precious contribution to existing knowledge about the situation of women in family business. Silverman (2014) calls this ‘contextual sensitivity’ (p.44), which refers to how participants of a group put a seemingly stable phenomenon like a family together. In my case, this is achieved through my reference group.

Third – Thematic Analysis

To analyse my reflective writing, I use thematic analysis. With this method, it is possible to capture all the multiple facets of the situation faced by me through the lens of the different theoretical approaches in the literature. Given the fact that my approach is anchored on the edge of family business sociological research, thematic analysis allows for the study of mental models, perceptions and beliefs (Carley, 1997). The data was analysed using NVivo10 software. Silver and Lewins (2014) found that using software is appropriate if the researcher wishes to code themes and concepts in order to build explanations or theories.

The literature review and the conceptual framework is taken as a basis for conceptual categories, which include the codes. The text was analysed by reading and re-reading

and coding the statements from my reflective writing, which could be associated with the different concepts (paradoxical situations, gender, total institutions, power, double-bind). The main question at this stage was: ‘What are the themes embedded in the conceptual categories?’ I started by determining which categories were predominant in the data (autoethnographic writing) and I summarised the ‘themes’. The analysis lies in the data because I moved from my experience towards the literature and then back to my data, coding the theoretical concepts found in the literature and analysing the data with the categories grouped in the literature review.

As I studied the field, the family business I know well, I came with preconceived beliefs and perspectives as it is my data and my writing, and so this perspective will be brought to bear in the data. I also created a kind of mind-map to illustrate the interconnection of all the themes; which can be found in Appendix 3. My aim was to bring my conceptions and experience into dialogue with my data and the different concepts I found in the literature. To what extent did the data support these themes? The findings are presented in Chapter 5.

Fourth – Textual Analysis

This analysis consists of two parts, the analysis of metaphors used in my writing and the word count, which was done with NVivo 10 as a quantitative counterpart to my reflective writing. I will now describe these approaches.

For Pieper, Astrachan, and Manners (2013) metaphors could be a means to display conflicts which are hidden and packed into the description of words. Metaphors might indirectly represent conflicts which are inferred but not argued in a direct way. Of particular relevance for this study, Graham and Seaman (2012) propose that metaphors

have the potential to represent the dynamics and interaction in family businesses. Metaphors also represent what Haug (2005) sees as significant in terms of the language one is using to describe experiences. This study adopts Haug's (2005) approach to memory work where the language is separated in their components to elicit the meaning of the experience the individual attempts to communicate. This means to look for emotions, which Haug (2005) suggests are often underrepresented in the stories women write.

I will interpret the metaphors I used in my autoethnographic reflections with elements from the theory of memory work (Haug, 2005). In doing so the sentences or words are deconstructed to their raw meanings and allow an exploration of the politics I transfer with the use of a certain metaphor. As Luce-Kapler (2004) stated the choice of verbs help to interpret the way one likes to be viewed by others, and could be used to uncover unconscious beliefs. Or in other words, an analysis of the use of metaphors might help determine our own identity, or how we do not want to be seen by others.

I highlighted a number of metaphors which I used in my autoethnographic text. I made use of this kind of expression as it is laden with meaning in a subtle way. Carpenter (2008) stated that examining phenomena from a unique and creative perspective can elicit an additional different view because metaphors illuminate the meanings of experience. I decided to include this, as I found that I used many of them in my text. Metaphors can also become dominant and obscure the essence behind them, a kind of 'sugar-coating'. Therefore, they are used as an additional perspective to the other analysis methods to extract conceptions from my text (Pitcher, 2013). For Alvesson and Sköldbäck (2010), using metaphors facilitates the process of reflection and a degree of self but, at the same time, reflects the seeing themselves *as* something.

Qutoshi (2015) sees in the use of metaphoric logics the writer being enabled to express symbolic relationships with particular situations that enrich multiple meanings and create the possibility of their richness in meaning making.

For while systematic data create the foundation for our theories, it is the anecdotal data that enable us to do the building. Theory building seems to require rich description, the richness that comes from anecdote. We uncover all kinds of relationships in our hard data, but it is only through the use of this soft data that we are able to explain them. (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 587)

In the quote from Mintzberg, the process of data analysis is concluded. I try to combine 'hard' data out of coding in NVivo and the word count analysis with 'soft' data, which is my reflective writing and the examination of metaphors. All of these pieces are combined together to create a whole picture of complex phenomena, the situation of women in family business. With different perspectives brought to bear in analysing the data, to highlight the idea of a situation which is complex and always in flux, it may be possible to describe a whole picture within a certain context. In the next chapter, my autoethnographic text is presented in full.

5. Autoethnographic Reflections on Being a Family Business Owner

Me as a child, experiencing the company

We lived in a big, very old house opposite the factory. My parents bought the whole terrain back in 1971, but the building was very old, dating back to the seventeenth century. From my bed, which was placed beneath the window in my room, I could see across the factory yard. In the morning, when I woke up and raised myself, one of the first things I did was to kneel down and place my elbows on the windowsill, my head on my hands, and look at who was driving in through the factory gate. Often, when it was around 6:30 in the morning, some of the workers would drive through the gate or come on a bicycle. I knew everybody. I mean, I could recognise that they were workers: I did not know their names. I only knew the names of some of them, like the women working in the office, the head of the tool-making section and the production manager. However, just from seeing them, I knew everybody. On some days, strangers would drive through the gate – strangers to me – but they were suppliers of materials or mechanics. However, there was not much time for me to look out of the window. My mother would come into my room. She would come to wake me up, but on this day, I was already awake. She told me to dress. This was not a regular thing for me. I did not like to get up early in the morning when it was cold and dark. I looked, then I got up and dressed. I did not like my clothing. Sometimes, when I think back to my childhood, I did not like anything at all, I think. No, this is not true: I liked my plush toys, which were very important to me. I would go into the bathroom and look into the mirror: I did not like what I saw. I did not like me as a child. I often saw myself from a distance, like a stranger. I was very pale and thin. I was approximately six years old when we moved into this house close to the factory. On some days, when I was not

with my grandmother, I spent a lot of time in the factory. To be more precise, I played in the assembly room. There were a lot of cartons with which I built houses. Each carton was one separate room. My grandfather worked in this room, which was quite big. He assembled brushes with a machine. I was used to walking around the factory. I think my parents thought that the workers would look after me. However, I knew that I had to behave anyway. The noise was very loud from these old machines; you could hardly speak in the production area. Everybody noticed me. I felt that was nice, but I did not like everybody. With some, I felt a bit uncomfortable when they talked with me. My shyness was great and I did not speak to anybody.

Before that, we lived in a house with my grandmother and her sister. In this house, there were three flats: my grandmother's sister lived on the ground floor, my grandmother on the first floor and my parents and I on the second floor. I have no memories filled with any real emotion. I can only remember my room and my bed and, sometimes, in the night or very early in the morning, I remember my mother standing beside my bed, or my grandfather. I spent most of the time with my grandmother in her flat. Here, my memories are vivid. Otherwise, I can barely remember this time as I was very small. I don't know if what I recollect is a memory, only in my head, or if it is mixed up with pictures I have in mind when I think of the time. One very intense feeling that I can remember is when I did not clean up my room. My mother got very angry and upset. She was on edge, and I thought I brought her there. That was what she said to me. When she started yelling at me, I withdraw from the situation and turned totally silent. She asked me: 'Why did you not clean up your room as I told you to?' I did not say anything because I did not know the answer. I did not know why I had not cleaned the room. I had no idea. This was my way of reacting to such a

situation. I sat silent on the edge of my bed. But this put my mother into even more of a rage, and the situation escalated. I decided somehow it would be better for me not to listen anymore and not to speak anymore. This was my impression of surviving the situation.

Alone, always working

I remember that my parents, my father and my mother, were always working.

Nevertheless, for me, it didn't feel too hard, because when my mother had left for work, my grandma was right there to see how I was doing. I never felt lonely; it was normal for me at this age. I also didn't see my father as a successful entrepreneur. He was never proud of himself. He didn't see himself as important either. Furthermore, my mother was very modest. My mother grew up pretty much in a working household, where money was scarce. However, my grandmother cared a lot about her two daughters, and they felt no lack during the war or the post-war period.

My father was raised in a totally different type of family. His parents were entrepreneurs. My grandmother on my father's side ran a small shop selling cigarettes and cigars. My grandfather was a mould maker, the basis of the present family business. He started his business in 1938 by producing steel moulds for companies throughout the region. Later, he started to inject plastic. My father's childhood was not what one thinks a childhood should be. He grew up with four brothers and one sister. Being the eldest, he was the one who was always blamed when his brothers or his sister did something. He practised many different sports throughout his life. He was a tall, handsome man. He met my mother in 1948, I think. I think it was very soon clear that she would support him in his dream of taking over his father's company. Her

wishes for her own life were not important – or, to put it another way, she did not give them priority. My father was never a man who forced my mother to give up her ways and dreams for him. However, I think he recognised that my mother would do so, and he thought that she would enjoy doing this. However, taking over the company from my grandparents was hard work. They took over the running of the company at a time where the turnover was decreasing and so were the margins. The company had a lot of debt. My mother often told me that no one delivered any raw materials to us: she would order what was needed and had to go to the company with cash, whereupon she would load the material onto the lorry and drive back to the factory, where they would be waiting for her to arrive so that they could carry on with production. Life back then was very hard compared with today. However, they managed it. My mother told me that the first thing she bought was a typewriter that she could use herself to create invoices: previously, she had to ask my grandfather if she could use his to write a letter or an invoice. She didn't like asking him. He was always in a bad mood and was not nice to her. The working conditions in this family business arrangement did not engender a good climate for a motivated couple, which my parents were back then. However, they worked their way through all the struggles and obstacles in their way. Now, with what I know, I am convinced that bad times and difficult conditions are fertile soil for a successful business.

My mother was quite old when I was born – not old compared with today's mothers, but back then she was considered quite old. She told me that many people thought that something must be wrong because they had not yet had children. My mother was 28 when I was born. When I was little, she managed to knit me a little rug: it was a lion. It was very cute, but I don't know what happened to it. I also don't remember that

much as a small child. I remember more things when I see pictures; however, the pictures do not evoke memories with emotions attached. There are only a few situations I can recall with emotion. Being with my parents on holiday was always very good. I liked it a lot. My father was relaxed and spent time with me.

However, there are not only good memories. I have no good memories of the kindergarten I went to when I turned four. I didn't like the other children a lot. I was somewhat shy. Before going to kindergarten, I had not really had any contact with other children – I spent the whole day together with my grandmother, which was fine with me, but on entering the kindergarten I think I recognised that children were strange to me, and I did not have any experience of children my age. I preferred watching children and people to being directly involved in what they were doing. Nevertheless, I could overcome my fears – which I didn't often, and then only when adults said over and over to me, 'Look, Helen, they are nice children the same age as you. Play with them!' – then, after a while, they could convince me to play with other children or with children I didn't know. However, I didn't like going to the kindergarten. I had a small little red satchel in which I carried my bread and so on. It had a typical smell; I still can recall it.

The kindergarten to which I went was led by the so-called '*Niederbronner Schwestern*', Catholic nuns. The nun who led the kindergarten was very strict and I never saw her smile or laugh. My impression was that everything in the rooms of the kindergarten was sterile, cold and dark. I saw myself alone, only with that nun sitting in the closet or changing room, in a small room, waiting for my mother to pick me up. She made me feel guilty because she had to wait when I was not picked up. I felt alone. I could remember seeing everything in the colours of grey, white and black –

monochrome. I also remember that we had to sleep: this was horrible for me. In the gym, they placed little beds – no, not beds – they were more like the folding cots they use in the army. They stood very close side by side. On the beds there very grey blankets, hard and stiff, and they did not smell nice. After we had eaten lunch, we went quietly to the gym and had to lie down on these beds and sleep with all the other children in the room. I could not sleep; I would lie there, always awake; this was terrible for me. We had to be quiet. I can't remember how long we had to sleep, but it was for one or two hours. Sometimes, I think, I fell asleep but was quickly awake again. I was very moody.

One thing I liked a lot was sport. As I got used to the kindergarten and the other children, I liked playing with boys very much. For me, this was a lot cooler than the things girls played at this age – mother, father and child. I couldn't enjoy that, it wasn't my kind of thing. I only had boys as best friends. I liked to play with cars, forts and knights, Playmobil and Lego. I had one friend: he lived in the centre of Erlangen, but his parents were building a new house outside the countryside. This was interesting; here we dug into the clay and built different tunnels, bridges and channels for water. He also had a very nice railway made of wood and had, like me, a lot of Matchbox cars. I always carried them with me in a little suitcase with compartments. Today, I find it sad not to have them anymore. I talked about those cars with my husband. He marvelled that I played with those cars when I was young. Nevertheless, generally, I felt lonely and bored. I can hear my grandma saying, as if it were yesterday: 'You are always bored; you do things for five minutes, and you are bored!' My father called me 'Springinsfeld': this is an expression I have never heard from anybody else. I recently looked it up on Wikipedia: it is the name given to a companion of Simplicius

Simplicissimus in the story by Hans Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen (1625-1676). I am not sure what is the right word or translation in English, perhaps ‘madcap’?

I liked the food which my grandmother prepared. She was a fantastic cook. The sauerbraten she cooked was to die for. However, unfortunately, I was too young to write down the recipes. My grandmother died when I was 12 years old. My mother was not as interested in cooking and also did not write down the recipes. So, the recipe was lost. This brings me to a thought I have had lately regarding a family business. I think that in a family, you have special recipes for doing things, mainly cooking. The grandma delivers the best recipe for a meal to her daughter; this recipe is prepared many times, she cooks it and the family eats it. Afterwards, she reflects: what could I make better next time? Use more salt, use less, cook it for longer, and so on. By the time the recipe is ‘ready’ to deliver to the next generation, it is nearly perfect, perfect in a way for that kind of family. I think in a family business, it is quite similar. You treat your children according to the best information available to prepare them for that kind of family business recipe. After a while, they cook it as if it is their own, or like the generation before did it. In some aspects, the former generation created it and learned from the mistakes they made. Moreover, in a family – even if the family owns a family business – there is (or should be) trust in what they say. Trust is the basis of every relationship. Trust reduces complexity.

However, going back to the time I was spending in my grandmother’s house, I also felt that my grandmother was ill. She did a lot of work but would often complain that her feet hurt. Later, I remember that a nurse came from time to time and gave my grandmother an injection. The medication was stored in the refrigerator in little bottles. They told me she had had sugar. However, for me, it was totally unclear what this

meant. She told me that she could not eat sugar anymore. I remember that for me, as a child, I loved chocolate and candy. It was pretty upsetting to think that my grandmother was not allowed to eat important and good stuff like sugar. When I was older, after her death, I realised that she had severe diabetes, and she was not compliant in not eating sugar.

I did not notice what time my parents came back from work. I have little memory of that. I played the whole day by myself. I drew pictures, I built things out of Plasticine, I put a table between the door frames and arranged all the food, which I built out of Plasticine, and I had a little cash register and paper money. I called my grandmother and she would 'buy' things from me. I was very happy when she did that. I remember that I formed little breads out of the dark brown mass. But she was constantly in a hurry. She did not take her time with me. I regularly felt that I took up her precious time, while I was not so important. I could play alone. So, I was quiet and played by myself. I didn't want to be the girl who stole time from her grandmother. She needed to cook, wash, rearrange the rugs, make the beds and so on. She was always busy doing things. She often said to me, '*Sei schön brav!*', which means something like, 'Be a good girl! I need to work'. My impression at this time was my mother was not there, my grandmother was. However, she was always working in the house or flat, and definitely did not have time to play with me. However, I was used to this. Nobody played, read or talked with me for a long time so that I could feel important for just being the way I am, as a person.

Hamster on a treadmill, 21.12.2015

I am trained to adjust to every situation. I am like a hamster on a treadmill. I was brought up to fulfil the needs of others. To work. What I like or what I want is not

relevant. It has to be useful and obvious. However, over all the years, the rebel in me is still here. I would spend my summer holiday from school with my aunt in the US. This was the place where I fed my rebelliousness. My dream was to move to the states and work there. All my life, or so it seems, I was imprisoned in the thoughts and wants of others. However, this had one advantage: I managed the family business very well – so skilfully that I currently have enough reasons to quit. Even now, after 15 years working in the company, having tripled the turnover, even now, I am not sure that I am allowed – or that I could allow myself this step. I am not afraid – I have experienced many struggles in my life and nothing can bring me down. But why do I still think I am not allowed to choose in a free manner?

The US stands for freedom and easy living, easy in the sense of light, not heavy. All the time, I thought I was born on the wrong side of the world. It was too cold; the people were unfriendly; the music was not good. I have often wanted to leave, but I am still here. It feels like I have an invisible iron ball and chain tied around my ankle. As I write, I am distancing myself from the here and now. I am somehow absent. I feel it is much harder to write while I am engaged in the working process. I am so absorbed in the day-to-day problems that I am not able to step back and reflect on what I am doing. This might be the case for all people, but I think that the self is more wrapped up in the problems surrounding it in the present and I am not always able to get in touch with myself. Even so, this is what autoethnography is all about. The writing process is both active and passive, subject and object, in touch with the past and the present. The self has developed in those particular circumstances. This year, I was on the verge of selling the company (this process I will describe later). Now, after this process, I can say: ‘my company’. Saying this is still not real to me: it somehow comes

from a distance, but it feels much better now than before this process. When I talk, I talk about the company. It is factual, not personal. Always impersonal. The company and me, we have had rough times together. We always had a difficult relationship. It often helped me but took a lot from me. The price I was paying was high, and is high still.

Later, I was a mother, outside the company with my ex-husband working in the family business.

With all this experience of my family and the company, I was longing to love and to be loved. I was 17 when I met my ex-husband. I can remember how I thought; this is the first time we have met, and we are talking about what we are currently doing. As he said he had a technical background and was training as a '*Maschinenbautechniker*', or mechanical technician, I thought, 'Oh this is the perfect man; he can work for the company'. So, back then, this was not a conscious decision, but I can remember those thoughts. Therefore, that's what happened. Clearly, I found him nice, and handsome; and in my head, I had a plan. My parents liked him a lot, and so the story went. I married him at 18, and I remember that my father was not excited about the idea. He said: 'Why are you marrying so young? Take your time!' I thought there was no time. No one else in the world. I had totally committed myself to him as a reincarnation of my problems. How naïve I was. We didn't even really understand each other properly. We often had arguments.

He started working in the company. In the beginning, all was fine. He was proud of working there, and I was proud of him. Later, he said to me that he was not paid well, but he agreed to continue because when we owned the company, then we would have money. I can remember being happy during that time. I thought everything was set.

Oh, was I naïve – a quick solution and everyone's happy. However, he couldn't do much against the will of my parents. They accepted his ideas about development within the company, but were not sure if that was a good way to go. I think in some ways they never trusted him: this was a big fault in all of us. I would say that my parents were not honest with him. My mother would often tell me he was doing a good job but I needed to help him: that meant she had to do some work after he had already done it. She would say, when he forgets something, oh, I must remind him of this and that. What she said did not give me a good feeling, and I was not sure what I should do with this information. So, I asked myself if should I talk to him about this matter. Should she talk to him? Was it better coming from her?

Later, I realised that it was not a good thing for me, knowing this. It made him weak in my eyes. At that time, knowing what I knew, I trusted my mother. I was sure that she would never do something that was bad for me. Today, I still think that she would never have done me any harm consciously. However, today I understand much better how people act when they see themselves losing their place and they feel neglected. People, including parents, can do things that they would not normally do. I was young and I was still of the opinion that my parents did everything the correct way and always did the right thing for me. I do not know why, for me, my parents were impeccable. Perhaps I thought that because they could work with and in the monster company, they must have supernatural powers. I took everything for granted that they told me. So, I thought my ex-husband was not doing a good job in the family business: this for me was like violating something sacred. I was not able to think, well he's not doing a good job, so maybe he should quit and apply for a job in a bigger company. For me, he slowly turned into a loser. I know now that this was not fair. He had a lot of struggles.

He could never win this game. My parents were convinced that my then-husband was not able to work in a proper manner and therefore he was not a good person. Failing in the company also meant failing in the family. My mother took every opportunity to make him feel that he was no good – and that is what I did to him, at home.

Over time, my respect for him grew less and less. It was not deliberate, but I was acting as a kind of marionette, I suppose, knowing exactly what was expected of me. This was not only because of the company, but was also a private thing. However, it's too personal to write and talk about, and in the end, it didn't matter at all.

