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Gender, Ethnicity and Identity Work in the Family Business

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Abstract

We study how family business members form and manage their individual identities in a family business context attending both to individual and societal circumstances. We depart from the understanding that the institutions of family and business are mediums by which diverse individual and social identities are mutually enacted, formed and continuously worked out. In order to bring in a combination of important individual and societal influences and processes we draw on identity work framework with a particular focus on two specific habitats of meaning; gender and ethnicity. We show that formation and management of plural identities take a distinctive form, and that the two habitats of meaning - gender and ethnicity - prove to be fundamental in organizing and performing in the family business context.

Introduction

Research has shown that creating a better understanding of identity processes is an appropriate way to address central theoretical and practical issues in the family business field (Dawson & Hjorth, 2012; Fletcher, 2002b; Klein, 2008; Miller, Breton-Miller, & Lester, 2011; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009; Zellweger, Eddleston, & Kellermanns, 2010). General management studies on identity have approached the topic in different ways based on their primary interest in organizational identity and performance taking a managerialist perspective, or on individuals' identity processes in organizational settings taking an interpretive perspective (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008).

Rooted largely in functionalist assumptions of stability and determinism, the dominant managerialist approach sees identity as an enduring essence. That is, individuals and organizations alike can have stable, singular and cohesive identities. In contrast, interpretive approaches view identities as emerging, multiple and temporary. Interpretive identity research suggests that individuals engage in processes of identity work and negotiate with the different terrains they face when they participate in their daily organizational and family lives. Recent literature shows that the managerialist approach on identity is dominant in both general management and family business literatures. However, for at least three reasons more research is needed that uses an interpretive lens (e.g., Alvesson, et al., 2008; Watson, 2008).

First, the lack of interpretive approaches on identity is a problem in the current literature because major social and economic transformations influence the conditions and structure of work and family life (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Beck, 1992; Beck, Beck-Gernsheim, Ritter, & Wiebel, 1995) with impact on how individuals adjust and transform their daily lives and their sense of being (Collinson, 2003; Sennett, 2011). Second, individuals in family businesses are assumed to passively conform to universal templates of individual behaviour which provide prescriptions for acceptable social behaviour in the family and business contexts (e.g. Shepherd & Haynie, 2009). This view limits the possibilities of a dynamic understanding of individual identity processes in the family business context. A more dynamic understanding is possible through an interpretive lens that focuses more on the meaning-making and the negotiated nature of individual identity processes.

Third, for family businesses, the importance of understanding the formation and role of individual identity is evident from the perspective of the 'familiness' framework introduced by Habbershon, Williams & McMillan (2003). Here, the development of a family business is related to the interactions between the family, the firm and the individuals. The notion of individual identities is integrated into the view of the family business as a system and it is important e.g. in relation to succession processes (Klein, 2008; Milton, 2008), strategic decision making (Miller, et al., 2011), and managing boundaries between family and business (Knapp, Smith, Kreiner, Sundaramurthy, & Barton, 2013; Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008). From this perspective, the unique advantage or disadvantage of a specific family firm is influenced by identity processes at the individual level (Habbershon, et al., 2003; James, Jennings, & Breitkreuz, 2012), and not simply the organizational level.

Our purpose is to deepen the understanding of identity processes in organizational settings and, in particular, how individuals' identities emerge and evolve in a family business context. We take an interpretive approach on two temporally and contextually embedded life stories with a focus on the start-up and growth of a first generation family business, including the owners' concerns for succession. This way we combine the general need for more interpretive research on identity processes in management and family business studies with increasing calls for research on first generation family businesses (Astrachan, 2003) and family start-up dynamics (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). Investigating married couples with children who start and run businesses provides a relevant empirical context for studying identity processes in family business (Fletcher, 2014). We define family business as a family start-up where a couple found and run their venture together, typically but not necessarily, with involvement from children and/or other family members..

Theoretically, we draw on an identity work framework (Acker, 1990; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006; Watson, 2008, 2009) and the notion 'habitat of meaning' (Golbert, 2001; Hannerz, 2002). In our study, two specific habitats of meaning emerged as important in relation to the identity work; gender and ethnicity. These were the most central in the life stories of the two owner-managers in order to understand how they worked with their identity, especially as we observed how gender and ethnicity intersected with the specific social terrains of both family and business in the individual family members' identity work (Essers, Doorewaard, & Benschop, 2013).

Our research contributes to the literature in several ways. In comparison with previous family business research, we place greater emphasis on the dynamic nature of identity processes in organizational settings and in particular the active role that individuals play in constructing their identity through specific daily life identity work processes in relation to both the family and the firm. Here, we demonstrate the unique context of the family business compared to the non-family business through a focus on identity work processes. We also heed the call to bring forward the less studied family and individuals sides of family businesses compared to the organizational and business side (James, et al., 2012). Further, we uncover the gendered and ethnic processes involved in the individuals' identity work in family business start-up, growth and exit. Highlighting the intersecting nature of gender and ethnic relations, this study avoids to decontextualize the diverse forms and settings of family businesses where family and business are seen as homogenous constructs (Howorth, Rose, Hamilton, & Westhead, 2010; Melin & Nordqvist, 2007). We add to the literature regarding how relations of gender are constitutive (Hamilton, 2013a, 2013b; Mulholland, 2003) and negotiated features of family businesses (Al-Dajani, Bika, & Swail, Forthcoming; Fletcher, 2014). In relation to ethnicity, we bring in the issue of migration, which allows us to problematize identity work of individual family business members further since taking one ready-to-wear model provided in one particular cultural context as relevant might prove to be difficult in another setting (Gupta, 2013). Finally, we offer an empirical contribution as we draw on lived experiences from two family business members as represented in their life stories. This is important because life stories of married couples with children and extended kin provides rich empirical context for studying sources and processes of identity work in family firms (Hedberg & Danes, 2012), and entails natural empirical ground for interpretive approaches (Fletcher, 2014), which are still rare in family business inquiry (Reay & Zhang, 2014).

The identity work framework and 'habitats of meaning'

Identity work is about the activities that individuals actively and continuously engage in as they form, repair, maintain, strengthen or revise their identities in social contexts (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 626). All individuals who have any existential concern do identity work (Cavarero & Kottman, 2000; Ricoeur & Blamey, 1995; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) since it is the effort of an individual to create a coherent, authentic and unique identity (Watson, 2008). Because identity work involves the discursive articulation of an ongoing performance between social references and self-definition (Alvesson, et al., 2008), the life transitions, specific events and encounters that an individual experiences may invoke greater

awareness and induce more concerted efforts for identity work. Thus, in contrast to the dominant approach to identity in the family business literature, where identity is typically seen as a fixed and abiding essence, the identity work framework allows us to put emphasis on the evolving and context sensitive aspects of individual identity work.

Further, we consider that individuals identify and relate to a range of ‘habitats of meaning’ (Golbert, 2001; Hannerz, 2002) as they engage in identity work. These spheres or habitats, offer symbolic resources for individuals to create meaning of the world around them and give both possibilities and limitations for their identity work (Golbert, 2001; Hannerz, 2002). Habitats of meaning refer to spheres that can be associated with both work and non-work, such as gender and ethnicity, which are in focus in this article. Each habitat of meaning may prove to be salient at a particular place, time and for some people but not others (Thrift, 1999). They may also be intersecting, which shape how habitats of meanings are negotiated and acted upon by individuals as they actively and continuously work out their identity in relation to others and as historically and socially embedded beings (Ashcraft, 2013; Ely & Padavic, 2007; Ybema et al., 2009). We recognize that notions of family and business themselves can take different meanings to different people at particular times (Hamilton, 2013a; Kondo, 1990).

Identities can, for instance, emerge in plural forms in the context of family business as informed by variety of identities such as gender: being a woman or a man of a particular kind, being a mother or a father, and as ethnicity: being a transnational migrants living in more than one culture and nation.

Methods

We adopt an interpretive approach that seeks to examine emergent and situated identity work as embedded in a particular place and time (Fletcher, 2014). We investigate through life stories how family owner-managers resist or comply with certain identity categories as habitats of meaning through mechanisms of ‘identification’ and ‘dis-identification’ (e.g., Elsbach & Bhattacharya, 2001; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). In attending to the two life stories of Sema and Ender, as we call them, we were interested both in their structure and content. On the one hand, we particularly tracked the type of events and persons that appeared in the story; on the other hand, we paid attention to the ways in which these different elements were assembled in the story. The analytical focus is thus biographical embeddedness and the context (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009) in which stories are told, rather than examination of what actually happened. As common in narrative research working with a limited number of cases (e.g., McGregor & Holmes, 1999), we bring forward the life stories of the two individuals by going into the meaning of family and socio-cultural contexts.

To allow for the required depth in understanding the small sample was purposive in the sense that we searched for individuals who were involved in starting and growing a family firm, while also being willing to share experiences and sense-making from this process. Several potential respondents were approached, but few were willing to give the access we needed to conduct an in-depth and longitudinal study. Some who did grant access were entrepreneurs without family influence. For this reason, we selected Sema and Ender primarily because of accessibility to be able to empirically study the theoretical phenomenon we were interested in (c.f. Koerner, 2014).

Through the phase of generating empirical material, the first author had contact with family members by following them over four years in several of their work places, at their homes separately and together. We followed their joys and struggles in their efforts of sorting out themselves, their family and their businesses both in their daily lives as well as in important occasions such as through divorces and ownership changes, etc. We interviewed their children, Sema’s younger brother and his wife, as well as Sema’s father. The life stories were told, and interviews made, in Turkish as the native language of Sema and Ender and later transcribed by the first author into English.