I can remember one time when a customer in the UK wanted a visit from my father. My parents asked me if I would join my father and my ex-husband in visiting this client. I said, 'Yes, if somebody would take care of the children, I would go with them'. The reason for my parents asking me was that my English was very good. I didn't work in the company at that time so, looking back, it was a bit strange for them asking me this. I didn't know if it was appropriate to go or not, but, for me, it was a new experience, and I was fine with it. My English was not as necessary as it sounds, by the way: my ex-husband also spoke English, and my father was a kind of language genius. I am not saying that he could speak the language, but he could communicate with people without any vocabulary. However, that's another story. It also turned out that the managing director was German. They told us that they wanted to expand their production in the UK, and that it would also be necessary for us to invest because they would increase the volume they bought from us. This was obvious to my father, and totally clear to my ex-husband. We talked about it on the aeroplane when we flew back to Germany. My ex-husband had a clear plan that we would need to follow to produce the quantities they would want for us in a couple of months. We were all happy, and

we raised our glasses. Back at home, I pursued my chores as usual in the household and with my children. I didn't ask again what they had implemented or invested after our meeting in the UK. Later, however, I heard that we did not make this investment. As far as I remember, my mother said it was too much money and we couldn't afford to do it. We would not be able to invest in new machines, and we had no guaranteed orders afterwards, so how could she negotiate with the bank? As our client finished their investment in their plant in the UK, and the quantities rose, we were not able to fulfil all the orders on time and in the manner our client expected of us. And so, the inevitable happened: the client searched for a second supplier, and a new company delivered to our client.

This brief picture is not a heart-warming story, but a story to learn from for the future. I can remember it – or to be more precise, my mother told me the story recently. When I was still married to my ex-husband, I talked with my father, saying that he should be nicer to my ex-husband, that he often didn't feel good. I can't remember what my father replied. I think he said nothing. My mother told me, 'Well this is what you said. So, what should we, as your parents, do about this?' We decided that my mother would not say anything more to my ex-husband that was critical. She told me, 'You wished us not to criticise him, so we complied. Helen, we wanted to do everything you wanted'. This sounded odd after so many years, like: 'You told us not to criticise him, so we didn't talk with him in a grown-up manner.' Nevertheless, she said, 'We didn't think that he was doing a good job, and we believed he would never take over the company. We believed that could only happen if you entered the company.' Oh, now it was clear: I understood that the game was not over. The company and my parents still needed me. They were reaching out to me, like a tentacle from an octopus, even

though I was far away – not physically, but more in a metaphorical sense, far away, because I was at home with my children, and the children acted as a shield.

As I had married my first husband very young, I hadn't finished my schooling. I was in the last class before my Abitur or A levels. I have to admit that I first attended a commercial school, a school completely focusing on accounting and organisation, and after finishing this school, the degree was only the rough equivalent of an O level. I was 15 years old, and to me, it was clear that I would continue in another school: I wanted to finish school with A levels because I wanted to study. This was very hard. I did not learn any real mathematics in that commercial school, so I needed to learn everything from scratch in just two years. I lived in Bavaria, and the school system in Germany is not equal in all parts of Germany. Bavaria is very strict with everything, including with regulations and laws. The teacher in the new school where I was to finish my degree said to our class: 'How many of you come from commercial school?' I raised my hand, looked around the classroom, and I saw only one boy who also raised his hand. The teacher said: 'Well, I don't think you will manage the workload here: with no mathematics, your chances of finishing this degree are zero.' Well, what a motivating pronouncement! After that, everything was clear: the best thing was to give up and leave. However, my dream was to study, so I knew I would finish and succeed in that. So, it was clear to me that I would study after finishing at school.

I filled out the application forms for a place at university. Back in 1987, there were not enough places for students and you needed good grades to have a chance of getting in. After I had sent off my application, my ex-husband told me that he would not accept me studying. He said: 'Now that we are married, we will have children, and I want you to take care of the children, and this is not possible if you are studying.' His opinion

was that I would not need any education if I was at home, and he would take care of our income. So, I did as I was told. I was accepted at Nuremberg for a place at a University of Applied Sciences. I went there three or four times, just to see what it would be like studying. My girlfriend got a place in Wurzburg, which was 100 kilometres away. We swapped our places of study, and so I did something good in giving up my place of study to her. Now she could study in Nuremberg. I was happy about my decision.

I became pregnant with our first child almost one year after my decision not to study; it was in 1988. I remember that I did not want to know if it was a girl or a boy. I desperately wanted a girl, so I was so happy when Nadja was born. For the second child, I didn't have a preference, it could be a boy or a girl, either would be fine with me. I had no real ideas, but I was young and enthusiastic about the idea that having children would be the thing which would fulfil me and our marriage, if everything turned out right. Now, at 48, my daughter is 26, much older than I was when she was born. She left us on our own. We sit here now with so much work, and I still can't understand what happened that she would quit with so few reasons. Perhaps she is stronger than I was? I always wanted to raise a strong girl or woman. Now, this has fallen back on me, she is also strong in opposition to me. There is a saying an older woman told me recently – I guess she is around 70 years old: small children step on your feet; big children step on your heart. How true. I did a lot of sport at that time, but I included it as a part of my life, not the whole. Our second child was born only 15 months later. These were exciting times.

My ex-husbands' stress grew. He had a lot to do in the company and two young children at home. He engaged with the children quite a lot, but not too much. Our flat

was small: the two children had a tiny room together. I wanted to move out of this flat. We were living on the second floor in the house with my grandmother, in the flat where my parents and I used to live—and Nadja could walk when she was ten months! So, I would carry Patrick, and Nadja was able to climb the steps up to the second floor on her own. But then I had to go down again to carry the things we had bought up to the second floor. However, the children understood and were very brave, so this was not a problem. My dream, though, was to live in a small house with a garden, but we didn't have money. One day I heard that a small house was available in our neighbourhood because the former owner, an old man, had died and his children wanted to sell the house. It was a small but nice house; the living space was around 150 square metres and the garden, including the house, was 180 square metres. The problem was, the house was old, built around 1924, which made the house affordable for us, but we had to renovate everything – the wiring, the water supply, everything. This was back in 1993 when house prices were high in Germany, but it was affordable because it was in need of total renovation. My father-in-law said, 'Well I am retired, I can help you to renovate this house'. My ex-husband did not like the idea of buying this house. He said it was too expensive and it was too much work. But I wanted it so badly. My parents gave us €50,000 (at that time, 100,000 marks), which was a lot. This sum was the precondition for the bank to grant us credit for the rest.

And that was when the trouble began. My ex-husband was very tired. He didn't like the idea of working in the company and working in the house. Together with my father in law, I worked on the house: I learned how to use an air hammer, how to install water pipes in the house – they are made of PVC and we glued them together. This shouldn't sound like I did everything when renovating the house: my father-in-law did most of

the most work. But it went on, and after six months we were able to move in. However, the first floor was not yet ready. It was still a construction area. Also, the kitchen was a catastrophe. But I wanted it, so I accepted the situation – but I didn't anticipate that the building site on the first floor would be there for five years. During this time, my ex-husband went on holidays with our son. My parents financed this: we had no money at all left for going on holidays. It was always that way. Our holidays were always financed by my parents. This was, on the one hand, very nice because we could never afford a holiday with two children, but on the other hand, my ex-husband felt bad because he was not able to pay for a family holiday. It would have been much better for him to earn more money so that he could pay for our holidays. But I think my parents meant well. However, we were never independent, always depending on the goodwill of my parents. Perhaps it would have been much healthier for all of us if we hadn't gone on holidays, or only went camping with tents. I think the children would have loved that. Nevertheless, camping was not my ex-husband's thing. When no one has ever given a company to the next generation, it is always the first time, and mistakes are made: I didn't realise that it would be a problem that my parents paid for our holidays. I was happy that we travelled to Fuerteventura, and my mother would often join us. So, I was happy.

However, my ex-husband continued to appear weaker and weaker in my eyes. Often, when he came back from work in the evening, he would eat something and then just go to bed, often at six o'clock in the evening. He went to work at 8.00 am and had his breakfast with my mother and father so they could talk about work. At noon, he often came home to eat with us, or he went with my father to a restaurant not far from the company. At three o'clock, my mother would often see him for coffee, and he left the

company at five o'clock. This didn't do anything to improve my parents' opinion of him. They told me he did not work hard enough. So, more information directed at me: I don't know why they were not able to speak with him directly. What should I do with this information? The intermingling of family and company expanded in the family and encompassed my husband. This all sounds as if I blame the family business for my less than happy marriage, but, no, that is not the case. However, the influence the company and the family had all the time was ubiquitous.

This was also the time when my parents decided to get some advice from a consultant. His name was Mr. Smith. When he came – and he came every two weeks – my mother would phone me and invite me to join them. I said, 'Fine, I will come'. So, after taking the children to kindergarten, I drove to the factory. We had a little meeting room, and here the meeting took place. It started at nine o'clock. I was always there first, with Mr. Smith. Then my father came, Mr. Beer, my ex-husband, and usually Mr. Schmidt, the production manager. However, he often had too much work to do to join the meeting. Even my ex-husband did not understand why and what Mr. Smith wanted from him. For me, it was exciting, a splendid variation to my normal life. My mother was never part of these meetings. I didn't know why. For every meeting, Mr. Smith created an agenda, and everyone was supposed to help one another prepare for the meeting. He often went through his agenda and then asked if this person had prepared something; the answer was often, 'No, I didn't have enough time to do that'. They didn't realise that this man was there to help them: they did nothing for him and only for themselves. I learned a lot during these meetings. I was always prepared, but to be honest, I didn't work for the company, so I think I had a lot of time to fulfil my little tasks easily. Then the time came when he asked me to write down what I thought were

my strengths and weaknesses, and what my objectives were. He said, 'Take your time, and please bring it with you in two weeks' (Appendix 1). He asked the same thing of my ex-husband: he did not write anything down. I have kept these pages until now, although I wrote them back in about 1996. They make very interesting reading after all these years. To be honest, I don't know if he spoke to my parents about what I wrote in these pages, but I did write that I would take over the company in one sentence and in the second one, that the company took my parents from me.

After a while my father stopped these meetings with Mr. Smith – perhaps he thought they made no sense when no one was joining in the meetings. But he was the managing director, and it was his wish to engage Mr. Smith in some of the processes, so he had organised these meetings and being prepared for the meeting was mandatory for everyone. However, my father was weak in these decisions, so he cancelled the meetings and Mr. Smith did not come back.

I thought that it would be nice if I were to have a bit of money, so I decided on an apprenticeship with a sports trainer in our union. In Germany, this is a particular kind of organisation. I wanted to give lessons in aerobics and wanted to teach gymnastics to children, so I got my trainer license. My ex-husband was fine with my decision. And so, it came about that I gave three one-hour lessons to children – my children were also with me – and a lesson for women one evening a week.

I also wanted to have a dog. Patrick was four years old and I thought that he was now old enough for us to get a big dog. Ever since I was a child, I had wanted a Scottish Deerhound. My mother paid for the dog and we picked him up in Cologne. The dog was a dream, and everybody loved him. My mother, too, was very excited. We still have a picture in our house of this dog, and my mother also has one. We were very sad

when we had to have him put to sleep: he was ten years old. This dog turned out to be my closest friend, besides my girlfriends. A relationship with a dog is very special: I talked with him a lot about what I was thinking as we wandered through the forest. The dog gave me a good alibi for not being at home or for leaving home in the afternoon for walking. Our marriage was going from bad to worse.

The next thing I wanted to do was learn languages, and I went to a school in Erlangen. I started to learn Spanish and French. I don't think my ex-husband liked it: he didn't say much about it, but I don't think so. Then we decided to have an au pair. This was also my idea, and my ex-husband said yes to it. He always said yes to things and later wouldn't stop moaning about them. I often told him, 'Say no when you mean no', but this was not his style. He liked the idea of being the good guy, and other people didn't get to see the quarrels. For him, it was always important that his world was perfect, and the people around him should think everything was just lovely. But nothing was lovely. We decided to have couples therapy. At first, this was a good idea, and he also thought it was a good decision. After a while, however – I think it was after the third hour – he said he wouldn't continue as he thought the problems were with me and I should continue with the therapy. He had no problems. When I heard this, I was very upset and yelled at him. I found it unbelievable that he thought I was the source of all the problems in our relationship. However, I decided to carry on, and I continued this therapy for almost two years. It seemed to me a very good decision, but was also a very difficult time. I often cried and had to get in touch with my feelings. I was beginning to free myself, but before I could feel the freedom, I felt the sadness with which therapy is always combined. I was able to resolve the problems I had with

myself, and after a period of a year, I was sure that I had to divorce myself from my husband.

I remember when I made that final decision to get divorced. It was after a short holiday we had with friends on the English coast. We travelled there by car and met my friends, who had spent some time learning English there. We wanted to go camping because this would also be nice for the kids. My ex-husband, as always, said yes but meant, as always, no. So, he didn't join in and did nothing for the community. In the morning, everybody had their chores. One would buy bread, one would fix breakfast, one would make coffee (meaning that someone had to make a fire to have hot water). Only one person did not do anything. This was my ex-husband. He sat on the only chair we had brought with us and waited for the others to set everything for breakfast. One night, a huge thunderstorm blew over the camping area. I woke up and realised that the rope from our tent had come unpegged. I stepped out of the tent in the rain and was looking at what had happened. I woke my ex-husband up and said that, on our side (Nadja's and mine), the rope had torn. He said, 'Leave me alone. You wanted to go camping. See how you can fix it.' Nice. His daughter was also lying on that side of the tent, but he didn't care. Understanding what he said, I got dressed and stepped out. I took a hammer and tried to get the peg back into the earth. Then I saw Bulli step out of his tent – he was a friend of ours – and he said: 'Wait, I'll help you.' He understood that my ex-husband didn't give a damn.

After these few days in England, we drove back to home. While we stayed the night in Belgium, I phoned a friend living in Brussels and said, 'Joelle, we are here, can we visit you?' She said, 'Well, you and the children can come, but not your husband. Sorry.' I said, 'Okay, Joelle. Thank you, but we are a family. We all come, or no one

will.’ I hung up. I called my mother. I said to her, ‘We will need one more day to get back home, then it’s Sunday, so you have two days to decide what to do.’ I told her that I wanted to divorce my husband. I was sure, and I would tell him right away when we got home. I told her that I wanted her to know beforehand as she had to decide what to do for the company. She replied, ‘If this is your decision, we will share it with you. We are on your side when you need us. You always do what you want.’ What did this mean?

I learned to trust my feelings and to see myself as an individual. I knew that it would be hard for my children – they were nine and ten years old – and I knew that it would also be difficult for my parents because they would lose someone who worked for their company. They were getting older, and as yet, they had no solution to their succession planning. With this decision, their hope died that I would enter the firm and take it over together with my ex-husband. This is clear now. As I mentioned earlier, I not only took the children from my ex-husband, but I took the house, me and his job. This sounds strange, but in an abstract way, this is what it was like.

We arranged everything, but when the time came when he should leave the house, my ex-husband didn’t want to move out. He said that this was because it was me who wanted to separate. Then I had to tell the children and then we all had to leave. I took responsibility for that. I agreed. My mind was clear. I would tell them, and I would tell them that we had to go. I called my mother and told her the situation. She said we could come and move into the small flat opposite the company. So, there we were again. I was back after 15 years, back opposite the company. But I was glad that she helped us. I first brought the children to the flat, and then drove back, getting a bed for each of them. My ex-husband was at home, sitting in the kitchen. I was carrying a bed

down from the second floor (in parts, bringing it to the car): he did not even raise himself to help me. Then I asked him, what about the cat? Will you feed her? He said no, he didn't want to feed her. So, then I needed to pack everything for the cat. Knowing that, for a cat, the house is more important than the people with whom it is living, I had the cat in the car, and she cried. I also cried, loudly, in the car. But when I got to my new home at the company, I pulled myself together and didn't allow what had happened to show. I was being strong for the children.

After some weeks, my ex-husband found himself a small flat and moved out of the house. We went back—but without the cat. She was living then with my mother, and we shared the dog. He spent some time with my mother and some with me. This was the time when I started working within the company. I think that apart from the grief which all this had also caused my parents, the good side of it was that I started working for the company. I think they were very pleased with my decision.

Me entering the company

The company offered me the opportunity to work and earn money even without an apprenticeship or formal qualifications. To work in the company seemed to be a lesser evil than applying for a job, at least back then. My parents were happy that had I started working for the company. They never said that; they never would but between the lines, I knew that they were very happy with my decision. Easy. A quick solution. This work made it possible for me to separate me from my ex-husband because I always knew that he would never pay for my children and me. It was also hard for me to feel able to leave him: he worked in the company and if I went, I would also take his job away – not that my parents and I wanted that, but I knew from the start that he would not stay and work in the company as before. I told him that it was okay with my parents

if he continued to work there, but he said it no longer made any sense to him. His dream was always to be self-employed, and this is what he would now do. He would take the money he got from the company as compensation and would invest it in machines and in founding his own firm. At this time, for me, it was totally clear that he would not be able to pay maintenance for his children. I wanted to keep the house and would buy him out, and I would take over the remaining mortgage with the bank. I asked my parents and they said they would gladly lend me the money to buy him out, so I alone was responsible for the mortgage.

Looking back, I knew that I was making a mistake in marrying him, but I was too much of a coward to cancel the marriage. I had a voice inside which told me not to marry, but another part of me, said no, it's too late now. I already knew then that I would be responsible for my children and myself. So that was how the story with me and the company began, but on another level.

The company employed me as a clerk, and I was to see what this new arrangement would bring to my life. I got a place to sit and work at the back of the front office. I shared the office with a nice older lady. The room didn't have any heating, so it was very cold. Initially, no one knew what I was doing there, including me. I don't think anyone had any idea. Yet somehow, obviously, I had entered the company without applying for an open position. The people working in the company knew that I was the only daughter, and so they didn't really wonder what I was doing there, for, as a family member, there is always an argument for working in the family business, even without any official documentation.

My mother gave me small tasks which I had to work on and finish. As far as I remember, I had to do the addition for the clock-in cards of each of the workers. This

was the basis for paying the workers' monthly wages. There was no computer system at that time. I found it very complicated because it was not a clear-cut system. On the surface, it seemed easy; but then I recognised that everybody has their own way of working. Almost every single worker had individually adapted their working hours. When I had finished one of the cards, I went to my mother and showed her the card and the addition – or, to be more precise, showed her how many hours each worker had worked in that specific month. She took the card and looked at it. Then she said, 'No, not Mr. Robin. He works on Friday only until 12 o'clock and he never has a break at noon. So please correct this'. Okay. I understood. Then I finished the next card. My mother said: 'Oh no, not Mr. Jack. He has one-and-a-half hours' break at noon and he works till four o'clock on Fridays'. Next card: 'Oh no, Mr. Schmith. He works till five o'clock. And don't reduce the beginning minutes. With him, we will pay him.' After each card, my mother grew more and more upset. I was getting worried about asking her again. But for me, it was almost impossible to detect any pattern. There was also no documentation on these cards where I could look anything up. Even the cards from the previous month didn't always follow a similar pattern. There was an individual system adapted for every single worker. My impression was that the workers were very satisfied with this individual time scheme; but for an outsider, as I was back then, it was impossible to handle. When I asked my mother why this was such an individual system, she said it had always been that way, and if I was going to ask her everything for the whole day, it was easier for her to do it herself. She said I wasn't helping with anything! This made me sad because I wanted to do good work and the issue was that the lack of transparency in the system made it impossible for me to do good work on

my own without bothering my mother. This was far from motivating. I thought I was doing everything wrong.

After a while, when I was sitting behind my desk, waiting, my mother gave me different jobs. I would record the data from the statements of the account in the cash journal. This meant that I needed to record everything that was written in the statement of the account into this book, and tick the invoices so that it was clear that the money from the customer was in the bank account and that we had paid our invoices. All payment flows were registered in this book, with dates, and the pages numbered. It was very orderly, and I needed to give it my whole attention. I had to be careful, because if I made a mistake the whole page was ruined. But it was better than the addition of the working hours, being clearer to me. However, my mother was not so satisfied with it. I think that was when I first learned that I could not do anything right in her eyes.

After these approaches, we tacitly agreed that I would search for jobs myself. I thought it would be a good idea for the company to have an email address and I started to figure out what the requirements were for installing such an address. We now had a website – which was not unusual in 1998 for a company like ours – but we had only an address with the Telekom extension, which was better than nothing. Now, when I told my mother that everything was ready, she was content with it – content rather than satisfied, which I think was impossible. But I realise this only now: back then, I had no idea why my mother was always in a bad mood. I was very sure that my imperfection was the cause of her mood.

The next little project I started was to do research buying electricity from another supplier. This was possible because the German electricity market was now open to a

range of suppliers. We were one of the first companies not to buy their energy from the local municipal utility (*Stadtwerke*). My parents let me work. I would ask them what they thought, and they simply said, 'Fine, do it'. Changing energy provider saved us a lot of money. The next step was a new brochure for the company. I remembered a friend of mine being an artist – or, to be more specific, a painter – and he was now also working as a graphic designer. I called him, and because I knew he was very creative, the brochure would be totally different from all the other brochures in our field. I did this together with my father – together in the sense that he let me work and lead the project, but he was always with me in meetings because of the content. I didn't have sufficient knowledge of the company to fill in the required lists on my own. The documentation was a problem in the company. Everything was in the heads of the people and almost nothing on paper for a third person to work from. This made it tough work. We need lists of all machines, products and so on. As we had no data on our products in a list, I had to collect all of the measurements from drawings, etc. I searched the whole company for these figures; it was like playing detective. For me, it was a good way to get to know the company and the products better. Now I would say this is a hard introduction to a firm, but it was also a good idea to select and realise projects on my own. But what would have happened if I hadn't done a good job? Did my parents already know that I would do all this work well? Because these projects were not cheap, and if the results hadn't been good, it would have been a very expensive experience. Did my parents give me any positive feedback or praise? No, I had never had feedback. When the brochure was finished and printed, it was very nice; this made me feel good but not much more.