Analysing the empirical material, we took a grounded perspective (Bryant & Charmaz, 2010; Glaser, 1967; Pidgeon, 1996). The initial coding schemes were first developed on the basis of the material instead of following an identity work framework. Identifying the codes that emerged from the material, the process was inspired by positional analysis which relies on two separate concepts; being positioned and positioning. These two concepts helped to distinguish between the societal constructions forced on oneself and on self-positioning (Bamberg, 1997, 2004). We aimed to present the members' stories following temporal lines and places in which different positions were constructed and referred to. For example, we attended events of firm start up, growth and future plans in a subsequent order. At this phase, we identified the significance of 'gender' and 'ethnicity' as major habitats of meanings the participants drew on in articulating themselves in their identity work.

The analysis then focused on the ways in which family business members negotiated the habitats of meanings in relation to their distinctive notions of family and business in working out their identities. Here, we found that identity work was made around four themes, which we labelled: making sense of family identity, making sense of business identity, articulating plural identities and, re-structuring plural identities.

Further analysing these themes, we found they related to the more temporal stages of family business start-up, growth and decline. To relate our increased level of analysis about identity work to the temporal development of the family firm therefore, we relabelled the themes in the following way: 1) 'Starting Up: Making Sense of Who I am in relation to Who we are at Home' 2) 'Opportunity Recognition: Making Sense of Who I am in relation to Who we are at Work' 3) 'Family Business Growth: Articulating Who I am (not) and Who we are (not)' 4) 'Family Business Dissolvment: Restructuring Who I am(not) and Who we are (not)'. We acknowledge that such a stage model may ignore many nuances and differences in experiences among the individuals and the family as a group. But it also has explanatory power in illustrating how identity work processes as long-term experiences can be organized into analytically generalized understanding (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2008; Yin, 2014)

Below, we visualize the analysis by exploring first what specific discourses around gender and ethnicity are enacted as the basis for Sema's and Ender's identity work. Before presenting stories, we first introduce the focus individuals within the study: Sema and Ender. Sema's life story starts with her migrating to Sweden from Turkey when she was four years old. Sema moved with her mother to join her father Ali, who migrated to Sweden as a factory worker in late 60s. In Sweden they had two other boys, Mustafa and Okan. When Sema was in her mid-20s she met and married Ender in Turkey. They both originate from the same city in the southern Turkey which is known for its entrepreneurial culture. Ender has a university degree and used to work as a professional adviser to the Ministry of Education in Turkey. He comes from a relatively wealthy and educated family. Following their marriage, Ender migrated to Sweden to be with Sema. They had three children.

Starting Up: Making Sense of Who I am in relation to Who we are at Home

The first event that revealed Sema's and Ender's identity work and how they made sense of their life stories was the decision to start up a business. Both Sema and Ender place this decision within the context of family life; yet, the way they fill the story with meaning differs.

They start their business activities when they find a small kiosk in a small industrial town. The family business they start up becomes a laboratory where not only they learn how to operate it but also where their identities are gradually moulded with continuous identity work. None of them was previously involved in small business although Sema was more familiar due to her family's previous business. Their life stories show that the business accelerates intense identity work for both, though in different forms.

Sema

The business started with Ender who came from Turkey...I looked (at possibilities). He didn't have a possibility to find a job in this country neither had he the personality to work in a factory. It is because of my husband; otherwise I don't think I would start. What I knew was food business coming from my family; all foreigners were in food business. The business kept my marriage up.

Ender

Some friends did their graduate studies and lived abroad in the USA and in Germany. Actually my purpose was to do my graduate study here in Sweden. I collected all my university degree credentials and submitted. But it took too long. I couldn't wait; I had to work because we were expecting a child. It was due to bread winning, and also because I came here by my own choice. I am not like some people who have been living here for long years but still do not work and claim social support. I never asked nor applied for such a support from none.

For both of them, the decision to start up a business was informed by the family situation. They thought about their business as an important element of their family life. However, when explaining the situation in detail, different constructions related to the intersecting gender and ethnicity emerges. Sema speaks from the position of a wife who decides to follow her husband. To her, it is all about keeping the marriage; it is the marriage that makes her enter into an activity that she would have otherwise avoided. On the other hand, it is her and not Ender who has relevant experience in the food business they enter. In this way, Sema integrates into her narrative a story of a family business which she has been part of. In her story, we observe how two family businesses come together; yet, she makes an effort to maintain her individual identity and to separate her “new family” business from the old one.

For Ender, migration to Sweden emerges as the key point around which he builds his identity. He strongly “dis-identifies” himself with the stereotypical image of a migrant who comes to Sweden because he did not have better conditions and professional prospects in his own country. Therefore, he makes it clear that coming to Sweden was his own choice. The picture of dependent and unqualified migrant does not find a place in the narration of his identity. Setting up a business works as a way of separating himself from an identity he does not want to be associated with. This move is coupled with his strong sense of being a male breadwinner. In this, the family orientation of his story differs from that of Sema. Ender speaks as a head of the family. Although indirectly bringing the wife to the story (“we”), he mainly presents himself as a father.

Their life stories show that the business accelerates intense identity work for both, though in different forms. Ender had a professional expert position prior to his migration to Sweden. He thus experiences a dissonance between his professional self-identity with that of the migrant man who cannot continue on the same path and even stigmatized with the stereotypical image of migrant who is dependent on social welfare. However, starting up a business support him in transforming this troubled identity category with that of gender. He becomes much more comfortable with the situation; in fact, it is the business that boosts his identity as the head of family; to him, it becomes a confirmation that he can provide for his wife and children. Sema develops different attitudes and with time, she finds the idea of family business particularly disturbing to her identity. She realizes that contrary to her initial thoughts, the family business is actually threatening her family and relationship with Ender as she used to have a life and a work of her own. She identifies the need to be on her own, and decides to take a part-time job in a refugee camp as a translator.

Opportunity Recognition: Making Sense of Who I am in relation to Who we are at Work

Although the business provided considerable degree of economic capital and status to the family, Sema and Ender sell their kiosk and start a grilled chicken shop in another town. Sema and Ender provide strikingly different accounts about how that opportunity came about. In their engagement with the business, they do identity work differently around the business, shaped at the intersection of their gendered and ethnic identities: one's identity orienting towards the entrepreneurial and another's to the professional and managerial contexts.

Sema

Sometimes I took the kids with me to go downtown, dropping by the video renting shop and chatting with the owner about other shop owners, new openings, and bankruptcies. I got to know what was happening in the city. One day when we were in the car to visit my family I saw that a big hamburger chain was opening just beside the local hamburger shop. I knew that the man running the local shop had just opened borrowing 4.000.000 SEK from the bank. I felt sorry for him. I thought he needed to change his offering. It suddenly came to me that there was no shop offering grilled chicken in the city. There was an always long queue to buy a chicken. He should have done that! I wanted to tell him what to do, but I thought it may not be appropriate. Time passed and he did not seize the opportunity. I shared the idea with my husband and people around me.

Ender

After returning to the city where we lived, I bought a small shop and later I sold it, because we had other plans. Travelling to Turkey by car we passed by grilled chicken shops, but there was no such a shop in Sweden. Our family loved chicken, I was going to the market to buy a chicken and it was taking long time waiting in the queue. We thought why not having such a shop here. In Europe, for a migrant to participate into economy, either you have to discover something new or to serve with very high quality. In European countries, in Sweden or elsewhere, the migrants cannot be successful if they do what the natives do.

. Our success...my wife also contributed a lot; she knows Swedish very well, she was managing contacts with municipal and health authorities. But the business, how to develop and grow was usually my job. We had a very good partnership.

The medium of the new family venture provided Sema and Ender resources to craft their identities around the business and what kind of business person they thought they were. For instance, emergent in Sema's account is the type of opportunity which is found through local networks and by relating to the others. Being a person who could skilfully exchange familiar cultural codes and symbols, Sema was adept at communicating with people in the city which she knew, and even relate to them as if they were friends embedded in the same locality. However, to Ender, the opening of a grilled chicken shop naturally followed the family's long-term plan. This may compensate for his realization that he was a migrant and as a migrant he had to face different type of situations. In this part of his narrative, he does not resist the identity of a migrant; yet, clearly, he acknowledges that the group of migrants he belongs to is working migrants, repairing his migrant identity as a self-employed migrant who make it against all odds. Ender in this phase reconciled his ethnic identity in contrast to the migrants who are dependent on a social welfare as he first made sense. Gradually, the focus of his narrative shifts towards his managerial skills. This serves to elevate his own position. Interestingly, he speaks of his wife and her role in the business; yet, he tends to value his own contributions as more important. What we can observe in their identity work here, is a tension and/or rivalry growing between two individuals tied by both marriage and business commitments. As their story progresses, it becomes more evident that the notion of a family business is far from problem free. Indeed, the business aspect of their family venture provided Sema and Ender with many opportunities to construct their identities as business owners. The below excerpts from their narratives show the general attitude and approach they took towards this identity.

Sema

Ender says he has principles, I say you don't have the luxury to have principles. This is a service business! You cannot close the shop at 19.00 just because you want to watch a football game. You cannot reject the customer just because she wants a customized sandwich. If you don't innovate on your offerings nobody may come again.

Everything has its own ritual, you learn the laws from scratch, how to make a sandwich, make phone calls. You need to have a proper language, without swearing and know how to behave in the society and be modest.

I don't play. This is not a theatre, because whatever you do turn to yourself, turn to your identity, I am committed here with my identity. All Swedish businesses, from the plumber to whoever I made business with remember me in a positive way. Therefore, next time I turn to them they help me without any doubt. You develop a network for yourself and this network both may keep you up or block you on the way.