That was the time when I began to work more than just a few hours in the company. It quickly became more and more. My mother picked up the children from school and so on, but I still worked half days. Then I met my life partner, Uli. He lived in Ulm. After a short time – only one month – he moved from Ulm to our house. He was okay with me working part-time, and I was happy that he was at home. So the process of me working more and more developed very slowly: not the whole day, but sometimes until two o'clock and so on. I saw that Uli got along well with the children: he cooked, and was there when they came home. He was a special person, not a usual one. He was a musician and saw life from a different angle. He liked saying things like 'a new situation, a new point of reflection'. This is a saying from Bertolt Brecht. He brought light into my life and taught me to live again – perhaps for the first time in my life. He said, 'You can do anything that you wish to do'. I had never believed such things, and with my history, I always looked at him as if to say, 'Are you kidding?' He was good for me, though my mother did not get on with him very well. He was out of her reach: she couldn't influence him. It was not possible. He was a free man, free in his mind. He didn't care about money. He always said it's only money.

Feeling good, and also having a good feeling about Uli being at home, I got more and more involved in the company. At the beginning of our relationship, we travelled to Tobago. This holiday was one of the happiest times of my life. We had plans to move there and live there. So crazy. But possible, though I wasn't ready for this step. I told him that when we got back to Erlangen, we would both drown. This was my feeling. It didn't happen, but we had a rough time. He was 20 centimetres shorter than me, a musician and a mason, not adequate for me: that was what people were saying. I felt that dichotomy of the world around us rejecting him while I was very happy with him.

Our new friends liked him, but my parents' friends and my older friends—not friends, more contacts—didn't like him so much. He was not of their class. Being of someone's class is evidence of incapacity, but this is what people are often all about.

Choking

My ex-husband made my life and the lives of my children difficult. His idea of being an entrepreneur and founding a company didn't work, and he became insolvent, not paying anything for the upkeep of the children. He was so frustrated that he tried to make our lives as hard as possible. My mother, too, often worked against me because she didn't have the influence she wanted to have. She did care a lot for the children, mostly in a material way, buying everything they wanted. This was not a good way to be, but the only way she knew. We didn't have much money: my salary was not high, and I had to pay for the house and Uli was not working. So I was the only woman bringing money home. My mother had money, so when she came home from Spain where my parents had a flat, she would bring a lot of clothes for the children. A lot. I had to step back because I struggled with this, but we all were happy because the children were happy, not thinking or ignoring that this was not good for the children. Later, my daughter, in particular, often told me that I did not give her enough as all of her stuff came from my mother. At the time, I wasn't able to see it, but Uli did. He said the children were being spoiled, but I said that wasn't true.

Only a few years later, my parents were in a quandary about what to do with the company. They decided to sell. I acknowledged that that was their decision and I would help them with it. For me, I never dreamed of taking over the company. I wanted to have a job, not anything else. So my thinking was that I could work within the new

company, and I found that idea exciting. We found a potential buyer for the firm, but then my father had doubts and he stopped the whole process. It cost us a lot of money. Then my parents began to search for a managing director. Again, I complied. My father engaged an agency to search for a managing director who was willing to do the job. My parents found someone; I can remember that he was from Munich and very keen to start working in the company. The agency began preparing the contract and made an appointment with the man to sign the contract. A short time later, my father decided not to proceed with it. This was another expensive decision. We had to pay the agency, and the man also wanted compensation.

Me and the conflict of taking over the company

The production site in Erlangen was becoming too small. It was obvious that if the company were to have a future, it needed a new line of production. So, a decision had to be made. My father was 63 years old and he wanted to retire, but he didn't know how, and he didn't speak openly with me. I could only guess or read his mind. A major client visited us at our production site in Erlangen and I prepared a presentation about the company. My father thought they might buy the company. He said he would have asked them, but the factory manager was always part of the meeting, so I couldn't. This was typical of my father: he was the only person who was in a position to tell the factory manager to leave the room, and I don't know why he didn't.

After three years, we understood what this client wanted from us. In 2005, they switched from their kind of packaging, which they were producing themselves, to our products. But in 2000, they didn't tell us that they were coming to our site to see if we could produce what they wanted for them. They only said we didn't have any space

left to build a new production base, so what were we going to do. Well, nothing was clear: my father didn't want any more responsibility, the succession planning was unclear and the problem with the building was obvious. So I said that we were searching for land or a building to move the production out of that particular building, but so far, we hadn't managed to find the right building: because of our shift system, we operated 24/7 and this was not possible when there were houses around. 'We are searching,' I said, and we were sure we would find something.

Only three days later, I got a phone call from the managing director of this client in France. He wanted to know what our requirements for the new building were in more detail because they had an empty building close to their factory which could perhaps be a solution for us. I was always curious, and this sounded very exciting. I told him that sounded good and asked him to send me a plan and the address of this building. The next week, my father and I travelled to France to meet the managing director and visit the building. It looked very good, like it was purpose built for us. Then the idea surfaced – I no longer know whose idea it was – to collaborate with them. Clearly we said immediately yes, not thinking about the consequences. That first 'yes' felt so right. It was a clear feeling from my father and me. So clear, we had to do this. So it happened: we created a 50/50 cooperation agreement with our customer in France. I can remember we had a consultant who read the contract and said that he would not recommend a 50/50 split as our company was so small and they were so big. Well, that was the motivation for a fair and close cooperation. My opinion is still that, with a 50/50 partnership, it was necessary to find good solutions. Otherwise, everything would go back and forth. Now, 15 years later, it remains a very good decision. It laid the foundation for a trusting collaboration with our customer.

That was the time for my father to say he wanted to hand over the company to me. He told me he would give me everything now, all, with all its pros and cons. He would not keep anything back, but I needed to pay them a sum every month until their deaths. So we did it. This was 2001 and in January 2002, my name was officially on the register of the Chamber of Commerce.

Me in the position of company CEO

The company is a GmbH, the German name for a limited liability company. In Germany, this is a legal personality, something impersonal; however, the company bore the name of a person – my father, Manfred Fürst. At almost the same time that I took over responsibility for the company, I decided to change its name to Fürst GmbH, so it was no longer had the name of a single person. I had never thought of naming the company after myself, because I was never really proud of what I was doing.

Things took a different turn later when I was managing director of the company, however. I now acted on its behalf, on behalf of the company. I was helping the company do its business. I was now becoming its helper, its fulfiller, its henchman. Now it was my responsibility.

I brought about a turnaround in the company, changing the main product line from a mixed factory, producing many products, to a company which only produced packaging for the food processing industry.

Studying while working

As my dream was always to study and to learn a lot in life and about life, after finishing school, I started studying economics in Nuremberg, but not for long, because my ex-husband didn't like the idea of a student wife. For me, the situation of having a family

was quite important; therefore, it was quite an easy decision for me to quit studying and stay at home. The years went by and I registered in a school for languages. I started studying French and Spanish. This was very positive and a nice experience for me. We engaged an au pair so I was able to leave home in the morning and go to school, so to speak. I experienced it as a nice time. I learned a lot, and later I realised that it was important to study French because I founded the first company outside Germany in France, though I didn't know this back then. Somehow for me, it was always important to learn all about other countries: my dream was always to live somewhere other than in Germany, so therefore the language was a way in, so to speak. But unfortunately, this did not last long. My ex-husband was not amused and he forced me – in a gentle way, but I did understand what I should do – to quit school and focus more on the family. So, I did. More than five years later, I started studying economics. This was a special cooperative programme between the University of St. Gallen and the Steinbeis University of Applied Science. This was my opportunity – quite a hard one, because I was building a new factory close to Erlangen, but in the countryside with a lot of space. But I was so eager to learn that I finished my studies in 2008.

That was a year with lots of mixed emotions. I experienced a blow to my faith as my long-term partner, Uli, died in an accident, right on the street. I hadn't had the chance to say goodbye. This was a horrible time for me and my children. As I was the only manager of the company, I needed to return to work immediately after this happened, but it was so hard for me that I searched for help, and I needed it. Deciding on this was a good thing. It gave me the chance to come back to life. This was the hardest thing so far in my life. I thought at times that I probably would not survive the pain. But, years later, I can see that this experience was, in one sense, a good one: I learned to deal with

the worst pain in my life and I am still here and life goes on. There will always be a future, even if I couldn't see it back then. Were I to experience another painful situation now, I know that I would be able to survive.

However, with this experience behind me, my life changed. I learned for the first time that working is not everything in life. After losing someone so dear, who always knew how to live his life, I learned my lesson. Back then I didn't realise it, but, looking back, 2008 was a turning point in my life – also, because I had met my beloved husband in the same year. We got married two years after our first date. One year later, I founded another company in France. This was more the idea and will of my now good friend, the managing director of the first French company, Jean. It was important for him to create a company by himself. I think he envied me for the fact that I was born into a family business. This was his dream. Now, the dream came true and we built a second factory in France. My husband also has shares in it. Honestly, back then, I didn't care a lot. For me, it was important that Jean was happy: I trusted him, and I do so now. The development of the Fürst group has been quite enormous. I think my part in the success was working hard, being disciplined, developing a good connection with people and not taking myself too seriously—and having the financial means: I left all the money in the company so we had always enough to grow it. But now, I realised that I had neglected to think about my pension. I wasn't paying anything into an insurance scheme: I was only serving the company. Even though I knew that I was the holder of 100 per cent of the shares, I had not touched anything – only once had I used funds to buy myself a house in the countryside, moving away from the loud city of Erlangen and away from all the people who wanted something from me.

Wanting to sell the company, 16.08.2014

A thought I had for a long time was growing stronger over time. It began with a letter I received from a big competitor, much bigger than my company. The owner manager sent me a letter in which he said he was interested in my company and could we talk. This sparked the initial thought of being free. I danced around the kitchen. After a few days, I contacted him and we met. We met once or twice, but back then I wasn't sure. However, my thoughts matured and I decided to give it a try. The reason I felt that way was twofold. It sounded amazing to have something for which another person would pay a lot of money. It was at this time that I began to realise that what I had done for the last 15 years was not so bad. This might sound odd, but I honestly never thought about whether the things I had done were good or bad. I was happy when we had a good year (see, I write 'we' ... this means I am still thinking that it was not me alone doing this ... that wasn't possible...). On the other hand, I was excited about quitting a job which I never really liked doing – or, to put it otherwise, never tried to see from a different angle, allowing me to see things differently. Moreover, I thought about selling the company because I was not sure if such a pressure was a good thing to hand on to my children. If the business was not there, they could develop their own life without invisible chains and not being family business victims.

The process was important, not only with the focus on selling the company. But I didn't undertake this whole process alone: I engaged consultants from CBCB. Their focus is on selling companies like ours – family companies, the so-called *Mittelstand* in Germany. We had meetings, and they were very experienced in that sector. This gave me some confidence in the process. The preparation of all the paperwork took us several months; then came the time for me to approach my biggest client with my idea. There the twist in the story began. A year later, on 21 April 2015, we were joint venture

partners, running a business together on a 50/50 basis. The business wouldn't let me out. It was getting so complicated and so interwoven that I realised that selling the company might not be an option for me to exit. I suggested continuing ...

On 17 September 2014, I had the chance to visit St. Hubertus Hospital in Wernsdorf. This is a very historical place. Since 1838, the whole place has operated as a psychiatric hospital. My thought was that this facility has some clear similarities with a family business. The worlds are not so disparate from one another: at its heart, it is still a total institution. When you walk through the area, you can even feel and experience the history and the destinies of the people who walked or are walking around. It is a very powerful emotion you experience here. If you jump in, you recognise that this is a very special place. The interior and exterior mirror the feelings and interpretations of people's lives, giving a floating feeling and process, as life is. Life does have a lasting fixed mode, and so it is for the patients, or, as Goffman puts it, the inmates.

I identify myself totally with the company. I mean, I am the company. That is perhaps why I took everything so seriously. I feel like I was withdrawn from all that was happening around me, not really talking to anybody. My children, especially my daughter, did not have any respect, or show any respect to me, and she made me feel guilty all the time.

I also felt that everybody was taking something from me and that they also took it for granted. My daughter told me that I did not spend enough time with her. Well, okay, I had to work – but why did I hide behind work? Why did I take over the business? Was it just that I thought my parents would expect it of me? Did I expect them only to think that I was good enough when I took over the company? Was it the only way in which I could prove this? I would be good enough then. I think I was brought up in a kind of

a prison or a golden cage because I was not able to leave. Even my customers wouldn't let me leave.

Preparing the company for selling, 01.10.14

We had a long meeting with CBCB, my M&A consultant. It was my birthday, and it was very intense. Jean, the managing director of the French side, also took part in this meeting. He was not in his best mood. Then the consultant asked me for a private meeting: he wanted to check something directly with me (paying Jean). I asked him what he thought of selling the company, whether this was the right time. He said, 'Yes, it was the right time' – but of course he would say so: he would make a lot of money on this deal.

The M&A process is also a very suitable method by which to reconsider your work and achievements over the last few years and can help you to review what brought you to this decision, along with the milestones in the company's history. There is one part of the process that makes you sad. What could I have done better so as not to end up here, selling the company – or should I say my company? I never learned to say 'my company' or to say I was the boss. Perhaps that was part of the problem. Was I not allowed to talk this way? Was this ever my company? Did this come from my parents? I had to pay for the rest of my life for my parents' retirement – not from the performance of the company, but from my own money. Was that a good deal? In the process, there was a time when I thought I was burnt out. I went to a doctor and she told me I wasn't depressed. She also told me you don't put a racehorse into a cowshed – she said I was bored, that was all, and she told me I had to decide what to do. I was the only one who could decide to sell. I told my children what I wanted to do, and we discussed whether they would continue working there, or whether we could offer the

buyer the continued support of family members after the firm was sold. The reactions of the two children were different. The first reaction of my son was his eyes began to fill with tears. After some moments of thinking and silence, he answered that he would stay and observe the people who were buying the company and if he didn't get along with them, he would go; but, for now, he would stay and support me in the process. I felt at once that this was not what he wanted, but he was able to do it. This impressed me a lot. My daughter's first reaction was very clear: she would never work with strangers in the company, telling me, 'I will not be at your disposal!' From that time on, I did not involve her in the selling process. She took no part in any meetings after that. I never asked her again. That was when the slow process began of all the problems involving my relationship with my daughter.

We finished the process, but not with the same intention as when I started it. However, I learned a lot about my work, my company, my clients and about me. It was a very important experience and not a cheap one. But the most important thing I took from this process was that I realised who stood behind me. This was first of all my son and then Jean. For both, selling the company meant destroying their dreams, but they were always by my side. Therefore, the decision to hand the company over to my son was quite a natural solution. Not only was he able to manage the company, but he had also proved his character. So, we would continue together.

04.10.14

Today I thought about my grandmother– my grandmother on my father's side. What would she say if I sold the business? I think she would be fine with my decision. She also suffered as a result of the business, but in a different way. We were sisters in mind, so to speak. I remembered her as a funny person – playing the piano, creating ice cream

out of a special machine and sitting in the Hollywood swing in the garden and just swinging there. I also have a picture of her sitting on my swing, which my father built for me, and swinging there. But the other side was that she grew up in quite a wealthy home. Her parents gave her the chance to learn to play the piano. They were a middle-class family. She worked in her cigar shop, but my grandfather would often come into her shop and say that she should give him money, or he took money out of the cash box. And then he said she was not capable of running a shop on her own. I always remember that. Perhaps I took revenge for her. Perhaps, as a little child, I didn't recognise all the things which were happening, but I never liked my grandfather that much. I have to admit that I also didn't find myself particularly enamored of my grandmother, but felt more for her than my grandfather. Perhaps all the stories I heard from my father also influenced me. My father didn't have a good relationship with his father. He told me that he only remembered him yelling at him and beating him. My father was always responsible for what his siblings did because he was the eldest of the children.

Nadja leaving the company

There was conflict with my two children working in the company. Patrick, my son, had worked in the company since 2006. My daughter joined the company after completing her bachelor's degree in engineering. The problems emerged with the idea or the desire to sell the company. We all realised the steadily increasing conflict, but I thought it would work out over time. This was not what happened.

My daughter stressed me out. The problems with my mother and my daughter were perhaps one of my strongest motivations to quit the company. I didn't have the strength to fight them both. My daughter would argue, saying this is not right, this is not the

right way and so on for things that were quite obviously right. She was not able to ask or say in a calm way that she didn't understand this, or why couldn't we change that. No, she would say everything was 'crap', and then I would lose the basis for the conversation and would be unable to say something clever back.

I don't know where she gets the thinking that she will do everything just perfectly and the others are stupid. Perhaps it was the constant support from my mother that made her think she would do everything just right.

Before my husband and I left for our holiday in December 2015, I instructed both children that now was a good time to prove their ability to work together. We had two important projects. One was with a well-known customer who had signalled his interest in working with us in 2016. He wanted a different kind of closure or tamper-evident seal for the tubs. This was one project which had to come to fruition during the remaining days of December. We would talk about the result when I returned in January. The second project was the opportunity to cooperate with a machine building company which might want to build its new firm on our land behind our premises. This was a project for Nadja: she had to call him and tell him that I would be back in January but he could have some figures now from her.

During our holiday, I realised that I had a decision to make when I returned. I thought a lot and talked a lot with my husband. I decided to take Nadja out of the company. Coming back in January, there was chaos. The construction of the new closure was not what I expected. Nadja had let Patrick down, even if she had a technical degree. He had to do everything by himself. He had made contact with the customer and knew exactly what was at stake. I asked Nadja what had happened with the other company and whether she had given him the information. She replied no, she didn't know that

was her job. This left me speechless. I was not sure why she didn't understand what I was saying. It was always difficult with her – sometimes it seemed like I was talking in a foreign language – and somehow the two of them were not able to talk with each other. Coming back already with thoughts about taking Nadja out of the company, now I was sure that I needed to do it. But things turned out differently.

13.01.2016

In the morning, someone knocked on my office door. I could tell from the sound that it might be my daughter. I said come in and there she was. I knew straight away what was going to happen. She said: 'Can I talk to you for a minute?' I said yes. She immediately sat down on my table that is there for meetings. I still sat behind my office desk. Then she started right away, saying that she was going to leave her job. I knew she was going to say that. She continued: 'I love our products, I love our co-workers, but I cannot work with you both together.' By both, she meant her brother and me. I said, okay, here we go again, because this was not a conversation we were having for the first time. Sometime in the recent past, she had been in my office saying the same thing. Back then, she had said that she couldn't stand the situation any longer and was going to quit. She had already given her notice to Mrs. Miller (name changed). At this time, I had said, 'No, Nadja, this is not a good idea. it doesn't feel right. Let us try harder and we will work it out for sure'. She had stood up and left my office. I felt very sad: my maternal heart was hurt badly. I wanted her to work with me and I intended that she and her brother would work together and take over the company in the future. Yes, that was my dream, or my imagination. The children had very different characters and they could complement each other in a good way. Theoretically. But

now, in real life and at this point, I knew it would not work out for all of us. Sad but true, and at this time the right decision.

I'm not sure who started this kind of battle – for a battle you always need two – but my impression was always that Nadja suffered from the situation more than her brother. It was also in 2015 when she said she would not work under her brother. Enough said. I could perhaps understand how this personal feeling could influence her actions, but it was still a job, and a job must be done.

The situation that morning in my office was emotionally laden. She said in an upset manner that she knew everything was her fault because I was perfect and so being her brother. It didn't seem possible to speak to her in a calm and rational way. I never feel that it was a good idea to make a decision under pressure; however, she could see no other way for her. I accepted that. On the other hand, I felt a sense of freedom because of my thinking during my holiday. I had had the chance to speak with some people who also had a family business and had made the decision already to sell it or hand it over to their children. The people were in their 70s. The first thing they told me was sell it—selling the business is best. I told them that that was what I had wanted to do last year, but I had stopped the process in May for my son, who had fought to keep the firm in the family. That was when the trouble really began between the two children. I authorised my son to be a company signatory, based on his wish to be more involved in the company. Now he had to take over responsibility, and that is what my daughter could not accept. But, when I began the process of selling the company, the first thing she had said was that if I were to sell the business, she wouldn't work there anymore: 'I am not at anyone's disposal!' I remember replying, 'Good to know, so, I can't count on you.' I should have understood then, but I was blind, blind as only a mother could

be because of her feelings for the children. There could not be a clear distinction between family and business. I am still and always a mother, not only a boss. My decisions are always influenced by my feelings for the family and the children. I couldn't free myself from these feelings. I think she also felt that she was not in the right place, and it is good that she made the decision and not me. So, the way was paved for the future.

For me, it was important not to take on the anger that she felt, but it was not easy. She didn't leave us in an easy situation. But I think she wanted it that way: perhaps it made it easier for her, thinking that now we'd see how we could manage everything without her. She said she loved everything in the company – but not us. We were a pack of liars. For almost a year, she had been waiting for another position, because she couldn't work under her brother. It was not possible. She wanted to be at the same level. She said I had told her that I would arrange that but I had done nothing. She wept and was thoroughly upset. I said: 'Well, you seem to have no time to wait any longer. You know why your brother has a different position from you.' She responded in a totally wild manner: 'Bullshit.' I had had enough. I told her she should leave the company in two weeks. She said she would prepare everything so that it was all in order when she left.

It was very hard for me. The intermingling of family and business can hurt badly. Looking back, this was a new experience for me. It felt like I was losing my daughter, like a separation from a partner after a big fight. That night, I stayed in a hotel in Stuttgart with my husband because we had both an appointment with a bank there. I couldn't sleep. I tossed and turned, constantly turning my thoughts over in my head. What had gone wrong? What had happened? It was strange, because it was on the third

working day after her and my holiday. We didn't even talk so much about business these days. So I returned, and two days later we had a different situation going on. She was so angry, and we circled around each other like cats. She couldn't say good morning or goodbye when she arrived at work or left. There was a constant bad atmosphere.

My husband went to visit my mother and father, to look after them because I saw that my father looked ill after I hadn't seen him for three weeks. He had the same impression. We needed to decide what to do with him. During his visit, it was clear that they had also spoken about the situation with Nadja. My mother knew everything – or, to be more exact, she knew the version from Nadja and her friend. As my husband told me that evening, I felt bad, because I thought that my mother would call me and ask me what had happened with Nadja and what the problem was. But nothing. The situation with my mother was not new. My husband continued to tell me what my mother told him. She criticised Patrick for not giving his sister any information. She said that he would lie and that he wouldn't do a good job, but Nadja was tidy and everything was in order on her desk. She took the decision to resign on Tuesday evening. She knocked on my door. When she opened the door, she saw Patrick and me sitting at my desk together, looking at the investment plan. At the same moment, I saw the colour in her face disappear. She was shocked. Then Patrick said, 'Well, you are leaving, but what about the closure? I have an appointment with the client tomorrow.' She replied that he should make an appointment. I thought, 'Oh my God, what are they doing?', and felt that the situation was very bad. Then Nadja left. Afterwards, she said this was the moment when she decided to leave the company.

For my mother, everything was clear. Patrick and I were responsible for this happening. I felt angry as I heard my husband telling me this. Then we talked about how this could happen. We weren't there. The mediator was not there. So they were able to carry on with their interactions. I am an only child with no idea what it is like to have a sister or brother. I had heard about sibling rivalry and was a bit naïve in not seeing that this was what was happening. We thought that Patrick was putting the information right so things made sense and putting things on track, where he wanted them to be. And Nadja was very direct: she was not able to handle what she saw as disloyalty. When I think back now, I see that it was never any different. The two children were fighting for my attention. They were jealous of each other. But I didn't recognise that it was becoming serious. Now, everything was clear. Nadja would leave the workplace, the family business and almost the family.

I talked to Nadja and told her that she should know that I always had planned that she would take over the technical side of the business while Patrick had responsibility for customers and the commercial side. Later, when everything was settled they were managing directors, it would make sense to have two separate roles. But they would also need to work together and this was the best time to show that they could. But it didn't work out. I said to her that when she left, I would lose something, she would lose something but the only one not losing anything was Patrick. He was a winner, if only in the moment. But the die was cast, and Nadja was leaving. I also told her that the door was not closed forever. It was open and there were many different options to take when some time had passed. I hoped for me that I was not losing the wrong part, so to speak: if my son was not playing fair and I had stopped my dream for a while and not sold the company, then I had bet on the wrong horse. This was what I asked

him first thing next morning. Did he influence Nadja? Did he say something to her which she could misconstrue? He said no, and asked me what I meant. I said that we both knew he was capable of doing so. Had he done that? Again, he said no. I believed him. But later I asked Nadja, and she said he did. Here we go again, a difficult situation, not knowing who to trust. This was something which I couldn't win, so I gave up.

25.01. 2016

At 6.00am I was sitting in my office with a cup of tea. This was not my time for working; normally I was a night owl. My husband had left that morning for Madrid; he needed to catch the nine o'clock flight in Frankfurt. For me, it was a good option to get going early because I needed to write my thesis and half of the night I had been thinking about the problems we were facing now in the company regarding personnel. Since my daughter had finished her last working day on Friday 22 January 2016, it was only my son and me in leadership positions in the company, even though my daughter hadn't seen herself in that position and this was the main reason for her quitting her job.

But that was another story. I was sitting there, writing, feeling a deep sadness about not having her around anymore. Thinking of this, I started to cry. It was certainly a combination of family and business, but those two overlapping systems were always present. For me as a mother, I felt like I had lost her. I knew I would not see her as often as I had. This was one advantage of working together: I was able to have her around. This was the ... I will call it the physical aspect. But seeing each other was not always good. If she was in a bad mood, I also experienced this bad mood. Sometimes it made me feel sad; sometimes I had no patience with her, often due to problems in

the company, issues which arose, and I needed to tell her what had happened. I often felt that she was not completely involved in the life of the company.

The company, with all of the people, the processes, is extremely lively. Nothing ever stays the same, not even for a short period. A machine which had worked pretty much the whole night had given up working at 4.00am. The maintenance worker only started at 7.00am. During this gap, the machine was producing none of the items a customer had requested. Often the LKW was already ordered to pick up the cartons we planned to produce. Many things can happen in a production line with 21 machines working 24/7. Water-pipes or oil pipes can burst, valves. One machine consists of a mould of more than 2,000 parts, which is attached to a machine with about 500 manufactured pieces. Then there is the robot which takes out the plastic tubs in less than half a second. Then the periphery items – water cooling systems, pipes, compressors, etc. Not to forget there are people working there. As we worked 24/7, the people needed to work night shifts. It was a special thing to plan all of this. If one was ill, the whole plan could be in jeopardy. This short chapter should show that a company is a living organism. It is so important to have contact with the people working there, visiting the production site, seeing for oneself what happens there and so on.

Nadja was not of that kind. She almost always stayed in her office. The workers needed to go to her to inform her what was going on. This was one way of doing things: however, it was very important to go into the production area to see the problems as and when they occurred. Sitting in the office is a working habit from a big company where the office worker, the white-collar worker, is very detached from the worker in the plant. We were not such a company. Here, the intermingling with the products, the machines and the workers was still necessary. I did not often visit the plant: this is

what I delegated to my son that year, as he works as the plant manager. He took over my role. Nevertheless, even as he did so, it was important for me to stay in close contact with the people, the products and the plant itself.

It was a bit confusing for me to continue to work in the company and present myself to other colleagues that everything was fine and give a convincing impression. But feeling a different picture inside was very hard. Not that this was a feeling special to me. This was a common feeling as a managing director. Everybody wants an answer from you, no matter how you are feeling inside. Nobody cares. Furthermore, for the people working in my office, it was very exciting to see how everything developed, how we handled the situation. They didn't have any responsibility and were in their comfort zone, and from this zone, it was very easy to judge. What a nice life, being an employee!

I know that life is not that easy but, at the moment, this came into my mind. I thought it was worth writing the feeling down. Perhaps this is also an aspect which is not easily seen when one is looking at a family business. Most people see only the big car, the big building: no-one sees that there are people working in this, people working in the company, not only for it. And those people are also taking responsibility for everything, often with their own private issues. Nobody wants to see this. For someone who is quite sensitive, as I am, being a managing director is probably not the right profession. On the one hand, I believe it is the right profession because I can provide people with a good place to work. We are mostly all happy and like what we are doing. I talk to everybody, and we have one kitchen for everybody, including the production side. We are a family. But there is another side to the coin. Today, people want to earn a lot of money and don't understand that you have to pay a price for this. If you want

to earn more, you need to work for a bigger production company, and on the management side. There you can earn a lot. You need to do much more than is possible here, but people do not see this. They keep their minds on the money. For some working people, a bigger company is the right choice.

Now the first working day is almost over. I am tired and would like to go home now. My PC is not working: the guy who said he would fix it will come again tomorrow. Perhaps it's a problem when everything is going well – no worries about money, no worries at all; then you don't see the need to get on with each other. It is often said that a knot ties things together. I feel that we are missing our knot. Nadja experienced a lot of fear and anger: she looked very pale and thin. For a mother, this is hard to see. But on the other hand, there is a company that needs to be led. There is work to do, and she left us suddenly. One minute there, then gone. We have an audit for the ISO 50001 on 7 March. No one else has done it before, but Nadja is not able to do this. Well, I could feel anger – but she must be very upset to have made this decision. This too is very hard.

I wrote her an e-mail in the evening, in which I said: 'You are a loser; I am a loser; only one person is a winner in this situation, and this is your brother.' But there were times when it was very hard to understand why there was so much anger and hatred between them, so strong that the barrier between them was insurmountable. I had never thought that things could be this way.

Today Nadja's boyfriend came to the factory to get a new iPhone for my mother. Nadja is living with her boyfriend just over the street from my mother, so it is easy for him to stop by and pick it up. The boyfriend's name is Bert. Since Nadja left, it is the first time I have seen him. He works in the same village where the company is, around ten

minutes away. So he came, and he wanted to start the car that wasn't working anymore. I stepped outside and asked him what had happened. He said he thought the battery was low and he would go just across the street to the garage to ask for help. To cut a long story short, the car did not work and I offered him a car from the factory. He said okay but he didn't need it. I replied that it was so much easier for him and Nadja. He agreed. Then he asked me how long I was staying today. As he asked this, it was already six o'clock. I said I was tired but hadn't written anything for my thesis, so it might be a good idea to stay and write. I told him I would stay if it was of help to him. He told me I could go if I wanted, but I replied that I was fine staying. He said that he could possibly get the car fixed, and someone would pick it up tonight. He would call me when he knew. I would stay and wait for his call. He said, '*Tschüss*' and left.

So here I was, thinking about what had happened. I was happy that I could help and that we could talk quite openly. But I was also thinking that I was tired and hungry and wanted to leave. But for the thesis, it was good to stay. I wrote down some ideas and thoughts. At 7 o'clock, my mobile phone rang. It was Bert. He said: 'Hey, you can go home. The guy isn't coming tonight now.' I thanked him for calling. Then he added: 'By the way, I think Nadja is a member of the ADAC: they will pick the car up for free and can check what's wrong with it.' A voice in the background said, 'We talked already about this, that's what we'll do.' As I eavesdropped, I heard my mother talking, and Nadja: it sounded like a cosy get together, eating, chatting, etc. I felt bad. I had that same feeling again about only being good for working. They were having dinner together and were installing the new phone for my mom. I had been sitting in my office now for 14 hours and was feeling hungry, tired and abused (I don't work 14 hours on a regular basis, but at the time, things were quite tough, and the workload was high).

But I had to let those feelings go. I was sad but okay; the situation was also okay, but in a way, I felt that it was not good.

And this was just part of the picture I mentioned. My mother's part in the story is not calling me, asking me what happened, how I felt about the situation. Or something else – perhaps saying thank you for the iPhone. But she is on Nadja's side, and she thinks Nadja is organising everything for her. We, Patrick and I, are facing the workload, or the work that needs to be done, while Nadja is gone and until a new person is found who have to do the job. Nadja created a good 'to do' list, but didn't manage to speak to her brother about what work needed to be done in her absence. Nadja only spoke with me about things I didn't know and won't manage – a lot of applications for the electricity safety stuff. So, after all, I feel that she left us more alone than a stranger working here.

30.04.2016

After this period of time, I have had the chance to look into the work Nadja did, even if it is very sad and lies heavy on my heart. I feel now that she never understood the family business as I do, like something which is part of the family and has to be taken care of. She used to work in the company for her own sake, not for the sake of the community, including the business, and so her work did not reflect respect.

Before my parents' birthday, Nadja called me and asked if she could come and talk with me. This was the first time we had met since everything happened in January. A strange feeling, but for me, it was always clear that if a child needs my help, no matter what they have done, I will always be there. During the talk, which was quite good and calm, I realised that Nadja didn't really understand very much. We are different;

this is clear now. She talked about something white and I see it as black. I came close to saying as much, but stopped: it was not necessary that she understood. I didn't have the strength for this. She left me with mixed emotions. I told her that we needed to talk more about this. It was not possible to cover everything in one conversation. I realised that we had little in common. But this is not bad. I think it could be a kind of freeing of each other, so we can come together again refreshed. One chapter of our book is closed. Now it is up to us to open a new one.

23.06.2016

Now, after all this time, we feel good. We still have a lot of work but we recognise that we can manage it. Some weeks ago, I got an advisor involved in the process of handing over the company to my son. We talked a lot about our expectations. The process will take a while because the company is not small anymore and I didn't look after my pension fund, but I am confident that we now have everything established for the future, as far as we can predict it.

For me, my biggest wish is to hand the company over to my son and to leave it as soon as possible. However, I will be here if he has questions and needs my advice, or if he simply needs someone who can listen, which is often the most important thing to do. While you are speaking, you can find the answer for yourself. The other doesn't need to do anything. The relationship between me and Nadja has improved over time. Now we are again only mother and daughter, and this fact makes things much easier. From a mother's point of view, I am very happy only having normal family problems and I am glad to have her back as a daughter. Honestly, this is the only thing that counts for me. The other aspect, it is only work – this should not destroy a family. The relationship between Nadja and Patrick has also improved; however, there are

differences and they will only be on the private side and not influence the business and the working space any more.

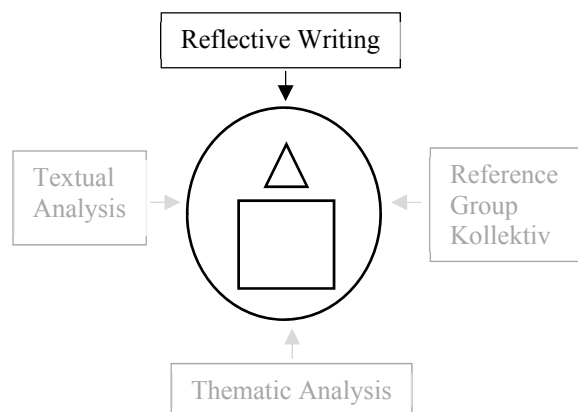
6. Findings and Discussion

The purpose of this analytic autoethnographic study was to explore, portray and deepen understanding of the situation of growing up in a business family and what influences this has on the business, family and individual.

In this chapter, I will explore the findings drawn from the different analyses applied to my autoethnography, as outlined in the research design chapter. I will illustrate with quotations from my writing, which portray my perspective and capture some of the richness and complexity of the subject matter. This chapter shows the key findings obtained from my autoethnographic writing and interpretation; these are also graphically illustrated in ‘mind map’ form in Appendix 3. The chapter concludes with a re-examination of my assumptions, which were outlined in the introduction chapter.

6.1 First Perspective – My Data

As noted above, the data is of a highly personal character, as it is an autoethnographic study. I think the reader should find and understand my experience within the viewpoint of their own experience and thoughts. As



Ngunjiri, Hernandez and Chang (2010) states, I lay out my personal data but also reach out to the readers with their vulnerable openness. Here the perspective also has multiple facets, as many as readers are reading the text. Autoethnography is still not a common research method, and so personal experience should illustrate facets of the

cultural experience, and in so doing capture some characteristics of this culture, in my case the family business, that are familiar for insiders and also outsiders (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Even as I analyse my autoethnography, it does not mean that the written data has somehow changed. I disagree at this point with Ellis and Bochner (2006), who state in their article that analysing autoethnography transforms the story through analysis and generalisation and loses the qualities which make a story a story. This thesis departs from Ellis' and Bochner's (2006) configuration of autoethnography at this point – the story of my reflective writing stands alone in this thesis, and the analysis is quite separate and is displayed in this chapter in sections 6.3 and 6.4. Moreover, the analysis builds on the presentation of the story rather than transforming it. The reflective writing is presented for the reader to read and see what it means. I maintain that giving a voice to my story is important and that evoking an emotional response in my readers is also important to me. However, the analysis below works with Anderson's (2006) concept of analytic autoethnography and not Ellis and Bochner's (2006) approach, as I think that the analytic approach sits well with the nature of the study and elicits aspects which would not be visible if I had not done the thematic and textual analysis (Rambo, 2006). The following section will examine the data in various ways. Adopting a multifaceted approach, even as every reader will take their own perspective, means the interpretation my data will yield multiple insights into the situation of women in family businesses. With reference to the diagram outlined above this means the triangle is in front of the square.

Does it make sense to me?

As I re-read my written data, I found some discrepancies in my perspective. I wondered why I shortened some sections and extended other ones. I also left out the period when

I was in boarding school. Many facets of my life are missing. During the time when I wrote the data, the data represented what I felt at that time, and there must have been a reason for leaving things out. I left out what I thought would not be important at this time. I used the biographical order or my timeline, but jumped from one point back and forth. I wrote down some thoughts which illuminated others at the same time. The last section in my reflective writing was from this year, and is quite fresh and more laden with emotions as things were still not sorted out. How we feel emotions is also a question of time. If we have not worked out our emotional level in a clear way, we view things very as intense and far from incorporated in our story. Denzin (2009) describes it in this way:

Each of the forms of emotional intersubjectivity must be understood as a temporal phenomenon. Temporality is basic to the internal structure of each. Each form is a temporal accomplishment, and each is differentially rooted in the past, the present and the future. Feelings in common, for example, are based on events and associations from the past. (p.156)

This is how I experienced the last section of my data where I write mostly about the situation with my daughter. Here it is clear that the emotions are very lively because they were not long ago.

What Haug (2005) describes as an eliminating of some experiences, is captured by my autoethnographic reflections, in my reflections on my partner who died in an accident, as these feelings were far by the most hurtful I have experienced in my life so far. However, perhaps I wanted to construct an identity of myself as being always in control of situations. During this time – I was almost not. Remembering this, elicited negative emotions which I like to neglect or forget. This works in conjunction with the fact that I did not write anything about my time in boarding school. Back then it was a very hard time which was also filled up with sadness, and tears.

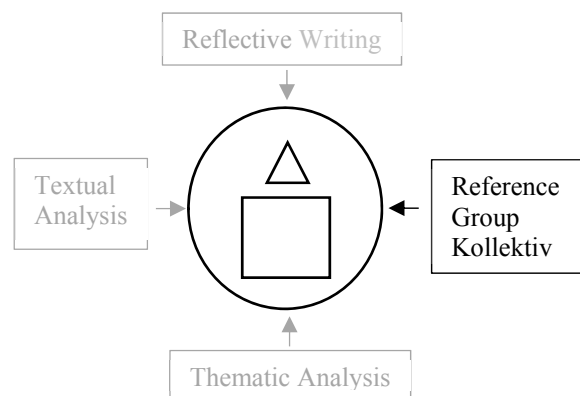
But overall my writing has created meaning for me. Even if there are fragments and no exact endings for some stories, I did not attempt a totally authentic own voice; I think in my writing there are several voices that exist through time and space. However, it is a rich basis for demonstrating an angle on the situation of a family business and what can be revealed from an autoethnographic study (Speedy, 2013). This goal has been fulfilled. In the next section, I will present what my reference group said about my data and refer to the fourth premise of Anderson's analytic autoethnography (Anderson, 2006), which is to engage in dialogue with informants beyond the self.

6.2 Second Perspective – Reference Group

My reference group – Kollektiv consisted of three people. The first person was someone who knows me very well.

The first person from my reference group was my long-term friend, Gisela.

She found the text very interesting and very emotional. Her first comment was that the story was intensive and touched her inner self. Reading through a kind of story, like a book, about a person she knew was strange but very insightful for her. She was surprised that my ex-husband had not wanted me to study. She said, 'I did not know that.' It is interesting that I did not admit this fact to her; back then I had exchanged my place of study with her. She also said that I had a lot of free space to work, that my



parents did not regulate me so much. She found the last one-third of the writing too emotional and very much of the present. She recommended me to rewrite this section and leave things out which I would not wish to read 10 years after I had finished this thesis. She also recommended me to include more writing about Uli, my partner who passed away. She thought what I wrote about him was a shortcoming. As she told me to write more about him, I could fill the gaps in the text when I removed the text with this raw and emotional personal data. I knew exactly what she meant. But after some weeks of thinking about her feedback, I decided to leave the text as it was because it is intensive, it was not long ago and I had written it with the wounded heart of a mother.

As I told her that my mother would read my writing, she said that this would be not a good idea. The stress she might feel could be too strong and she would probably be hurt in a way that was not good. My friend recommended me not to give the text to my mother.

In sum, she found the writing had meaning for her.

The second person was someone who does not know me so well.