Ender

I used to come to the shop at 10 o'clock. I come before the employees come, I look around and I order the goods, I do all by myself. I work here until noon. Later I go to the gym just in the opposite corner, I work out there and come back here, I continue working on various things, manage paper works etc. and later I go home.

I hired people who I knew but since they were not so efficient they had to leave. I usually find my employees through employment office and later I invite them to work here for a week and see if they are good. I pay them for the temporary placement. I am usually very good at managing relationships with employees even after they leave. They still talk to me and greet me. When I arrive, my employees, usually girls, say "Brother Ender welcome! Would you like to have a cup of coffee?" I respond with great respect and say "thank you darling". They all work for me, they are my sisters.

Ender's narrative brings in several elements of a rational and disciplined self that is associated the image of management. A close reading of the narratives shows that being prompt, such as coming earlier than everyone as well as handling important tasks by himself is necessary to maintain control at the workplace and over the employees in general. This way Ender works to differentiate between the immigrant family business owner and the general professional manager who cares about efficiency more than the reciprocity with kin as many ethnic and small businesses do (Fernández-Kelly & Konczal, 2005; Jones & Ram, 2007). For instance, he finds human resources from the employment office instead of through ethnic community and fair wages instead of abusing new migrants' labour with temporary placement; However, the nature of the family business adds a different dimension to the employer-employee relationships. The family structure is evoked to account for his good rapport with employees. Although, we can interpret female employees as figures which help to set his maleness and later link all those qualities to dominant discourse of the male manager; Ender desexualizes his relationships by invoking the identities of siblings. In this way, he gives an example of how the family business is used to do identity work by building on both worlds: family and business.

Ender's emphasis on efficiency and keeping the things in their own place is contradicting with the nature of the service business according to Sema. She thinks, in the service sector, one needs to sacrifice her personal principles and leisure in favour of the business. More importantly, she does not tend to position those in hierarchical ways but rather in a flat scheme of small world networks. In order to carry on she admits she needs support from a plumber as much as from the municipality. Contrary to Sema, for Ender the work boundary is drawn around the physical walls of the business and careful effort is needed to maintain this border (Powell, 2003).

Family Business Growth: Articulating Who I am (not) and Who we are (not)!

The first grilled chicken shop taught the married couple different lessons in the way of sorting themselves out in a particular way and it continued with a steady growth of their family business. They opened three

new shops, two cafeterias and a big restaurant. However, the success in terms of business growth did not secure the happiness in the family life. Quite the contrary, the couple experienced intense tensions and quarrels in this period.

Sema

After selling the second shop for a high prize, I stayed at home and then my husband's disappointing incidence (referring to spousal loyalty) happened. I pitied myself; I just looked at the walls long time. Later I saw that If I don't stand up, nobody will help me out. I said, Sema! Stand up and keep moving. I opened the third grilled chicken shop just after the forth. At the time my brother was working in a factory and my parents' situation was not so good. I wanted to help them and started up with my brother. My father provided the start-up capital. However, we had long quarrels with Ender about the partnership with my brother. I was tired and I included Ender as well, however with one condition, I said my older brother will also take a share, so I divided the property into four.

Ender

We bought a new shop, the third one. Sema said that, let's take my younger brother as a partner, I said ok since he was jobless. As we started up, she said, your share or my share doesn't count as different shareholding. Therefore, this shop can be shared only between me and my younger brother. I said, if there is no difference between you and me, and then I and your younger brother can share the business. Only the men can own it. Then our quarrels started. I said why share the business this way. She replied: I cannot make you the boss of my family! I said Sema look! we built up this business together, we shared the business idea, we worked together, and we struggled together. If your father wants to start up a business for his son, he can do that under a different name. You, your father, your brother can be partners, but please do not involve me. I won't put any money. She didn't accept. I didn't raise my voice further since I saw that we may end up with breaking up. Then we became four shareholders, she included her older brother as well.

Following the opening of the second shop, Sema and Ender needed additional support and Sema's extended family (sibling and parents) entered into the scene. For Sema, her family's involvement is justified on terms of family respect as she needed to provide to her extended family due to temporary hardship. In contrary, Ender perceived their entry as a threat and narrated about Sema's family's unethical behaviour toward using company income as their own personal incomes. This and Sema's effort to cover or even defend that situation is where Ender sees a deep conflict starting that eventually destroyed the family and the business.

Indeed, Sema and Ender experienced deep disruptions to their existential security where they lost beliefs about each other. They both interpreted the situation as unjust and the responsibility had to be carried by them. There was no-one else who they can put the blame into except the family. At this period, the tensions around the extended family of Sema functioned as a boundary making device for both Sema and Ender. Sema approximated her extended family and at the same time put a distance between her own family (represented by her husband) and the business. For Ender the extended family of Sema is 'othered' as a way of trying to save the integration of his own nucleus family and business.