I was glad that Maria, my daughter in law, consented to read my story. She came up with interesting thoughts. For example, for her, my story has two parts. First, the ‘old’ one, in which all my emotions and the history are described very calmly and appear settled. Her explanation for how I had overcome my shyness was that I stayed with my aunt in the US and was free of the business and able to develop myself in my own way. Maria is someone who is shy and admits that she could not lead a company. She wondered what we would do if the family business was closed? What would we do as a family? She also found it a bit drastic that even my marriage somehow broke in

combination with the company. The second part she experienced as busy (*wuselig*), emotion-laden and, therefore, not so clear. I would jump in my writing through situations which had occurred and she felt that this was not yet worked through. Then she wondered why I did not describe how my children entered the business: all of a sudden, they were there. Maria also recommended for me not to give the text to my mother; she thought that she would not understand it and would take it the wrong way; there would be a big fight, and this would not be worth it. She also recommended to me not to let Nadja, my daughter, read the text. Perhaps later, when she was older and better able to understand what had happened.

The third person I shared the autoethnography was someone from the family, my mother.

As I had had the same recommendation from both women, I thought about what to do. I decided to read the text to my mother and not leave her alone with it. So, I went to her and read half of my writing to her in one evening. She sat beside me and her arms were crossed. I sweated a lot because my tension was very high. I think it was because I am always very tense when my mother is going to judge what I have done. The first thing she noticed was that I got the year wrong when my mother and father met. So, I corrected this in my data. On one or two points, we laughed about what I had written. The second thing she noted was that she could not recall that I needed to sleep in the kindergarten. She said she had always picked me up before midday. Well, we agreed that I did not mean I was put to sleep every day but that this occasion had created bad memories. Next, she did not remember that my grandmother needed injections for her diabetes. She said that she knew that I was right and that Helen, my aunt who lives in the US, also knew this. 'But I did not know that!,' my mother said.

The next thing she said was: ‘I never did something wrong against your ex-husband!’ When we finished reading through the text and I asked her, again, ‘What do you think? Does it have meaning for you?’ She said, ‘Yes, so far everything is right’. I said, ‘Well, wait and tell me by the end of the week’. Knowing my mother, she is not the kind of person who is used to explaining what she thinks about something. For me, one of the most important things was that my mother looked forward to hearing more of what I had written. Our relationship has improved through this process. She found it very interesting and felt honoured that I had chosen her.

Another interesting discovery was the fact that I had renamed the company from Manfred Fürst GmbH to Fürst GmbH. As I said, I felt it was not important to put my given name in front of a family business. I looked at my mother and said that I found it very strange that both of my parents were involved and they both had shares in the company. My father had slightly more, at 60%, and my mother, 40%, and the company was named after my father even though they both owned a part of the company. Today she called me and said: ‘I thought about our conversation yesterday and could not sleep very well, because I was haunted by the fact of the company name. All the time, I never thought about this!’ That was a real eye-opener for me.

My mother visited me the day after she read my data. She said to me that this was a very important thing to know and to read, and that she never thought about these things in this way. She said she always felt imprisoned and had never thought about it. This hurt her badly even though she is now turning 77. It was sad to hear this. She experienced gender inequality in a strong way: the shares were not divided equally between both of them and the company had been named after my father. However, these two examples are representative of a lot of other imbalances she experienced and

could not think about so easily. In the case of my parents, one could not speak of a ‘co-preneurial’ couple (Hedberg & Danes, 2012).

Summary

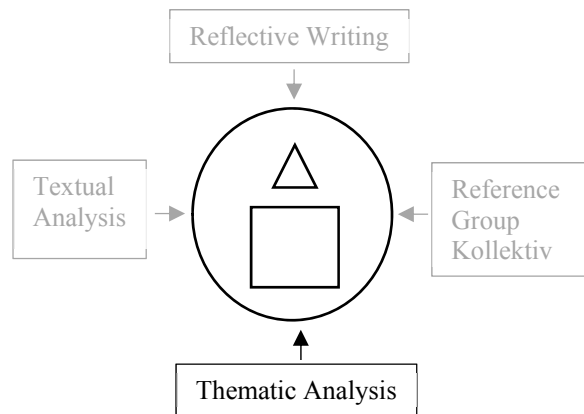
In contrast to Gisela, who knows me very well, Maria, who did not know me well, did not see the section in my data involving Uli, my partner who passed away, as being too short or insufficient. She interpreted it that I was very lucky to have had this relationship and it made no sense for me to write an in-depth description of it. For her someone would write or tell the sad part of a story in a lot of detail, because its meaning had much more impact on the life story. The happy moments were taken for granted.

The most exciting part was reading it to my mother. I was very nervous because the others who had read my writing suggested not to give this text to my mother. But for me, she plays such an important role in my life and, therefore, the story, I could not have left her out. This would not be authentic at all. I was glad I did. This reading aloud to my mother somehow strengthened our relationship. It could be called a kind of catharsis. As Scheff (2007) stressed in his article, in modern societies, emotions are usually repressed rather than resolved. For her, it was very important for me to give my story and at the same time with my data, somehow give her story a voice. My story evoked lots of emotions in her, which she had never allowed herself to experience. The story had a lot of meaning for her. She stood beside me and cried, I do not know for whom ... for her or for me? I think for us both. The background of this sadness was the role of the woman and the mother in family businesses and the strong male entrepreneur, which was my father in her eyes.

In the next section, my autoethnographic data will be used in another way – for a thematic analysis.

6.3 Third Perspective – Thematic Analysis

This thematic analysis is guided by the literature review and the themes I identified, which can be applied to a situation in the family business as a woman and what influences this has on the individual.



Family business as a paradox

This section discusses the results of the thematic coding of the reflective writing, with a particular focus on the concept of paradoxes in the family business. It is presumed and shown in the literature that when dealing with dualities like business and family on a daily basis, the business and the family receives a lot of pressure from within, and that contradictions and paradoxes emerge.

(...) I was sitting there, writing, feeling a deep sadness about not having her around anymore. Thinking of this, I started to cry. It was certainly a combination of family and business, but those two overlapping systems were always present. For me as a mother, I felt like I had lost her. I knew I would not see her as often as I did. This was one advantage of working together: I was able to have her around.

It was very hard for me. The intermingling of family and business can hurt badly. Looking back, this was a new experience for me. It felt like losing my daughter.

More seemingly contradictions are shown in Appendix 2.

From the family side passion, commitment, fidelity, and trust are brought into the business. These are also strong personal values for the rest of living well for the whole family. The family business is a long-term investment for which there is a long-term horizon and it is not clear what it will bring in terms of return on investment. This is made more complex by the fact that some family members do not live long enough to recognise their good and valuable work. All this time, the personal adapted strategies needed to fit the family and ergo the business.

‘Maschinenbautechniker’, or mechanical technician. I thought, ‘Oh this is the perfect man; he can work for the company’

The quote above, from my reflective writing, expresses how personal wishes and needs are sacrificed for a higher purpose. I was somehow governed by the fact that my future husband should have a profession which fitted into the needs of the family business. But, being raised in a family business, as mentioned earlier, one does not experience the family business as a paradox because one does not know of an alternative way of living. This sentiment is illuminated in my autoethnography, when I write:

Even now, after 15 years working as a managing director in the company, having tripled the turnover, even now I am not sure that I am allowed—or that I could allow myself this step.

Over time the individual builds skills to manage the dualities and paradoxes the family business brings with it. Practising will build the skills and trust is founded in being confided in and trusted to solve all the occurring problems. Together with the family the individual steps behind the higher value of the family business. If I try to set one side above the other then there is a problem, but if the family can manage to live with the somewhat opposite sides, then this is the secret of successful family businesses. As

the quote below from my data expresses, the discrepancy of inner feelings and inner needs is almost always in dialogue about what is best for the company.

When I talk, then I talk about the company. It is factual, not personal. Always impersonal. The company and me, we have had rough times together. We always had a difficult relationship. She often helped me but took a lot from me. The price I was paying was high, and is high still.

As the company is demanding because of the large part it represents in family life, it is important to be able as a successor to unfold the paradox to the extent that it is not a paradox anymore if it is the best of both worlds for the individual and for the collective. More of one brings more of the other. If the family business is stable because of a good internal capital structure, the business can risk something and can, therefore, build up more internal capital. In this relationship, it is not a contradiction but a mutual benefit. A good relationship evolves over time. So is it with growth in a business, which is achieved over a long time-frame. Family members are attached by emotions which hold them together, which is a unique strength in the business world. You can rely on each other and understand each other, often with only one quick look. This is a strong bond during a hard business meeting, knowing you have very good support. Here, the saying is very appropriate: 'blood is thicker than water'. But the opposite is also true. When the emotional assets are no longer strongly bonded together, the damage is also twice as great than if the fight had been with strangers only. It could be called an unstable equilibrium. No-one knows the weakness of a person so well as the family member. Then, the tensions are high and can absorb a lot of energy that is better invested in working. If a family member is not able to live with the contradiction of the family business, it can be quite destructive for the individual. If the family has managed to deal with these dualities, it can be an underlying engine

which brings new life to the family business and brings new ideas. However, the downside is that the opposite holds true, as this citation from my writing shows:

Failing in the company also meant failing in the family. My mother took every opportunity to make him feel that he was no good – and that is what I did to him at home.

It is a fight on a regular basis but it can release an unbelievable energy, the ‘must’ brings the family on paths which nobody thought could exist. It is important to keep both sides going, even to know that they are different in accepting them. Having a joint venture in which each company has 50% of the shares, there is a different perspective which needs to be brought together for a suitable solution. Our company has a 50/50 cooperation agreement with another company, and many advisors told us not to do this. The other party is also a family business; neither of us was afraid of pursuing this kind of business, as I outlined in my autoethnographic reflection:

My opinion is still that with a 50/50 partnership, it was necessary to find good solutions. Otherwise, everything will go back and forth. Now, 15 years later, it remains a very good decision. It laid the foundation for a trusting collaboration with our customer.

Nothing is true without its opposite, this is what gives the paradox its power. The paradox is Janus-faced in that it is restrictive but also liberating. There is no one cosy solution; you cannot escape where you come from, and in a family business environment, perhaps that is why one is more eager to solve problems. The paradoxical situation can generate new ideas. Over generations, values are built up in the family business. If one takes over the company, it is not possible to change everything at once. In my autoethnography, I reflect on how I decided to take over the company and, in the same passage, blame the company for taking away my parents when I was a child, a sign of grooming, as the company took my childhood in a way.

I wrote in these pages (see Appendix 1), but I did write that I would take over the company in one sentence and, in the second one, that the company took my parents from me.

This refers to pages I wrote because an advisor to my father asked me to, about how I would develop the business further, if I were to take it over, as a successor. Tradition and change are very difficult to apply in a family business. On the one hand, respect is necessary for the things the parents and grandparents did, but as the world keeps on turning, the business needs to turn with it, however, always in a dynamic environment. So, it is also important to keep what is tradition but to add the new spirit of progress. From my experience, it is important to accept the past and alter the future, and patience is needed until the time is right to change important pathways for the future development of the company. The successor needs to take their time, to get to know the business and to really understand what the family business is like. However, my experience was of being introduced to the business in a kind of hard way. On the one hand, I had a lot of freedom to decide what to do. On the other hand, I was alone and often not sure if a decision was the right one in a particular situation. My parents were part of the problem in a way, in that they did not care about what I did:

Now I would say this is a hard introduction to a firm, but it was also a good idea to select and realise projects on my own. But what would have happened if I hadn't done a good job? Did my parents already know that I would do all this work well?

As this citation from my writing shows, I did not feel always comfortable in my situation. I would not do this in this way, I was on the side of my son and would give him the support he needed to get to know the business.

Once one inherently understands where the family business comes from and what makes it distinct from others, then it is time to set one's own mark for the future. Not

earlier. It is very important to follow the values of the past but set the sails on the operational level for the future with new ideas based on the values of the past. It is important to honour the past and set changes for the future and to keep the values high in mind because they are the manifest grounds on which the business is inherently built. In other words, the business should be constantly changing to stay the same. Apophenia is a false positive. Miller et al. (2015) wrote that the family business is often thinking of 'either/or' and not 'and'. From my point of view, seeing the 'and' in a problem is what a family business is all about. For example, it is necessarily the case when the family business employs family members that it forgets about innovation, and this is a shortcoming.

Curiosity, commitment, courage, respect and deeper values are family words or, more precisely, human words – but all are part of the family business that makes a family business more human, or as we say in German '*menscheln*'. In a non-family business, a belief system is installed via a policy from the upper management team. In a family business, a belief system is not installed – it is lived in a natural way. As the values are personal beliefs, the more people are predictable based on past actions, the more predictable they are in the future. 'Who has no past will have no future,' is a very important concept for the family business.

Given a flourishing past, the family legacy will flourish in the future, and the family business will hold both together. The family members hold onto the past because of the generations working in the family business before them and they hold onto the future by creating a prosperous growing business for the next generation to come. This is all learned in the family business, not taught. Profound and fundamental beliefs and values need not be discussed in the business environment; this is something which is

learned when growing up in a family business and which a natural successor learns through the grooming process. An individual is independent but also dependent on the actions of the other. We are all working together and as such, duality, individuality and collectively could be an ideal combination for a family business. My autoethnographic writing illustrates how I saw my daughter's work:

The work was not good in parts, not even on the good side. I feel now that she never understood the family business as I do, like something which is part of the family and has to be taken care of.

This citation expresses how my daughter did not experience the business as I did. Perhaps in a good way, I raised my children differently, so that they would be able to make their own choices in life. From childhood, I experienced the family and business so closely interconnected that it becomes just one. The metaphor of seeing the family and the business as two different but overlapping spheres is a very good explanation for external people. However, the logic of two different spheres for the family and business is also somehow noticeable for insiders, which creates mixed emotions for the individuals as can be seen from this citation:

Nadja experienced a lot of fear and anger: she looked very pale and thin. For a mother, this is hard to see. But on the other hand, there is a company which needs to be led. There is work to do, and she left us suddenly.

‘Good to know; so, I can’t count on you.’ I should have understood then, but I was blind, blind as only a mother could be because of her feelings for her children. There could not be a clear distinction between family and business. I am still and always a mother, not only a boss.

As these quotes illustrate, it was hard for me to see my daughter suffering and, on the other hand, know that the work needs to be done in the company. To make a rational decision which is at the same time against the inner feeling of a mother is very difficult to do as the daughter might not separate the two roles of the owner-manager and the

mother who is occupied. So not only is the managing director brought into disrepute but also the mother, which resulted in a very painful process for the whole family.

Another citation expresses the rivalry between the two children:

It was also in 2015 when she said she would not work under her brother. Enough said. I could perhaps understand how this personal feeling could influence her actions, but it was still a job, and a job must be done.

This citation links to the same issue above, the separation of the two spheres of the family and the business, and on the other hand, the great strength which can be applied when the separation is seen as duality and as interdependent and in dialogue with each other.

But in the long run, the individual has always to sacrifice their personal wishes to the collective in the family business. Everybody is working for the success of the whole, not for the success of the individual, the strong and the weak together. This is a fundamental belief in the family business; but only if everyone is pulling the right end of the rope and in the one direction, the success of the business might be guaranteed in the end so that it can be handed to the next generation.

Somehow, opposite ways of thinking work together. Ward (2012) sees the family business as an oxymoron's inherent contraction, which means it is a contradiction but cannot necessarily be separated. From my point of view, seeing the family business from an insider's perspective is something unique and not assembled from different spheres. It is what it is, a business founded by an individual which is part of a family constellation. Many family businesses carry the name of a family. In German, the word firm is '*firma*'; in Italian, '*firma*' means signature. It is something personal to see the name of the family. The business is the family with the same name. This brings me to the subject of identity, which I will discuss in the following section.

Identity

I would like to come back to what I discovered in the literature review in section 2.3 about self-identity versus family business identity. As the basis for the analysis of my autoethnography, I took from Goffman (1961) how he describes identity crises in his book, *Asylums*. I analysed the themes with the data from my writing. Next, I explored more common themes with the examples from my data and my experience.

1. **Role dispossession** is described by Goffman as losing a role one has already taken in society, or having to alter one's role because circumstance or situation force one to do so. In the family business, a critical point is succession planning. If you are the incumbent family business owner, you might develop different plans than your children. In succession processes, children are not involved. It could be that the brother is regarded as the one to take over the family business and not the daughter. This might be a loss in the role of the first successor. Hall (2012) stated that succession process can be blocked because of the fear of losing position in the business and in the family. Changing one's role in an active manner is challenging but is combined with a goal. Changing one's role when prone to from the outside is an even harder process to accept.

This was clear now. As I mentioned earlier, I not only took the children from my ex-husband, but I took the house, me and his job. This sounds strange, but in an abstract way, this is what it was like.

In this aspect of my autoethnographic reflection, the concept of role dispossession is evidenced as the family business is able to take away roles and often not only one. As the working and family spheres are interrelated, in my case my ex-husband lost his work and his family.

2. Identity trimming and programming (Goffman, 1961). When one is born into a family business, trimming and programming is done right from the start. A first-born child or an only child in a family business somehow also represents the new successor. The programming will take place unconsciously, but at a steady rate. This will reduce the self to a kind of tool which is formed for the needs of the family and the business.

I have no memories filled with any real emotion.

I was brought up to fulfil the needs of others. To work. What I like or what I want is not relevant.

This concept of identity trimming and programming is confirmed. There is also a strong link to the findings through the literature review in Chapter 2, section 2.4, in the light of ‘grooming’ a successor for the family business.

3. Stripped of possessions, ‘identity kit’ (Goffman, 1961, p. 21). Growing up in a family business equips one with a status to hold high, and presenting the family as the business in the best possible light is important. This includes the dress code also. Developing one own kind of fashion or dressing is not an option for those who belong to a family business, as there is an expectation around the kind of clothes which one wears. Wearing a suit or a nice dress is more appropriate than running around in old jeans, or developing even more strange fashion like green hair and Doc Martens. Undoubtedly, this is part of every family, but if a business is connected to the family and if the new manager dresses in an inappropriate way, this will have consequences and is, therefore, forbidden. As clothing or the way we are dressed is a very personal expression of our self, being restricted in what to wear, even as a child, will have consequences for one’s identity building. How far we want conformity to be reflected by our appearance is also done by how we dress (Burgess-Wilkerson & Boyd Thomas,

2009). For me, clothes are very important as they are an expression of our self. I suffered a lot, not getting the clothes that I wanted, in particular, because I am six foot tall.

4. Contaminative exposure. This is described by Goffman (1961) as when the institution is not offering enough privacy. This is the case, for example, when a child plays in the family business premises but cannot play as it wants. When the parents are working, the child needs to play in the business premises, where the employees are completing their tasks. Children are exposed to the glances of strangers, who smile at what the child is doing, judging their play. The audience is expanded from the parents to include known and, at the same time, unknown people. Even these unfamiliar people call the child ‘sweetie’ or other nicknames. Undoubtedly this is not with a bad intention, but for the child, it makes no difference. In the family business, there is only a slight margin between the private and the public.

On some days, when I was not by my grandmother I spent a lot of time in the factory. To be more precise I played in the assembly room. There were a lot of cartons, with which I built houses. Each carton was one separate room. My grandfather worked in this room, which was quite big. He assembled brushes with a machine. I used to walk around the factory. I think my parents thought that the workers will look after me. However, I knew that I had to behave anyway. The noise was very loud from these old machines; you could hardly speak in the production area. Everybody noticed me, I felt that was nice, but I did not like everybody. With some, I felt a bit uncomfortable when they talked to me. My shyness was great and I did not speak to anybody.

As stated in the quote above, for me there was no privacy, as I was often in the company, exposed to strangers just to be close to my parents.

5. The disruption of the usual relationship between the individual actor and his acts (Goffman, 1961, p. 35). This is what Goffman called the looping effect. An agency, an individual or a family member who creates a defensive response on the part

of the family member or child (inmate) takes this very response as the target of the next attack the individual finds that his protective response to an assault upon self is collapsed into the situation; he cannot defend himself in the usual way by establishing a distance between the mortifying situation and himself. In this respect, I see some connection to a double-bind (Bateson, 1972) or paradoxical situation. As these kinds of communication have an influence on the identity in the long run.

One very intense feeling that I can remember is when I did not clean up my room. My mother got very angry and upset. She was on edge, and I thought I brought her there. That was what she said to me. When she started yelling at me, I withdraw from the situation and turned totally silent. She asked me: 'Why did you not clean up your room as I told you to?' I did not say anything because I did not know the answer. I did not know why I had not cleaned the room. I had no idea. This was my way of reacting to such a situation. I sat silent on the edge of my bed. But this put my mother into even more of a rage, and the situation escalated. I decided somehow it would be better for me not to listen anymore and not to speak anymore. This was my impression of surviving the situation.

As this extract from my autoethnography illustrates, I had early on in my childhood tendencies to withdraw from a situation. The reaction from my mother did not allow me to act in any other way, but is, as stated above, collapsed into the situation.