Sema's account provides an important point regarding the timing of this action. After her disappointing experience, she felt helpless and insecure. In order to regain equilibrium she forced Ender to include her extended family on the basis of the threat that they could end up with divorcing if he does not agree. This time it was her brother and her father who entered the scene as she believed she needed support from a male guardian to carry on. Once she realized that she could not get help from anyone in resolving the conflict but herself, she articulated her identities profoundly in professional terms. Indeed, the family's business provided her an independent space she could stand on without pressing gendered demands on who to be.

Family Business Dissolution: Restructuring Who I am (not) and Who we are (not)!

Soon after the destructing conflict, Sema and Ender broke up, and they divided the businesses including shares and management with Sema's brothers and her father. Sema and Ender also shared the custody of their three children. The next part brings in their future projections about the family, the business and succession.

Sema	Ender
<i>What keep me moving in life are my children and my work. Despite my efforts, I have not been recognized by my family or my husband. If I had a different environment or if we had been more similar it would have been different. This is what I could do by myself. I leave this but I have to know I can have similar possibilities for enterprising. If I open up a shop somewhere in the world, in Africa or in Istanbul, it will be a small business, with my conditions, my knowledge. This is my life philosophy, it is my identity! However for my children, if they want it I give it to them. But I don't want my children to take over the businesses. The business is so corrosive. They can't have a normal family life. Their children would fall asleep at 8.00 pm but they would not be there. It gives, but it takes more than it gives. If this was a manufacturing firm, I would love them to take over.</i>	<i>We built up something gorgeous and new. Our brains are working very well together. Sema is a good, hard-working and smart woman, especially very good at managing contacts. I know how a business should be run and the contact with employees. We had a good partnership. Sometimes I worked 15-16 hours a day. Unfortunately due to the people who drained us, we couldn't grow. I could move on but my older son doesn't want. The younger son works here sometimes. If they send me a signal, I can leave it to my sons. However they don't seem to want. It is enough for me; I don't want to do this with anyone else. I have acquired all this knowledge but I feel loneliness. After a while I will retire and have a good retirement wage and I can sell the shop and get leisure money. My sons seem to be able to stand on their own. I don't care about the business anymore. I am looking for a potential wife. It is enough; time is up for a new life!</i>

At this stage, both Ender and Sema were tired of working hard. Perhaps not so much for working long hours but for working hard to be able to respond to the conflicting expectations of the family involvement in the business, which is related to different discursive sources of gender and ethnic norms. Cutting off the family dimension from her life, Sema's dream is to do business wherever she sees opportunities. Being an entrepreneur is her lifetime project. Ender on the other hand does not set his projection around the business but as a man who needs a new wife, and a family life. He does not want to continue with his business beyond the normal retirement age. Business is not his life time project. His life time project is keeping up as the head of the family, and as a husband.

The couple's projection of a succession process is intimately gendered and is linked with different definitions of family. Sema and Ender put different emphasis on the importance of either both emotional bonds and the care or of the endurance of the family institution. In Sema's account, despite building up some material wealth, she thinks the conditions in service sector is rough and requires sacrificing a healthy family life. She interprets the family business by centering it around the notion of business as she experienced it as a migrant and with its potential threat to the family life. Accordingly, she thinks a family succession is unlikely. Sema does not want her children to take over the business in order to protect the family life she frames around care and compassion. However, even after divorcing, they kept the familiness of the family business intact aligned with the concerns around the established business and family relations. For example none of them wants to take a 'stranger' to the family business for partnering and growing further even if through marriage. Moreover, all the businesses work with the same suppliers and the customers still see them as operating a family business.

Ender would like his sons to take over his business but does not mention the possibility of his daughter to take over although the three children are in the same age range. For him the business is a family matter and needs a head who is a male. Ender wants his sons to take over the business to ensure the family succession. The cultural definition of family informs Ender's intentions as it does to Sema. However, for Ender it is the corporate understanding of family as a group of owners requiring succession which is what matters most.

The children's narratives reflect what their parents think regarding them taking over the business. Their views are informed by experiencing closer contact with one of their parents. Berna does not want to take over the business despite her regularly working in the shops together with her parents. One reason is that she sees the business distracting her mother's quality of life. She often sees her mother either very tired after work or even depressed. Berna does not want to be unhappy as her mother. The sons say that 'they don't want to be like them', seeing the businesses as a dead end and "a business for migrants", even if they are happy with the material wealth provided by their parents. Perhaps the family business, where their parents had to devote so much of their time, is experienced as strong rival for their parents' attention. Hasan poignantly expressed his opinion by recalling her childhood:

When I was a child, in the weekends where everyone has a free time, I used to call my friends. Unfortunately all were busy with doing plans with their family, but I had my parents who were always at work. Either I had to stay at home alone with no friends and parents, or I had to go to their workplaces to see them. This kind of life kills the family life and childhood and for my future I want a family more than any other thing, certainly not a family business!

Discussion

In this article, our purpose was to deepen the understanding of identity processes in organizational settings and, in particular, how individuals' identities emerge and evolve in a family business context. Focusing on individuals' identity, we extend knowledge of identity work processes by shedding light on the intense and simultaneous traffic occurring between family, work and individuals' own spaces. The interpretive approach opens up the dynamic and complex nature of identity work processes regarding the boundaries between family and business settings through a close study of the systemic interactions between individuals, the family and a business (Habbershon, et al., 2003)..

The life stories show identity work in a family business setting differs from a non-family work setting. In a non-family work setting, people deal mostly with their managers as source of identity regulation. However, as we have seen in the life stories, in the family business loved ones are the source of identity regulation. This makes the identity work different even paradoxical. For instance, Lutgen-Sandvik (2008) found that people who are involved in intense identity work avoid turning to family members when they do identity work in their work setting. Only in a restructuring phase do they turn to their families for support. Our study shows that nowhere in the life stories did Sema and Ender turn to co-workers or other people in different types of identity work; in particular sense making, reconciling and processing loss. Rather, they avoided discussing family issues with colleagues and even friends to keep what happened in the family in the family.

The two life stories also demonstrate the character of the individual identity work in a family business context. The starting up and opportunity identification phase show intense identity work where large efforts were spent on making sense of multiple identities and a variety of social resources, including the family (Miller, et al., 2011). The family influence also provides negative effects and limited emotional resources for the individuals as they engage in identity work in contrast to non-family business work contexts. Indeed, building on Lutgen-Sandvik (2008), the intense period of making sense of and navigating among multiple identities complicated the growth and succession phases either because the individuals complied with the family expectations and norms more readily, or because they thought that the dissonance

they experienced can be dealt with through quick remedial identity work tactics. Moreover, the life stories show that family involvement is a strong regulating force for individual identity work even after divorcing, as people have to find ways to sustain the family and business and transform their work and non-work identities accordingly.

New insights also emerge regarding how individual identity work is related to two habitats of meaning: gender and ethnicity. The life stories uncover how struggles to keep the family and the family business intact are influenced by how gender and ethnicity are interpreted and enacted selectively by the members in their efforts of dealing with themselves as individuals with coherent and distinctive identities..

The identity works of Sema and Ender respectively emerge from socio-cultural circumstances where their individual identities are not gender or ethnically neutral. For example, unlike Sema, business for Ender was the key to keep his gendered identity work. The discourse of the professional manager, which itself is quite gendered (Collinson & Hearn, 1996; Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), provided him a source where he blended family and business in order to master and control conditions and people around. Further, he dis-identified himself as a migrant. For him 'being a good man' meant to be a progressive and highly educated man who supports his wife's working outside (Arat, 1998a, 1998b). For Sema, being a wife (provided another paradoxical source of identity work. she believed 'being the good wife' does not necessarily imply 'being a good woman' but it includes "being a working woman'. She could be responsible and at the same time have an independent individual space and time for herself free from the family (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001). Ethnicity and migration, unlike for Ender, was not so much problematized by Sema. She complied with a good migrant image as a woman with no problem to comply with Swedish norms and adapt at exchanging cultural codes, much thanks to her early childhood growing up with a Turkish family and Swedish teachers. Thus, in making sense of who they were or were not, the couple tried to keep family and business separate or made remedial repair works in adjusting themselves to the demands and conditions (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002).

The life stories show how making hard choices interplay with individual identity work. Building on Essers, et al., (2013) the identity work in the family business became experienced as conflicting between the two individuals when different norms and demands were increasingly threatening their sense of beings. In relation to both gender and ethnicity, Sema refused 'the good woman image' as stemming from her family by breaking up and Ender wanted to consciously maintain 'a good man discourse' by trying to protect his family unity. In the last phase of restructuring, they decidedly drew on discourses around either business or family without feeling obliged to blend those two, because their temporary relief has not lived long. The couple ended up with divorcing, and exiting the business. With this dissolution they aimed to create authentic selves along the norms of good womanness and manliness. The regulating norms of 'being a good woman' and 'being a good man' thus inflicted with gender and ethnicity as habitats of meaning in the family business context.

After both the business and the family had been lost, Ender and Sema still relied on the medium of the family business as the main source for their identity work. In re-structuring phase it has become clear that different notions of family have been effectively informing the particular individual identity work. For Sema it became a place of emotional attachment and care. For Ender the family meant continuity through the succession, both of the business and of the family along the gendered labour of division (Kondo, 1990). Indeed, family business is conceived as long as it served either to the family happiness (for Sema) or family endurance (for Ender). This shows how different interpretations of the family and respectively the business can inform different visions of the family business succession and continuity.

Two methodological limitations concern our sample. The sample is small and the researchers' closeness to the respondents may create bias. These are common issues with interpretive research that strives to study a social phenomenon closely, over time and through in-depth interaction with people. Building trust and mutual respect with our respondents was considered essential in order to be able to

collect high-quality empirical material (Fletcher, 2002a). In this way, the fact that the studied individuals and one of the authors got to know each other should mainly be seen as an advantage in terms of the veracity and completeness of the life-stories reproduced (Essers, 2009). Despite limitations, the study offers a number of implications for research.