6. Restrictions or loss of self-determination (Goffman, 1961, p. 44). This means a loss of autonomy and freedom of action. It might seem normal that freedom of action is restricted for a child. But if the restriction of movement is extended due to the demands of a business, the situation is arguably made worse for the child. Children are given little time to develop their own interests and activities like stepping out and running around, as indeed all family members adjust their activities around the needs of the company, so the children are no exception. The parents must work, and are, over the years, prone to following their workload, and so they want the same from the child, learning, behaving and waiting until the time has come. The activities in a family

business are also more orientated towards the parents, as they indicate with their behaviour that they have spent the whole day working for the business, and then it is more than obvious that the private activities are orientated towards what the parents want and not the children. This point is mirrored in my autoethnographic reflection when I wrote:

I didn't notice what time my parents came back from work. I have little memory of that. I played the whole day by myself.

I regularly felt that I took up her precious time while I was not so important. I could play alone.

The parents want to reward themselves for the hard work. So, the child understands and sits back in silence. So, if this is the situation, it is difficult or impossible for the child to develop their own interests, learn and to learn to make choices as there are no alternatives to choose from (Goffman, 1961). Taken together, the concepts outlined by Goffman and illuminated by fragments from my autoethnography can be seen as potential causes of identity crises and are issues for a family business, as the development of the individual is important for a healthy family and business.

This all sounds as if I blame the family business for my less than happy marriage, but, no, that is not the case. However, the influence the company and the family had all the time was ubiquitous.

This quote can be linked to the literature review in Chapter 2. In nearly every section, the evidence is that the business has a strong influence on all individuals in the family.

Summary

Goffman's concept of the total institution is evident in this passage from my autoethnography, which confirms its utility as my conceptual framework, as in Chapter 3, section 3.5. The results of the analysis suggest that a loss of personal identity can be

associated with the family business. The framework from Goffman forms a good basis from which to view identity building in an institution which has some characteristics of a total institution, which will be viewed in more detail later in this chapter. This section has outlined how the business is always present and it forms the background to the individual family members' activities. The implication is that there is a severely restricted opportunity to 'make one's way in the world', an element that would normally be a part of growing up.

The so-called 'meta-identity', as outlined by Reay (2009), is good for the family business and the family, but not for the individual. The findings of the previous section show that the identity of the individual is vulnerable and always at stake. When growing up in a family business, one's own identity is not so important. Business is always first.

I will now move to the issue of women in family business, and what I could elicit from my autoethnographic data.

Women in family business

My mother was the connecting link from the family to the business. My father was present but only superficially. My mother made all the arrangements with me; she brought me up, together with my grandmother. She was the one with the different roles and the working role conflicted with having children. It was the same with me. The difference for me was that I was the only owner-manager in the company, there were no other family members to join me. On the family side, I was also alone, with two children and being the only one earning money. My parents had kept up traditional

roles: the woman occupies herself with the children and also works in the company.

This is somewhat illustrated in the quote from my data below.

My mother would come into my room. She would come to wake me up
(...)

In our family history, my grandmother was also self-employed and confronted with the role conflict of having six children and arranging the small shop, the cleaning and the children:

She worked in her cigar shop, but my grandfather would often come into her shop and say that she should give him money, or he took money out of the cash box. And then he said she was not capable of running a shop on her own.

The women in our family history all subordinated their wishes and dreams to the dreams of their husbands:

(..)think it was very soon clear that she would support him in his dream of taking over the company from his father. Her wishes for her own life were not important—or, to put it another way, she didn't give them priority.'

My parents were not a 'co-preneurial couple' (Hedberg & Danes, 2012). My mother worked in the company but was somehow invisible apart from the rare contacts she had with customers. But she was the backbone of the company and the backbone for my father as she kept all the money together. Clearly also, she was the backbone for me.

As my father had slightly a bigger share of the company, back then it seemed natural that the company was named after him.

The company is a GmbH, the German name for a limited liability company. In Germany, this is a legal personality, something impersonal; however, the company bore the name of a person – my father, Manfred Fürst. At almost the same time that I took over responsibility for the company, I decided to change its name to Fürst GmbH, so it was no longer had the name of a single person. I had never thought of naming the company after myself, because I was never really proud of what I was doing.'

I was a woman taking over the company as an owner-manager. My parents never gave

me the feeling that I should not be eager to do this job because I am a woman. This was never an issue. I never questioned myself, therefore. But to be honest and after all these years, I think that being an owner-manager and equally a woman and a mother, this is a burden from which a woman suffers far more than a man, and it is not worth it. I think the burden is because of the many roles a woman has to fill. This is my personal opinion. However, women should be given the opportunities to in fulfil these leadership positions. There is still a lot to do, also in politics and in the infrastructure for child care. The situation is still very poor in terms of women in leadership positions, even if being their own boss means they could arrange more freedom than being employed. But the responsibility for the family and the business and the different roles is not something which can be managed by a woman alone over time. My experience was that over a period I had to fulfil these two roles and more. I had to take the responsibility for my children and the company.

My ex-husband made my life and the lives of my children difficult. His idea of being an entrepreneur and founding a company didn't work, and he became insolvent, not paying anything for the upkeep of the children. He was so frustrated that he tried to make our lives as hard as possible.

So, I was the only one bringing money home.

The quote above expresses my experience of my situation, arranging everything for the children and being the one who earned the money. But the other roles were still there, coming home after a long working day. I was still the 'mother'; the connection with my children was very close. This was because I had been at home for several years caring for them. It was hard for them to learn that I was not available that easily anymore:

My daughter told me that I did not spend enough time with her.

The conflict between my roles was great for me. I started having a family with the idea that I would care for my children in a different way and never planned to work in the company. It turned out to be different.

This was also because, when my partner died in an accident, I needed to get back to work quickly. This meant after three days. The company needed me and I had to control my feelings as long as I was in the office. This was almost impossible to do, but it needed to be done. It is not possible for a managing director to hide herself behind an act of fate. No one was interested and I could not let any of my clients look inside my soul; this is what I learned in the early years of growing up.

As I was the only manager of the company, I needed to return to work immediately after this happened (...)

I often think about why I experienced the company as a big burden. I never had the feeling that being the boss of a company was something which is a target that is good to achieve for a woman. For me, the disadvantages were much greater.

I never learned to say 'my company' or to say I was the boss. Perhaps that was part of the problem.

However, my daughter is stronger than me. As I admitted earlier, I raised my children in a different way. She had no problem stating clearly what was on her mind. The role conflict of being a mother and managing director was strongest when my daughter was entering the business.

After she quit her job, I felt pain I never felt before and was not sure that this was possible. I was hurt as a managing director and this conflict influenced the relationship I had with my daughter in private. We always were very close. It was a shock to experience this:

Nadja would leave the workplace, the family business and almost the family.

For me as a mother, I felt like I had lost her. I knew I would not see her as often as I had. This was one advantage of working together: I was able to have her around.

I had had the idea that both children would work well in the company together, but this idea almost broke the family in two:

So, it happened that my view of my daughter was shattered by the fact that my wishful thinking perhaps brought us all to this situation.

This conflict was very hard to bear:

A strange feeling, but for me, it was always clear that if a child needs my help, no matter what they have done, I will always be there.'

For a while, because I was not able to separate the business and the family, I was not able to call my daughter and to continue as usual. Through this interconnection of business and family, a mother sees sides of their children that perhaps would be better hidden. Now after some time, we are talking with each other again because our private bond is very strong. But the incident with the family business is not forgotten. It is very important to find ways to cope with such conflicts; otherwise, a whole family is destroyed. All the years one spends with one's children can be blown away if the family is not able to get over the conflicts.

Summary

The data proves what the literature shows: that women face many role conflicts and the situation in the family business is no exception. It seems that women in family businesses are not aware of their positions, the intermingling of family and business shadows or follows in a stronger way the conflict of work and family. The family business, which can in some ways be compared to a total institution, is reviewed in the next section. The barrier of women tending to work more for less is not there, because the work is for the family. The caring mother imposes many different tasks on herself

and is, at the same time, often invisible or less visible in the family business (Ahrens et al., 2015). For myself, it was a bit different. I am visible as I am the managing director of the company. The burden for me is, nevertheless, high; being in such a position and being a mother is almost impossible to combine. Even in our modern and open world, more needs to be done.

The next section will explore the parallels between the concept of the total institution and the family business.

Total institutions

As we saw in the literature review, Goffman defines the total institution as a place where there are no barriers between working and living, that everything takes place in one location. Children who grow up in a family business are totally involved in living with the business, even if the business is not right in their hand to grasp. But it is always in the mind of the family or the parents. It is ubiquitous. In some families, the business is in reality not far apart from the home. In former times, the bosses' villas were in front of the huge industrial buildings. Even in small companies, it was often cheaper to have a flat or a house on the ground where the company had its production site or its office. In industrial places, property was often much cheaper than where the normal family house could be built. It was a so-called industrial centre. In my case, it was the same thing. My parents and I were living just across the street from the business.

We lived in a big very old house opposite the factory.

So, the family business is always there, in your mind and, on the other hand, visible for all; just reach out and you can touch it. In my later years, when I took over the

company, I built a plant 25 km from the old factory of my parents. The mayor said, 'Mrs. Fürst, you can build a house just on the property you bought for the company'. I looked at him and said: 'Oh no, I am not interested!'. My fear was not being able to get away. But now, the disadvantage of the separation of living and working is the long way I have to drive to work, especially on the weekend. While I am working, the business is there. Even in your sleep, it is creeping through your dreams and thoughts. All the time.

I remember that my parents, my father and my mother, were always working.

Next, I elicit from the six forms of adaptation, which Goffman postulates in his book, *Asylums*, and which I mentioned in more detail in Chapter 3, section 3.1.

'Situational withdrawal' (Goffman, 1961, p. 65) happens when growing up in a family business with the overwhelming identity seems to be useless for a child to do something about. Curiosity and interest turn into silence and acceptance of a situation, which seems beyond the influence of the child to change. The parents and the invisible members will try to bring the lost child back on track.

I identify myself totally with the company. I mean, I am the company. That is perhaps why I took everything so seriously. I feel like I was withdrawn from all that was happening around me, not really talking to anybody.

As the quote above expresses, I had the feeling of not being in the situation in which this was happening. To withdraw myself is a kind of shield I use to survive certain situations. The six forms of adaptation analysed have parallels to what Goffman (1961) stressed to be the cause of identity crises.

Uncompromising stance – **'intransigent line'** (Goffman, 1961, p. 65): Individuals in the family business threaten and provoke the institution by apparently denying any

cooperation. In applying this concept to my own experience, I find that overall my experience does not match it, although drawing an intransigent line is what might be the reaction of a child with a different character. If it is more of a fighter, it will choose not to back down.

In some respects, my ex-husband had some experiences which came close:

Failing in the company also meant failing in the family. My mother took every opportunity to make him feel that he was no good – and that is what I did to him, at home. Over time, my respect for him grew less and less. It was not deliberate, but I was acting as a kind of marionette, I suppose, knowing exactly what was expected of me.

But for me, it depends on the character and the experience each individual has made in the family and in the business. I can imagine that some individuals cannot adapt so easily to the pressure and force which a family and the business can bring.

‘Colonisation’ (Goffman, 1961, p. 65) is when the child realises that the family business has a lot of advantages and it will no longer follow her own wishes and wants. The conversion is an augmentation of the colonisation. The child plays the part of the perfectly adjusted reasonable future successor of the family business. The parents can be proud to have a child who will later take over the company. No – no one has to ask the child. It must, especially if it is an only child. Outsiders often see living and growing up in a family business as a privilege. But the price is high. The golden cage has strong bars. Goffman’s concept of colonisation is the perfect tool to describe the process of adaptation in which one makes the best of the situation. I wrote:

I am trained to adjust to every situation. I am like a hamster on a treadmill.

Later on in my life, I realised that I was able to adjust to almost any situation. Not thinking too much about whether this is now good or bad for myself. Just doing the things that need to be done.

Goffman also points out that in terms of the different forms that adjustment takes, the different total institutions differ considerably. This is undoubtedly the same for a family business. The total institution should be more used as a metaphorical way to consider a family business from a different viewpoint.

‘Conversion’ (Goffman, 1961, p. 65): Here the individual or child decides to be the perfect child and with this adaptive behavior, the parents can count on them:

I regularly felt that I took up her precious time while I was not so important. I could play alone.

I was brought up to fulfil the needs of others. To work. What I like or what I want is not relevant.

I will now move to the fourth and last form of adaptation.

‘Playing it cool’ (Goffman, 1961, p. 65): The individual avoids conflicts and shows loyalty. This is the strategy most commonly used.

I had to pay for the rest of my life for my parents’ retirement – not from the performance of the company, but from my own money.

This might be not a clear quote for ‘playing it cool’; however, it is a kind of giving in. There are parallels between the total institution and the family business, even if the comparison is somehow unusual. But it could be surmised that the barriers which are there in total institutions are somewhat present in family businesses. The missing barriers between the work and private sphere, the information flow, often combined with unclear messages and the reaction of these situations is key. In the following

section, I will look at how power is exerted and what my autoethnographic writing illustrates for this theme.

Different faces of power

For me, if the child has siblings, they are in the same boat and can work on their own level against the parents and the family business. Even a child alone might be able to do so. It can have two lives. One is shown to the parents and the other is hidden. This can be practised for a long time, perhaps as long as the child can decide for itself if the strong power has not broken his will to survive. This is how Weber (1972) describes the individual as trying to keep up their will against the power which they are experiencing.

Power relations

My findings also illuminate the misimpression a family business might give to the outside observer. The faces of power are very different and are exercised in a subtle manner. In a family business, a dilemma exists because of the close connection between the individual and the group, the family business.

All my life, or so it seems, I was imprisoned in the thoughts and wants of others.

Here the power which I felt throughout my life is the continuous influence of myself towards taking over the company years later. I did not know if this was done on purpose by my parents, but it was done. I hardly found in the literature proof for my statement. I think this subject is largely neglected, which is a lacuna that this study therefore addresses. The forms of power are the ones which will bring the individual family member or child to do what is foreseen by their parents.

I have often wanted to leave, but I am still here. It feels like I have an invisible iron ball and chain tied around my ankle.

I took everything for granted that they told me. So, I thought, my ex-husband was not doing a good job in the family business: this, for me, was like violating something sacred.

Not doing what one is seemingly is obligated to do within or for the family business is a very big offence. My ex-husband experienced this at first hand. He was not used to it from the beginning; he was not raised, himself, in a family business.

Over time, my respect for him grew less and less. It was not deliberate, but I was acting as a kind of marionette, I suppose, knowing exactly what was expected of me.

The problem was that the conflict was not only in the company but also had effects on our relationship as a couple. Finally, he lost everything:

As I mentioned earlier, I not only took the children from my ex-husband, but I took the house, me and his job. This sounds strange, but in an abstract way, this is what it was like.

I would be good enough then. I think I was brought up in a kind of prison or a golden cage because I was not able to leave. Even my customers wouldn't let me leave.

The feeling of not being able to leave sits deep in my inner feelings, the obligation to the company was internalised over a long time. There are no visible chains or bars, but the invisible ones are seemingly more difficult to escape from. I will now examine how double-bind communication, as evidenced in my autoethnography, might influence the situation of women in the family business.

Double-Bind

Girgensohn-Marchand (1996) argues that the double-bind is a phenomenon which is hard to grasp empirically, one which is often far-fetched, in which identification is not possible. This was also my experience when I started coding my data with situations in my text, which I thought to identify as a double-bind situation. In the following

section, I will offer some examples of double-bind situations which I identified in my autoethnographic writing. First, the comment:

I never felt lonely; it was normal for me at this age.

This was something I said about myself when I was around five years of age. I read this passage to my mother, but for her, this was nothing of particular note. This was the situation. I understood from early on that the message was: 'Be a good girl!'. In German: '*Sei schön brav!*' If you are not behaving in the manner in which I understood the term: '*brav*' or 'good girl', then you do not meet my expectations and you will be sanctioned. Here is another situation which was close to what I described here:

(...) I didn't want to be the girl who stole time from her grandmother. She needed to cook, wash, rearrange the rugs, make the beds, and so on. She was always busy doing things. She often said to me, '*Sei schön brav!*', which means something like: 'Be a good girl! I need to work'. My impression at this time was my mother is not there, my grandmother is. However, she was always working in the house or flat, and definitely didn't have time to play with me. However, I was used to this. Nobody played, read or talked with me for a long time so that I could feel important for just being the way I am, as a person.

It is not easy to tell if the above represents a double-bind situation. The messages I sketched out above are quite abstract. What does it mean exactly to be a good girl? This abstract message did not provide any information about what is meant exactly by it. This means I did not know what I should do now or what could be adequate and acceptable behaviour for my grandmother. On the other hand, the question can be asked, where does the double-bind of this situation lie? Indeed, one criterion of the premises set out by Bateson (1972) is fulfilled as we talk about me as a child in interaction with my mother or grandmother. One criterion is provided above all, that of a dependent relationship, the relationship between child and-mother or the child and-grandmother.

Girgensohn-Marchand (1996) stated that in families, there is not so much a paradoxical call to action than an unclear and inaccurate mode of communication on all levels which leads to a number of hidden or hard-to-figure-out contradictions or incongruencies from which it is hard to deduce or derive reasonable procedures.

A third example, from a later stage of my life, was the situation with my ex-husband and my mother and father:

We decided that my mother would not say anything more to my ex-husband that was critical. She told me, 'You wished us not to criticize him, so we complied. Helen, we wanted to do everything you wanted'. This sounded odd after so many years, like: 'You told us not to criticize him, so we didn't talk with him in a grown-up manner.'

My mother would often tell me he was doing a good job but I needed to help him: that meant she had to do some work after he had already done it. She would say, 'When he forgets something, oh, I must remind him of this and that'. What she said didn't give me a good feeling, and I was not sure what I should do with this information.

These kinds of influences were strong back then, they were obvious when I wrote about it many years later. Back then, it was normal and not detectable to us. A kind of hidden pattern, it made me feel uncomfortable but I was not sure where this feeling came from.

There was a situation I can recall when, as a child, I would be silent and did not speak or move. These then were situations when my mother totally lost control. First, she recognised that she lost control over me. So, perhaps I found the possibility to flee from a double-bind situation by retreating into myself.

(...) and the situation escalated, I decided somehow it would be better for me not to listen anymore and not to speak anymore, my impression of surviving the situation.

Not reachable for her. No-one will ever be able to reach my inner soul. Somehow my mother provoked my behaviour and I provoked hers. Like in a typical interactive situation, we gave our objects meaning.

Symbolic Interactionism

This brings me to my next theme, symbolic interactionism. In this section, I will outline how all the factors from the above thematic analysis influenced the individual because of certain interactions between family members. James et al. (2012) stated that symbolic interactionism, which is a prominent theory in family theory, can extend the resource-based view and the understanding of the family business. As the family and the individual are the central players in family business, their interaction is the basis for a good working and living atmosphere. Taking a certain perspective is also learned through interaction. All family members can create a common shared perspective of their family and the business. The most important point here is being able to take on the role of the other. If we take the perspective scheme from the data analysis, each approach to the analysis has a certain perspective for looking at the situation in the family business. As stated above, in a symbolic interactionist approach, it is important to take the role of the other to give the social object, including emotions, a meaning and create a socially defined reality. This can be applied to the day-to-day interaction in a family business to take all family members into account and overcome the paradoxical and double-bind situations which lie on a harsh line between have a good and bad influence on the family, family members and the business. It is necessary to face the reality that the family business is a hard business, but getting it right is worthwhile as it might result in the continuation of the legacy both the family and the possibility of the business being handed to the next generation.

Figure 6 is a more dynamic illustration compared to Charon's (2009) formulation when he defines perspective in the context of interaction. The human being interacts using perspectives, thereby defining situations, acting according to what goes on in the present situation and is active, not passive, as I explored in detail above. The actor is perceived to be constantly changing actions as he or she goes along (p. 39). Throughout this chapter, I have used similar diagrams to analyse my data and illustrate the situation in a family business from different angles.

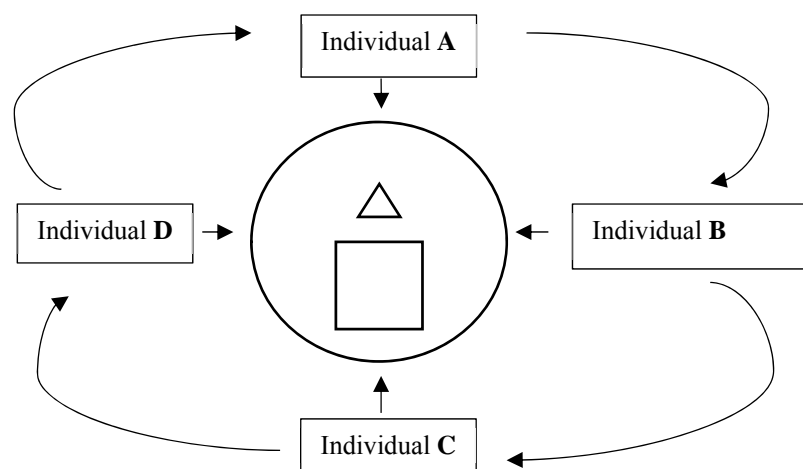


Figure 6 Family business Interaction Model: Perspectives of the Situation in the Family Business. (Source: The Author).