Implications

Our interpretive study approaches individual identity work in the family business context by focusing on the role of gender and ethnicity, as habitats of meaning experienced in intersecting ways (Calás, Smircich, Tienari, & Ellehave, 2010; Crenshaw, 1991; Holvino, 2008). This way, identity is dynamically constructed as self-identity in relation to wider societal and cultural influences (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Koerner, 2014; Watson, 2008). For instance, the two focused owner managers in the study identified themselves as migrant woman entrepreneur and migrant man manager at some instances but as family business entrepreneur or manager at others, instead of relying on one universal category of woman or man or migrant woman and man as fixed. Therefore, concentrating on the identity work of individual family business members our study extends the understanding of relations of gender and ethnicity in family business contexts, and heed the call for more knowledge about the family and individual sides of identity in family businesses compared to the business side (James, et al., 2012).

Previous research made it clear that women are either invisible or at best secondary to family business (Hamilton, 2006; Jimenez, 2009; Mulholland, 2003; Sharma, 2004). For instance, it has often been said that although wives' labour is essential to sustain the business, they are considered as not-working (Cole, 1997; Danes & Olson, 2003). While family business research has presented the problem area around gender relations, our study takes a step further and show how gender relations are worked out and the gender inequalities constructed and experienced. We thus go beyond the previous typical framing of gender relations as biologically determined positions embodied by men and women (Nicholson, 1994) and propose that in addition to focusing on "women in family business", scholars should focus on "gender relations within the family firm", and how these relations are related to the ways individual family business members do identity work. As Hamilton (2013a) argues, in the family business literature and in the management literature in general, whenever the family and work life is examined with a gender lens, researchers tend to conceptualize these life spheres as conflicting because the starting point is the woman's motherhood and housekeeping duties (rather than work life). Hamilton (2013a) therefore calls for research that goes beyond the fairly simplistic and dualistic work-family balance issue, which only serves to reproduce the established notions of universal womanhood. Here, our study shows that the interpretive approach to individuals' identity work gives a more complex and dynamic way of understanding the role of gender in dealing with work-family balance issues in the family business context.

The study also reveals the role of migrancy where identity work based on ethnicity as habitat of meaning is salient but often intersects with other identity categories as family business members do their identity work. We recognize that as gender has been imagined to the degree of woman's physical presence, ethnicity is often considered in the body of immigrant enterprises. Studies have demonstrated the important role of family involvement in migrant businesses, particularly in showing the distinctive nature of social and economic capital formation in ethnic communities (Danes, Lee, Stafford, & Heck, 2008; Ram & Holliday, 1993; Sanders & Nee, 1996). Paradoxically, those studies on the side also bourgeoned the understanding of ethnicity as a bounded group entity rather than a boundary forming factor that is negotiated in everyday life (Barth, 1970; Jones & Ram, 2007) and used as a habitat of meaning in identity work. This way, intra-group hierarchies, such as those emerging at the intersection of gender, family and business identities have been left unarticulated.

Extending these insights, our study shows the role of relations of family business members for identity work in two ways. First, it provides insights as a way to understand the attempts immigrant families to negotiate their migrant identity in relation to their decisions to start and jointly manage several family

ventures. Second, the study provides an understanding of the role of ethnicity in the family members' relation to each other and their individual decisions and future aspirations. Indeed, the life stories show that not only children, but also parents and siblings play an important role in these identity work processes. The two owner-managers in our study spent considerable efforts to integrate as well as distance themselves from these close kin to work out their individual (family and business) identities (Karra, Tracey, & Phillips, 2006). They experienced both pros and cons with involving other family members as formally employed or owners of the firm. All those insights indicate the need to take into consideration the particular context and situated relations in each family business. Thus, how they are embedded in a particular context and family relations shape how they see and act upon new entrepreneurial and growth opportunities (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Cramton, 1993; Welter, 2011). The study hence gives new insights regarding the mutual impact of the family and the business for the identity of individual family business members (Knapp, et al., 2013; Shepherd & Haynie, 2009).

Finally, this study has methodological implications for family business inquiry. Our interpretive approach takes the point of departure in everyday situations of actors and concentrates on lived and relational experiences as represented in life stories. This is also the natural empirical ground for interpretive inquiry to identity work and family business (Fletcher, 2014). Because this type of research still is rare in the family business literature, this article represent an important example of how such research can be conducted and reported in order to extend our knowledge about a relevant phenomenon.

Conclusion

In this article, the analysis of two life stories shows how family business members do identity work in relation to both family and business and how, through the two habitats of meaning in focus, gender and ethnicity, they construct their identities. Further research may attend to different habitats of meaning such as including age, social class, race, sexuality and disability which may provide insights in order to develop more contextualized and socio-culturally informed analysis of family businesses.

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