The two symbols in the circle represent the situation in the family business. Now, if we take the perspective of my reflective writing as being similar to that of individual A, we see the triangle in front of the square. If we take the view of the reference group individual B, we see the triangle on the right side of the square. Individual C will see no triangle at all. This is the downfall of the thematic analysis perspective. If we go further and take the view of the 'Metaphor' or individual D, we see another different situation. Now the triangle is on the left side of the square. This should stand as an example for the complex and dynamic situation of individuals in family businesses.

Only in taking the role of the other, is it possible to see and feel the things only the person from this perspective is eager to see, feel and to recognise.

From the other perspective, one might think the issue, object or whatever we call it might not even exist. To give social objects meaning through interaction can contribute to solving the misunderstandings and misinterpreting of emotions between family members to a certain extent. On this point, Blumer (1986) outlines three premises:

The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them. The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows.

The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.' (p. 2)

Referring back to the conceptual framework outlined in Chapter 3, section 3.5, if all the mentioned themes are not fixed and move in an interactionist mode, the views from the parents and from the children could be negotiated in a rather productive form. I have inserted a further developed version of the conceptual framework in Figure 7. Figure 7 illustrates the moving parts that work together to illustrate my concept of subtle coerced succession in more detail.

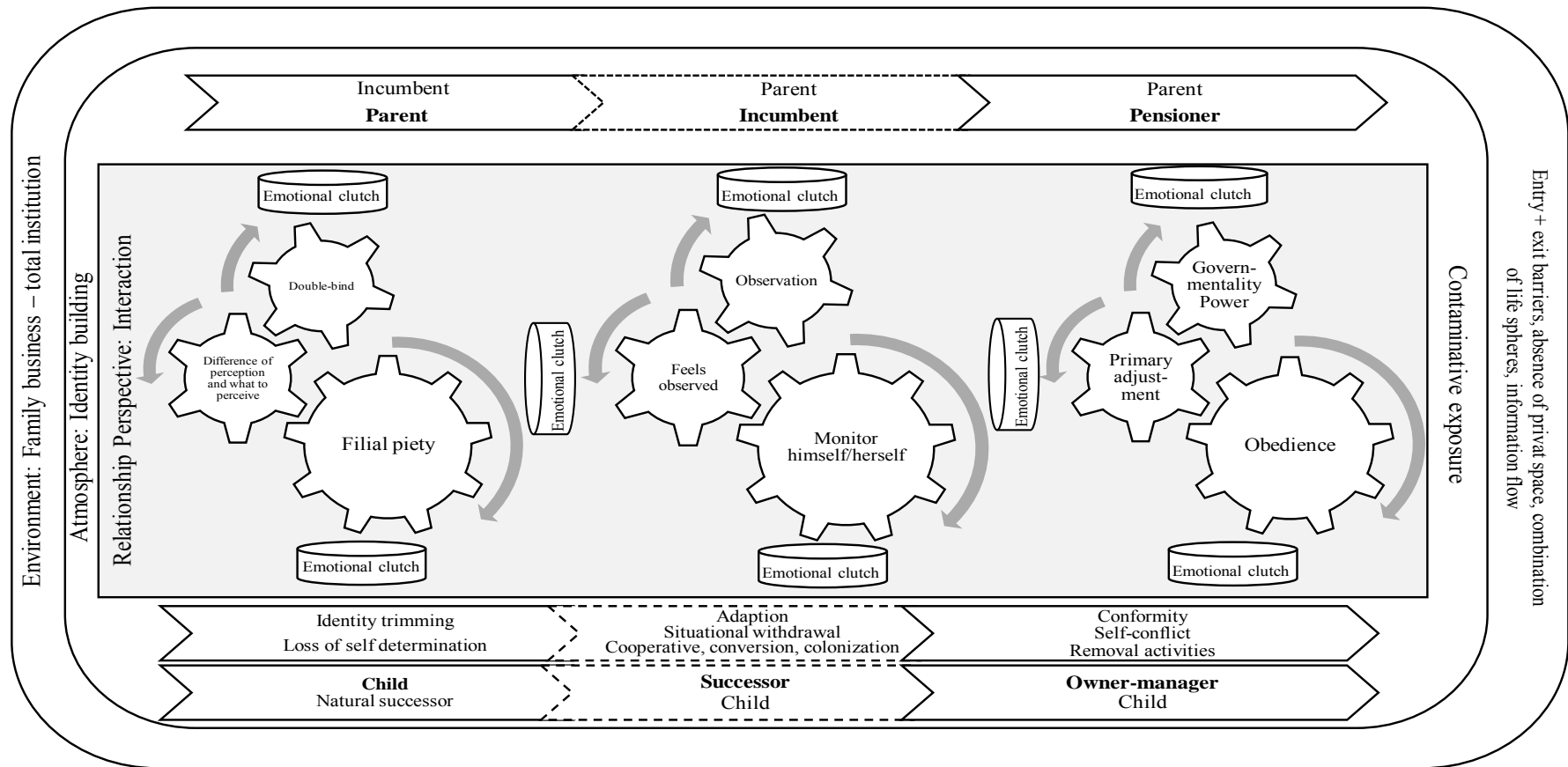


Figure 7 Conceptual Framework of 'Subtle Coerced Succession'
(Source: The Author)

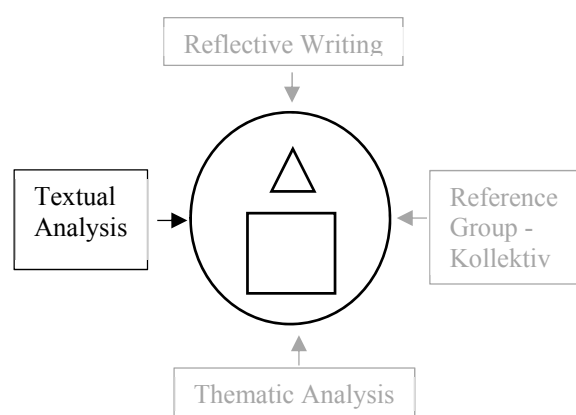
In the next section, I will describe what the textual analysis brought to light from my autoethnographic writing, including an analysis of the metaphors used and what the word count contributes to the findings.

6.4 Fourth Perspective – Textual Analysis

Metaphor

Only some of the metaphors stand on their own. Hereinafter, all metaphors are listed which I found in my data according to what meaning they had for me.

Now, with what I know, I am convinced that bad times and difficult conditions are fertile soil for a successful business.



The use of the metaphor ‘fertile’ soil, to me, this means that difficult situations train an individual to try harder to succeed, like a flower growing in the ground. Viewing this metaphor from the method of memory work, I am using active verbs like ‘know’ and ‘convinced’ to let others see myself as a person who has control of even difficult situations and find something good about it. This metaphor also left out the negative emotion which comes within stating and feeling this fact.

My father called me ‘Springinsfeld’.

This is the only metaphor which stems from my father. But I think he means that I was always moving, even as a child. My father often or spoke in metaphors. This was a way he makes sense of his world. As I stated earlier my father is not all the time

mentally with us anymore. However, with always stating he would say now, so and so, we keep him talking to us – even if he does not by himself.

By the time the recipe is ‘ready’ to deliver to the next generation.

I made the comparison with a recipe as I mean that every family business has its own recipe in handling situations in their specific family and business. If the recipe is a proved, then it will be passed to the next generation. They will only accept the recipe as good if it is good.

I am trained to adjust to every situation. I am like a hamster on a treadmill.

I think this does not require further elaboration. I have the impetus inside of me, but on the other hand, the hamster needs to move only on the treadmill. That is what I am tired of. With this metaphor, I also tried to demonstrate that this activity is limited to a small space. The emotion behind this metaphor is also neglected, though behind this quite cute and funny description lies a very deep sadness. The motivation to obscure true feelings behind a metaphor is referenced by Haug (2005) who suggests emotions are often not stated by women, which invites questions here. Why do I use this metaphor? Do I wish the others to recognise me? Do I want to be rescued by the others?

However, over all the years, the rebel in me is still here.

This metaphor expresses that, above all, I have kept my inner self over the years. Now, at almost 50, I can state the rebel is still here! This sentence above is in line with the others, that I might to present myself as active, fighting and nothing will bring me down. It also suggests that I attempt to construct my identity as strong to the outside.

The following three metaphors express, on the one hand, that I experienced that company as a living organism or as a monster; on the other hand, it expresses also

what I see as one component of subtle coerced succession, the trusted atmosphere with the parents. I saw my parents as impeccable and felt as though they had supernatural powers.

I do not know why, for me, my parents were impeccable. Perhaps I thought that because they could work with and in the monster company, they must have supernatural powers. I took everything for granted that they told me. So, I thought, my ex-husband was not doing a good job in the family business: this for me was like violating something sacred.

This short chapter should show that a company is a living organism.

They were reaching out to me, like a tentacle from an octopus, even though I was far away – not physically, but more in a metaphorical sense: far away, because I was at home with my children, and the children acted as a shield.

Deconstructing the words I used above in the metaphors, there are deep negative emotions covered by abstract descriptions, whilst at the same time I view my parents as always active and in control of their situation. Believing this might give me a sort of secure and positive feeling. Comparing the business with a monster, hides old emotions from the childhood, or so it seems.

In contrast to the metaphors above, in the following expression I am a ‘dogsboddy’ for the company, or as the following quote notes, I felt like I was in a prison, or as I found in the literature review, what Foucault (1977) described as the concept of the panopticon.

I was helping the company do its business. I was now becoming its helper, its fulfiller, its henchman. Now it was my responsibility.

I would be good enough then. I think I was brought up in kind of in a prison or a golden cage, because I was not able to leave. Even my customers wouldn’t let me leave.

Describing me as a helper and fulfiller, leads away from the active position I so long constructed. Finally, as I was in charge of the company in person I started to view myself not as active anymore, but more as a helpless slave. What is my motivation behind these expressions? Do I allow myself to be weak now?

The metaphor of the golden cage is of interest, as this metaphor mainly expresses power relations. Also, as the following quote shows, it also expresses the sense of being imprisoned.

All my life, or so it seems, I was imprisoned in the thoughts and wants of others.

She also told me you don't put a racehorse into a cowshed – she said I was bored, that was all, and she told me I had to decide what to do.

This analysis of the metaphors shows the power relations and the company as a living organism and, at the same time, an environment in which the individual is passively imprisoned. This kind of paradoxical situation comes alive again also through a double-bind communication. All these concepts and constructions are hidden behind the metaphors.

Word Count

The word count undertaken with NVivo 10 shows the 1000 words that occurred the most times in the data. The word found the most, with a count of 146, was 'company'. In looking at the word count displayed as a cloud in Figure 8, one recognises this overwhelming point. It is the dominant word which I used throughout my autoethnographic writing. This shows how I felt about the company being my life and my life being the company, not always voluntarily. Also, this quantitative approach shows the company is dominant in my life. In the written statement Appendix 1, from

In the following section, I will answer the research question and demonstrate my findings.

6.5 Discussion

The purpose of this analytic autoethnographic study was to explore, portray and deepen understanding of the situation of growing up in a business family and what influences this has on the business, the family and the individual.

As this research is explorative in nature, the findings reported in the previous section cannot be compared with previous findings, nor with theory. However, it can be compared with what the reader accepts as possible and worthy for proceeding with further research. This section will discuss the findings from the analysed autoethnographic data in light of the research question and the existing literature. Four major findings emerge from this study.

How are female owner-managers in family businesses currently understood?

My findings from the literature review in combination with my data confirmed that, on the one hand, the traditional role of women and, on the other, the professional participation of women in family businesses are supported (Humphreys, 2013).

Women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in family businesses. Women feel a greater freedom in family businesses or even in being self-employed. However, traditional roles are also still a big issue. Many women are still invisible and have jobs which represent this category of the second tier. Moreover, they are occupying themselves with their children, which is still the main role of the mother. I found that the family business is also, similar to the business landscape, gendered (Ahrens et al.,

2015), although there are some expectations. I am certainly one of them, even though I am still not happy with my job and my different roles. Daughters do not have the same opportunities as sons, except when, as in my case, they are an only child not in competition with a male sibling (Glover, 2014). This made me the successor for a family business, gender issues aside. This leaves us with the assumption that for the parents or incumbent, the fact that a natural successor is available is more important than the gender of that successor. If this is not the case, women and girls are still not regarded the same as men or boys in terms of suitable successors. The circumstances for women in family businesses need to be improved, as in other parts of our society. Because of the lack of clear boundaries between home and work, traditional gender-based differences are evident. Woman and double-bind, is what Jamieson (1995) describes in her book. She took the double-bind theory and the paradox to illuminate the situation of woman in leadership positions, but not in family businesses. Here is where the situation gets worse because of the close interconnections of family and business, emotions and work. This is what it makes especially difficult for a woman compared to a man to survive.

The opportunities will, for sure, improve in the future and things will change. Girls are better educated than in previous times and they can now choose their jobs. Certainly, they do not have to accept everything that is offered to them. If we let them, they will be strong and eager to do as good or perhaps a better job than men. The preconditions need to be adjusted, which means childcare need to be better organised. It is also a task for politicians, communities and, least of all, us to provide an environment where girls and women may have almost the same opportunities as boys or men. I wrote 'almost' because there is still a long way to go.

What is the experience of a female only child growing up in a business family, in which the future is predetermined from the beginning?

The thematic analysis applied to the first research question can also be adapted to the second research question.

Finding 1:

This is the primary and overriding finding of this study, which I call ‘**subtle coerced succession**’. I will now describe what I meant by this and what the components of subtle coerced succession are. First, I will come back to what I explained in Chapter 4, section 4.1, which is now displayed in Table 2.

Application to my Study:
Premise 1: The fact <i>E</i> is: I did not live my life, and experienced a kind of force on it.
Premise 2: Background knowledge, <i>W</i> : <i>my experience first-hand of growing up in a family business.</i> Which implies a hypothesis: <i>H</i> ‘ <i>Subtle coerced succession</i> ’ is exerted by parents to groom an intentional successor.
Abductive assumption: ‘ <i>Subtle coerced succession</i> ’ exists

Table 2 Abduction applied to my Study
(Source: The Author)

I will now describe what the components are and what the effects of this phenomenon are for the individual family member and the business, referring back to Figure 7, in which the dynamic of the succession process is portrayed.

Parents begin the planning for succession as soon as the child is born. One should not forget that preparation of children for family businesses is taking place all the time and always around the children, such as talking at dinner about the problems the parents are encountering in the business. This means shaping or grooming the children from the beginning, even if they might not understand too much about it. A sense of responsibility seems important for a potential successor, so individual fulfilment is counteracted. The importance of leading the company into the next generation is emphasised.

Subtle coerced succession (SCS) consists of the following six elements:

- Environment or situation of a family business
- The strong wish of the parents to have a natural successor
- Trusted environment: parents convey that succession is for the sake of the children.
- Development over a long time; grooming starts in the early years of the children
- Children feel an inner obligation and sense of duty to not disappoint their parents
- Children are not able to recognise what is happening to them, as the process is subtle.

The findings from the thematic analysis of my autoethnographic writing lead me to the conclusion that children could be exposed to what I call ‘subtle coerced succession’,

which occurs due to ‘grooming’ of a child early on to take over the family business in years to come. During that time, all the communication, whether a double-bind or not, and all the interactions and the emotions involved, are directed to that one goal. For the parents, this is done with the good intention of handing over the family business as a present to their children. They often want for the children to have a better start in life than they did. They had to build the family business up from scratch. Why should the children not experience this as anything but an altruistic move by their parents? The children often respond with filial piety because not fulfilling the obligations the parents presented to them could be viewed as ungrateful. In terms of the relationship the children have with their parents, this is the last thing they want.

What can be revealed by an analytic autoethnographic study of an existing family business from the viewpoint of a female owner manager?

This is answered through the following findings and through some remarks which came from the comments of my mother as she was part of the reference group - Kollektiv.

Finding 2:

With this finding, I will update the literature on women in family business to the extent that women are eager to lead the family business, while, however, not necessarily enjoying it, also because of the multiple jobs of reproduction a woman needs to accomplish within the family, especially in Germany. The picture of the mother is somehow different than in other European countries, also because of our history in Germany. The ancient view of the caring mother, is still present today. Juggling all the chores which were expected from me, was a great challenge and one on which I could not only focus on whilst working for and leading the family business. In addition to

the answer to my first research question, I can confirm generally the two different streams in the literature within my study through my writing and my special situation with three women who were active in our family business: my mother, my daughter and I. All experienced the family business differently because of our age and our constructions of our self, different generations and for other reasons.

My mother experienced the family business in the traditional role which I found in the literature review. The company was named after my father: she had a smaller share of the company. She did not have a managing director position, so she was not very visible. Patriarchy was present and is still present in the family business; this is what my mother experienced. My life reflected the content of the literature on the family business, even those women like me are still underrepresented: I am a woman and I am an owner manager. I am leading a mid-sized family business, a function normally filled by a man, in an industry type, manufacturing, that is male dominated. However, I am not content because I never wanted to do this. From a gender point of view, I have opportunities and I am not dependent on a man's voice, only my own prison, which I described in the form of a metaphor as a golden cage.

Women or girls are suitable for being the successors of family businesses and are able to take over the responsibilities like a man can. This does not lie in the gender one is, more in the willingness, abilities, and qualifications one has for this highly critical position. To limit the succession only to a particular gender is old-fashioned and a shortcoming. I included gender in my research as I found in the literature that it is still a big issue in business research. However, as a woman, I did not experience from my parents a difference related to my gender. I assume that the fact that I was the only

potential successor was more important than my gender. It could be an interesting field for future research to explore the differences between gender among successors.

With my daughter, there is also a shift toward being an active woman with her own thoughts and wants, who can speak very openly and act accordingly. She stems from the generation 'Y,' their value system consists of independence, being autonomous enjoying life and work and to express one self. She has grown up in a time where gender equality was different to what my mother or I experienced. My daughter grew up with another picture of the roles of sexes. She is well educated and free. Sometimes her independence gives me anxiety. I think our experience shows that mothers really want to raise daughters who are stronger than they were. However, on the other hand, they are a bit scared of the outcome. The luck we have, that we represent three generations of women with their own histories, experiences and different identities is very strong and dynamic. The relationship is carried by the strong emotions we have for each other. Though we share mostly positive emotions, if you love the person they can hurt you very badly. This is also what our mutual story conveys. I am reminded of the saying: 'Your son is your son till he gets him a wife: but your daughter is your daughter all the days of her life' (17th-century English proverb).

The succession process, now from the third to the fourth generation, is not stable. However, through thinking about what has happened to me and through the theory of symbolic interactionism, I am sure now that I have raised my children differently. Now I can recognise that my son is a natural successor in the sense that he does it with love. The emotional component is crucial to get involved in family business (Otten, 2012). All that has happened makes me think that it is good for my daughter not to

work in the business because of the sorrow and threats, which are obvious and extreme. She would perhaps suffer as I did. However, this might not be true. What happened to me does not mean that it will happen to her. As we are active, and should be active in every sense. What is important is ones need to love the work, in order to handle it over time.

The third finding is about a different view of the family business and the paradox that arises.

Finding 3:

The family and the business are not separate. They are one. The paradoxical situation is recognised as normal. From an insider perspective and from my experience growing up in a family business and working for 15 years as an owner-manager, I see the family business as one and as a unique form, not as an interlinkage of different systems. The business is always part of everybody's life in the family, the invisible member sitting on a chair with us at the kitchen table. I think the family business is a special type. Not everything is obvious from looking at it from the outside. It only makes sense when seeing it from the inside (Berrone et al., 2012). This is more a duality which is interdependent, a kind of living organism.

Finding 4:

Finding 4 relates to the combination of different concepts like the total institution, power exerted via different means, double-bind communication, the paradoxical situation of the family and the business, which together create an environment and atmosphere in which it is hard for individuals to find their way. Identity building is

strongly influenced by the fact of being born and exposed to a family business and the interaction and dynamics that arises.

Family business makes use of governmentality (Foucault, 2000). As in the total institution trying to destroy the identity of the person, governmentality is interested in optimising the self and the management of the self in the larger sense of the family business identity. The total institution (Goffman, 1961), through the mode of surveillance and punishment, occurs with governmentality. Governmentality is perfectly qualified because it is an overarching leadership style which is able to capture the person as a whole.

Total institutions are characterised by the breakdown of barriers, meaning the barriers of work and intimate spheres. All the six premises which lead to an identity crisis according to (Goffman, 1961) were supported. The family business can be viewed as at total institution. A total institution may be defined as a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered way of life (Goffman, 1961, pp. 11-12).

A picture can be formed of governmentality using the fact that people are controlling themselves. This subtle way of power is used to direct children and potential successors in the 'right' direction.

The concept of the double-bind is an interesting perspective and it is part of the family business as both have as an ingredient, the paradox. I see a clear link between those two phenomena, as I have grown up in a family business and have been exposed to double-bind communication or messages. It seems very hard or impossible, even, to build an own identity and to be fully confident of what one does.

It is important to keep in mind that family businesses and the families involved are different or heterogenous; therefore, the outcomes and their goals are also (Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017; Miller. et al., 2015).

Re-examination of my assumptions

In referring to the problem statement in my introduction, one of the major issues is that many family businesses will not make it to the next generation. This has something to do with the unconscious or conscious ‘grooming’ of children at an early age to be the successor. My first assumption appears to be justified because of Finding 1 in my data, ‘subtle coerced succession’. I have outlined the premise above in this chapter. The goal of the parents or the patron is to have by birth a suitable successor and to justify their goal with the thought or intent of this being in the best interest of the child. While the act of succession may seem voluntary to some observers, it could be an act of coercion for others. My second assumption is that family businesses will not make it to more than the third or fourth generation, because the children experience how hard it is to work and live in such a construction; this could be justified as this is part of Finding 1.

The third assumption is that the children growing up in an environment of a family business and constantly being exposed to the business have it hard in creating an own identity. My research suggests that this is reasonably inferred from Finding 4 due to the dynamic influences of the business on the family, creating an own identity seems difficult.

Fourth, applying the concept of symbolic interactionism to day-to-day interactions in the family business is somewhat unjustified. However, symbolic interactionism provides a solid view on emotion and how we construct our self according to the

situation we are in. I could not find any evidence for this assumption. It may only be a point for the future to apply it to conflicts in communication in family businesses. An interaction model is provided in this chapter, which should illustrate a possible process of interaction between individual family members. My fifth assumption is also unjustified, or cannot be answered in a clear way using my data. It can be more viewed as a suggestion, accepting within the business family the option that leading the family business into the next generation may not be the best solution for the family, the individual or the business. This reduces the pressure on all family members. There are a lot of options for finding a good way to retain the ownership or part of the ownership and stepping back from the operative management positions. This is certainly a chore for advisors to the family to find a good way to arrive at a solution. This requires the commitment of the family to take another path, which may enhance the survival rate of the family business.

In the next chapter, the implications for theory and practice are outlined, and recommendations for future research are given.

7. Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

In this chapter, I answer my fourth research question, and show the implications my study has for theory and practice in the family business. As stated above, the implications are carefully drawn as this thesis has an explorative character; however, I found in ‘subtle coerced succession’, a phenomenon which the literature extends.

Some recommendations for families and successors in the family business are stated. Afterwards, the limitations of the study are outlined and a personal reflection from my perspective on the research journey rounds up this chapter.

What insights and new approaches can be proposed for the family business and, more precisely, for women in family businesses?

The following section will therefore focus on the implications for theory and practice and, at the same, time answer my last research question.

7.1 Implications for Practice and Theory

Knowledge is a treasure but practice is the key to it.

(Thomas Fuller)

As this research is based on my own data, it does not take the approach of classic research in making a contribution to theory. However, as I reviewed the literature with the overarching themes from my experience, some findings showed that the concept of the total institution may be a promising basis for future research into the family business.

I believe that a better understanding of the phenomenon of ‘subtle coerced succession’ would allow families, successors and family business owners form a more informed perspective towards succession.

My study provides a possible better understanding of the situation in family businesses, especially for a women, mothers and owner managers.

My study has four implications.

First, it is important to note that the process of succession starts at an early age and is not always as clear as the literature so far describes it. Therefore, my work contributes to the literature on succession with findings on ‘subtle coerced succession.’ In contrast to the recent work by Parker (2016), and almost all of other literature concerning succession in family businesses neglects the viewpoint of the children or successor, on how they experienced the process as this perspective has not yet connected with other concepts and to the best of my knowledge has not yet received any attention. My findings suggest an extending of the literature (McMullen & Warnick, 2015; Parker, 2016) as it goes one step further in admitting that the process of preparing a child as a successor is not always a conscious decision by the parents, and vice versa, the children are not always able to decide in a free way because of the subtle early determination process towards succession. This process is omnipresent. It is the environment of the family business which can be viewed as a total institution and the interaction which is going on is what the participants, the parents and the child, experience as an influence. This subtle influence cannot be divided into good or bad by a child nor the consequences this might have for growing up and building an own identity. This study showed that emotions play a vital role in the interaction of individuals. Being

dependent on the parents in an emotional way – what I defined as ‘emotional clutch’ - is used by parents to deliver their goals.

Second, this study widened the view on the family business through the lens of literature and concepts which, to my knowledge, were not yet brought together in direct connection with family businesses and the succession process. With this work, I discovered that the concept of the total institution may also be applied to family businesses in combination with aspects of the double-bind, power relations, surveillance and governmentality, which are in part manifest in the perspective of a ‘subtle coerced succession’. These findings seem to illuminate the highly dynamic background aspects which are not yet fully understood in the family business (Long & Chrisman, 2014).

Third, my data suggests that the environment of a family business and the interaction (Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017) of the family members can create problems in identity building. This is because of the strong influences of the invisible family member – the family business and the double-bind communication resulting from this fact and its outcome on a child’s interest in becoming part of a family business (Eddleston & Kidwell, 2012). This research shows that if the child’s own identity could not be confirmed over a long period this will lead to contradiction and to identity loss in children. My data further suggests that the good performance of the company and the commitment towards the family business are underlying goals, which the child recognises unconsciously.

Fourth, my research has added further insights into the conflicts owner-managers have with themselves. The contradiction in which the successor is growing up is later brought up in a different way in the business, whose demands are high and not

separable from the individuals. This interlinkage makes it hard for the child or later the manager to separate their own wishes and wants from those brought through their parents of the family business. The environment, in part like a total institution, can lead the way through power relations and force. Also, steady surveillance makes it very hard to develop an own state of mind.

With its use of the underlying theory of symbolic interaction which was also an active perspective on emotions, as proposed by James et al. (2012) for more studies, my data contributes to the argument that special interaction patterns affect individual family members in how they think feel and act.

The next section outlines recommendations for the business family in general, including parents and incumbents. Afterwards, some recommendations are made for the successor.

7.2 Recommendations for Families

Family members are responsible for the succession process and, in searching for a potential successor, they should:

1. Consider that the children need their parents and parents do want the best for their children. The family is the most important group for us in our lives. This should not be questioned through economic goals regardless of how successful and how high the monetary earnings might be. It will never be worth sacrificing love for money. This is also the same if a business is attached to the scenario. Parents undoubtedly start with good intentions and handing over the family

business to their children is basically a great thing to do. Schulze, Lubatkin, and Dino (2003) call this altruism.

2. Take a step back and do not view the child as a successor and, at the same time, a child. Separating these two roles is healthy. I will go one step further in not seeing a child as a role: I see the person, and their personhood was never questioned. If something could be questioned, then it will be the actions in preparing the child for the future. Therefore, separating the potential successor and the child can only be a healthy solution as, no matter what is attached, it is a work role and nothing more.
3. Not taking the business so seriously could be a good solution for all, the family, the individual and the business in not searching too hard for an intra-family successor. Wennberg, Wiklund, Hellerstedt, and Nordqvist (2011) note strong support for the claim in their study that ownership transfer to external owners outperforms intra-family succession. However, there are also studies which show the opposite.
4. Setting clear policies or a strategy in written form, or what Kammerlander, Sieger, et al. (2015) describe as family governance, so that the expectation is clearly stated. Having a clear plan is the best development for a business. It has nothing to do with any particular person and should not be taken personally if not everybody from the family is included. Clear policies can also include how the family will interact with each other. This can reduce the intensity of relations with kin. Establishing these policies before they are needed is the best way of going about this. This could be one way to keep family conflicts from influencing the business. If the family problems are too great, these will have

a bad influence on the business. Moreover, this can lead to more transparency in the process and perhaps can bypass coercive measures.

5. The art of living and working in a family business and family is to see in the two spheres not an '*either/or*' but a '*both/and*' with all the struggles this will bring with it. But this is, on the other hand, the fascination and the strength of the family and the business and of this unique form of organisation. This is also the means by which there is payback for all the hurt and the hardship (deprivation) involvement in the family business might bring. If not for this, no one would ever tackle this task and take over a family business.
6. It is important to make family businesses more suitable for women by combining work and children and contributing to their efforts by paying the same money as is paid if a male employee or a male family member does the job. Sadly, this is still an unsolved issue today. The same applies to succession in family businesses. Girls or daughters need to be seen also as a potential successor if they want to be. Undoubtedly, working women face all of these problems, but in a family business, the silent insistence of the family on male successors is much more challenging and demanding.
7. The parents should look after their pension funds at an early stage. As my data showed, it is not stated in the literature that the parents have dynastic interests (Spranger, Colarelli, Dimotakis, Jacob, & Arvey, 2012); it might also be simply the lack of money, which should be provided for them by the successor, for example as a monthly allowance. This can be applied, moreover, to smaller family businesses, which are also not easily sold.

No one single solution can be found for resolving the problems stated above. However, it is possible that my experience or my ‘recipe’ might help in making some recommendations or highlighting some new measures which could help some families in their unique and individual situations.

7.3 Recommendations for Successors

The ‘*truly willing*’ successors should:

1. Be as sure as possible what they want in life and be able to state this in a clear way.
2. State in a clear and honest way if they do want not take over the business and why.
3. Consider alternatives, which are not often seen at first sight. Working outside the family business for a while and then coming back could be a good solution, according to Chalus - Sauvannet et al. (2016).
4. Remember that taking over the family business always has a price tag, not only on the emotional, and personal side, but also on the monetary side. Often it is not talked about. However, the incumbents often have not looked after their pension funds, or never thought about building up monetary security outside of the company. Therefore, there will be a price to pay. It is important to be clear how high this will be and what the tax situation and the transformation costs, including advisors to the family business, are in the business’s respective country.

5. In view of the theory of symbolic interactionism which guided this research, I recommend remembering that the meaning lies not in the objects themselves. As we interact with our family members and with ourselves, meaning is applied through interpretation and constant interaction. The meaning, which always involves emotions, is not fixed and can be changed in further interaction with others. This is important to remember as what we see in the family business today can be actively changed tomorrow. We are not passively involved and victims of an institution; we have the ability to play active part inherent in ourselves.

My aim was also to inform practice by putting forward a potential model for the day-to-day interaction between family members working in the family business, but also other individuals which have points of contact with the family business. As this study shows, the situation as individuals and as women is very complex and dynamic. A clear way of communication is through symbolic interaction, which means taking the role of the other; trying to understand her/his perspective, and their emotional motivation. This might provide the key to making a prosperous and healthy way on the thorny path of developing the family business further for successive generations. Only relying on power and antiquated views and opinions will not solve the problem so many owner managers and families face when finding a successor who is willing to take over the burden and the work in a family business. In the next section, I will describe the limitations of this study and the possibilities for future research.

7.4 Limitations of the Study and Future Research

Overall, I hope to have initiated a fruitful, insightful and important discussion about the situation of a child growing up in a family business carried out as an analytical autoethnographic study.

A limitation of the research could be viewed in the fact that the method applied is analytic autoethnography and, therefore, only a very small number of units of analysis are involved; apart from the reference group, there was only one ‘view’. Nevertheless, this was not only from the researcher’s viewpoint, but also from that of the owner-manager of a family business. The research method allows a deep understanding of what is going on. As the data was collected mainly from my autoethnographic writing, besides the statements from the reference group - Kollektiv, it represents the story of an individual, although connected to the people who were involved in the study, more or less the members of the family. Alternatively, only one family business has been studied, and that business is economically and culturally distinctive.

I am telling my story within a limited timeframe, so, to say taking a snapshot, stopping the reality for a moment to capture what is happening now, and from this moment, going back and writing about my past. It is a kind of a journey through time. This has impacted how a situation is viewed and interpreted.

‘The conclusion itself will not be evidence; it will be a belief, supported by evidence or by other belief,’ (Browne & Keeley, 2010, p. 32). It could be argued that this work is too broad and that, as a result, I did not reach the depth I might have if I had isolated some of its parts. Whilst I have, in fact, considered doing this, I found the idea of providing a complete description of the situation of a child and women in family business almost impossible, so I decided to leave it on the surface, but to cover most

of the aspects I felt were important for narrowing the phenomenon of the family business from my experience.

With these concerns in mind, inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values and personal backgrounds, such as gender, history, culture and socio-economic status. That may shape my interpretation formed during my study. Denzin (2014) asks if we need always trust what a subject says about her/his meaning of an experience. As mentioned earlier, I tried to eliminate the fact that my perspective is subjective to my own experience and, therefore, my interpretation. The different techniques in analysing the data were used as far possible within the method of analytic autoethnography.

Despite these limitations, I believe that the findings of this present work offer some insight into the situation of individuals, particularly women, in family businesses and the succession process. Moreover, these findings offer a wide scope for further research. Besides these possible limitations, the findings and insights are only possible through using the method of autoethnography.

Future research

In this thesis, I mainly explored my own views of things as this research is of an explorative character. It has a solid basis and provides a broad spectrum of ideas for further research. There is much complexity in research, which is difficult to address in a study such as this. The different themes viewed in the literature review are an example of the complexity of the area of family business. As the inference is abductive, this finding is only preliminary. The abductive hypothesis has to be tested empirically through deduction and induction. I explained this in more detail in Chapter 4, section 4.1.

I propose five areas for future and additional research. First, future research could test a larger population to see if these findings are also present in other family businesses. Second, a researcher could see what could be taken out of this research and transferred to a different setting, take some of the explored concepts and contribute to theory-building in family business research. Third, the perspective of the successor, specifically ‘Subtle coerced succession’, should be researched using a wider sample size to see if this is experienced by more individuals. Fourth, I found the method and theory of memory-work (Haug, 2005) very promising, and for future research into family business it might be usefully employed in its purer form, through working with women over several generations in family businesses to detect their experience. Fifth, metaphors are a vital ground and would be an excellent basis for working with the incumbents as well as with the successor in family business to detect their ‘hidden’ wishes and emotions, in order to be clearer about their future decisions.

7.5 Personal Reflection

The experience of this journey towards a DBA has been very challenging for me for different reasons. Starting this project at a rather late stage in life was, on the one hand, very pleasant because I learned and discovered a lot of new concepts, theories and ways of seeing my life and the family business. It was also demanding for me mostly regarding the language issue, as I needed to write like a researcher and on the other hand like a fiction writer, all in a language which is not my mother tongue. This ability developed over the years, but it is still a struggle for me.

It was very challenging for me to lead my company and at the same time develop my subject over such a long period of time. As this thesis has a highly personal character, writing and reflecting on my own life was somewhat challenging too. This DBA project also gave me the opportunity to engage in enriching and sometimes tiring discussions with people who are full of inspiration for me. I improved my listening, learning and idea-development skills. This DBA journey disciplined me in a different way. I was an absolute beginner when I started, and now I am a beginner. I learned and read so much that I really appreciate this journey, even if it was the hardest job I have ever done. It changed me as a person to some extent. When I somehow naively stepped onto this path, I hardly understood the academic, emotional and physical difficulties in conducting qualitative research and writing a doctoral thesis.

The family business is not only part of the family; it also is the family. The business influences the family and its members on a regular basis. Often working and living in one place, all family members are tightly interconnected with each other and the choice of partners is strongly influenced by the family, as these choices have impacts on the business. A collective business family history provides identity and motivation. But not for all. It is a challenge to develop an individual personality if one is integrated or interwoven into such a strict network. Everything which appears open to other people is very restricted in a family business family.

We do feel responsible for everything we are doing. We do it in a good way with no excuses. As we do for our children, we want to do our best. A business in the family is like a family member we take care of as a natural person. That is all there is. But it is enough for a very good performance. As in most countries, the family is the primary

institution for raising children. The children are raised with the idea of having a business in the background.

If someone founds a business, then the business is there like any other family member. It has to be taken care of. Then the family business is handed to the next generation like a picture or a string of pearls from Aunt Margot. So, it is natural to take care of it. This taking care of the invisible member of the family is absorbed with the mother's milk. You can do nothing about it; you are not asked, you just have to do it.

My personal conclusion for this study is that even having grown up in the described very narrow walls or, as I stated earlier, in a 'golden cage', it is possible to see the means by which one can escape. It depends on such thoughts as: Did I try if the door was open? Did I kick against the bars? Do I destroy the bars of the cage? Or, perhaps others will let me out of the cage? Will they open my door from the outside if I ask them? Perhaps I am not imprisoned at all, and it is only a notion. Interaction with others is the main way to give the object a different meaning. But it is important to think that the possibility of doing so exists. This is how I constructed myself or wanted to be presented, perhaps in a subconscious way. I want to be recognised as active, however I also presented myself as a victim, and not active at all.

No matter what happened and what had happened, growing up in such a close environment as a family business, is it possible to change? Nothing is fixed and can be negotiated through interaction and interpretation. This is what I felt: that the family business is forever. Symbolic interactionism with its view of interpreting symbols (objects) in situations is useful for resolving conflicts. The meaning of an object or social object like emotion, lies not in the object itself; it is negotiated and interpreted through interaction.

Viewing some aspects of this study with a symbolic interaction lens, I conclude that thinking is a kind of internal conversation in which symbols are used for an interactive process with others. Human social behaviour is at least to some degree indeterminate, since social interaction cannot be predicted through factors and conditions which have been shaped by that interaction (Stryker, 2006).

There are no alternatives. So it was in my case. Nothing else exists. The business has to run. Everything else comes afterwards, such as my own interests. That is not asked for and is not important. I was groomed like a soldier to fulfil the needs of the company and forget about mine. This is how I recognise the process of the construction of self, (Haug, 2005).

Undoubtedly, every family business is different just as every family is different. But for the family within the family business, or which has this invisible member, it has to take care. Different as families are, they have to keep the family and the business healthy. So, the family business functions like a family, always asked for, always taken care of, like looking after a baby. If it cries, you run and you look at what has happened always and in a calm state.

Those families and individuals who go through life with a wakeful spirit and watch with an open mind and then have the ability not only to draw the right conclusion but to act accordingly will be successful.

‘For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf, and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack’
(Rudyard Kipling).

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Appendix 1

Persönliche Identifikation :

- Ist da !
- Zwiespältig: 1.Firma von Geburt an ein Teil
 auch von mir.
 2.Firma nahm Eltern weg.
- Identifikation mit den Produkten ist da
- Ortsbindung stört mich
- Umweltgedanke ist wichtig

Eigene Beurteilung meiner Stärken und Schwächen:

1. Stärken:

- Klarheit über mich selbst
- Kenne meine Grenzen zunehmend besser
- Zielstrebigkeit und Ausdauer
- Viel Energie und Disziplin
- Kann klare Anweisungen geben bei partnerschaftlicher Führung.
- Große Bereitschaft zu lernen
- Belastbar; in der Lage viel auf einmal zu machen
- Flexibel im Einstellen auf verschiedene Personen u. Ebenen (Arbeiter – Kunden)
- Sehr gute Umgangsformen
- Ordnung ist mir wichtig
- Sprachen: Englisch, Spanisch, Französisch, Italienisch
- Sicher in Benützung von word f. windows
- Sicher in Schreibmaschine schreiben
- Sparsam

- Kann bei Entscheidungen klar Ja/Nein sagen
- Überblick fürs Ganze und auch Blick fürs Detail
- Humorvoll

2. Schwächen:

- Trau mir meine Stärken nicht eingestehen
- Perfektionsanspruch
- Manchmal hektisch
- Arbeitsplanung (fühle mich zu festgelegt)
- Geiz
- Kann [REDACTED] Stärken nicht sehen
- Sicheres Auftreten gegenüber Katz

Eigene Zielsetzungen:

- Übernahme der Firma mit vollem Engagement und Zeit für meine Kinder, mein Privatleben.
- Partnerschaftliche Zusammenarbeit mit [REDACTED] u. meinen Eltern.
- Ideen bezüglich Personalführung, Umweltgedanken etc.
- Schwerpunkt auf Auslandskontakte legen.
- Wunsch nach Delegation von Arbeit
- Stärkung der Mitarbeiter zu selbständiger Arbeit
- Beendigung der Zusammenarbeit mit Büroangestellten

- Zuständigkeiten, Aufgaben klar verteilt
- Regelmäßige Treffen der Führungskräfte
- Vertragliche Regelung (Beteiligung)
- Adäquate Bezahlung meiner Arbeiten bis zur Übergabe.

Appendix 2

Family

Business

Born into the family	Hired into a business
Members we love	Members which should work
Unconditional acceptance	Conditional acceptance
Take care of Money	How much can you earn from the work?
Emotions	Rationales
Security	Risk
All one Family	Selection pressure, divides
Keeping the identity	Changing the business to actual requirements
Basis for equality	Inequality through hierarchies
Cooperative	Competitive
Unprofessional insider	Professional outsider
Mother	Owner manager
Tradition	Change

Appendix 3

