The Gendered Identity Work of Women Leaders in Family Business

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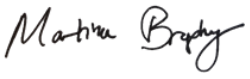
Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Master of Philosophy is entirely my own work, and that I have exercised reasonable care to ensure that the work is original, and does not to the best of my knowledge breach any law of copyright, and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed: 

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Abstract

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The Gendered Identity Work of Women Leaders in Family Business

Scholars recognise gendered identity work as an important process for women leaders in overcoming tensions and contradictions between their gendered and professional social identities. This is particularly relevant to daughters in family business who often encounter cultural and familial gendered norms that position women as inappropriate for family business leadership. Despite this, there is limited understanding of how women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives. In addressing this gap, and answering the call for greater engagement with gender theory in family business research, the current study undertakes a novel approach within family business research by combining an identity work lens with doing gender well and/or differently. In doing so, this thesis produces empirical insights that advance current knowledge of gendered identity work and gendered relations in family business as well as gendered identity work more broadly. This was achieved through an exploratory qualitative inquiry drawing on in-depth interviews with 14 women leaders in family businesses in the Republic of Ireland. The empirical study found that women engage in different forms of gendered identity work—*Blending in, Complementing, Unsettling* and *Challenging the Gendered Norm*—to manage their competing identities. Moreover, it evidenced how these different forms of identity work related to various gender practices associated with doing gender well, doing gender differently and doing gender well and differently simultaneously. These findings advance knowledge of how family business women's attempts at doing gender well and differently relate to how they manage their competing identities in their daily working lives. Implications for practice, limitations and avenues for future research are extended.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This introductory chapter provides an overview of the empirical and theoretical backdrop to this study, which led to the emergence of the overarching research question and objectives. The chapter begins with a description of the empirical context (i.e. Family Businesses in the Republic of Ireland) in which this study is undertaken. This is followed by an outline of the key theoretical concepts guiding this study. Next, the relevant literatures and gaps in knowledge that led to the development of the research question and objectives are detailed. The parameters of the study and an overview of the approach utilised concludes this chapter.

1.2 Empirical Context: Women in Family Business in the Republic of Ireland

Based on existing statistics, family businesses are a prevalent form of organisation globally, internationally and nationally. Within Europe, there are in excess of 14 million family businesses providing over 60 million private sector jobs (European Family Businesses, 2018). Our nearest neighbour, the UK, has approximately 4.8 million family owned businesses, which represent 85% of all private enterprises (Institute for Family Business Research Foundation, 2019). According to recent Irish Central Statistics Office data, there are 160,700 family businesses in Ireland which represent 64% of Irish enterprises and employ 938,000 people (O'Gorman and Farrelly, 2020).

In the media, family businesses are portrayed as favourable environments for women based on their higher than average female representation at board and management level (Wight, 2013; Murray, 2017; Hall, 2018). Most notably, a 2015 survey of the world's largest family businesses (n=525)[1] found that 70% of family businesses were considering a woman as their next CEO whilst women comprised 22% of the average family business's senior management team and occupied 16% of their board seats (EY and Kennesaw State University, 2015). These figures compare favourably to the global average with women's participation in top management at 13.8% and board membership at 14.7% (Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2016).

[1] No Irish family businesses featured.

From an Irish perspective, latest figures show that women represent 7.9% of CEOs, 17.1% of board directors, and occupy 26.8% of executive leadership positions of large Irish-owned private enterprises (Balance for Better Business and CSO Gender Balance Survey, 2019). Specific to a family business context, the 2019 PwC global family business survey found that Ireland fared slightly better on gender diversity than its global counterparts with women representing an average of 28% of management team members compared to 24% globally, and 27% of next generation members working in family business compared to 23% worldwide[2] (PwC, 2019). Although these are encouraging statistics, family business women in management still represent the minority; accordingly "there is still a long way to go [for women] to achieve parity with men" (Cater and Young, 2019, p.230).

The continued gender disparity in family business leadership may reflect societal and familial norms such as primogeniture, which is the practice of appointing the first born son as successor (Wang, 2010), as well as micro level factors such as identity conflict (Dumas, 1992) and perception issues (Overbeke, Bilimoria and Somers, 2015). According to the PwC Next Generation Survey (PwC, 2016), 45% of female Next Gen agree that male Next Gen are more likely to be expected to manage the family business, and only 77% of female Next Gen agree that the current generation is confident in their ability compared to 93% of male Next Gen[3]. How women in family business perceive themselves and believe others perceive them is a matter of identity. Thus, understanding how family business women manage and negotiate their identities, which, in turn, has implications for their leadership and succession of the family business (Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Byrne *et al.*, 2019; Mussolino *et al.*, 2019), is worthy of further scholarly investigation.

1.3 Theoretical Concepts and Definitions

1.3.1 Gender

For the purposes of this study, gender is understood as the "socially constructed assumptions which are stereotypically associated with sex categories" (Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2018, p.6). Gender is not tied to bodies per se but is treated as a performance that is conducted by individuals in interaction with others (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 1990). Notions of natural sexual difference fuel the hierarchical gender binary (Ahl, 2004). Without

[2] Irish sample totalled 129 family business owners/managers. The global sample totalled almost 3,000 family businesses (PwC, 2019).
[3] 73 female next gens across 25 countries (including Ireland) were surveyed (PwC, 2016).

perpetuating a dichotomous and essentialist view of gender (Linstead and Pullen, 2006), this thesis recognises that the cultural understandings of masculinities and femininities are ascribed to bodies coded male and female respectively (Gherardi, 1994). In keeping with this understanding of gender, the current study draws on the concept of "doing gender" as the "socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'" (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p.126).

Importantly, individuals are understood to be held accountable to the cultural norms and standards relevant to their perceived sex category (West and Zimmerman, 1987; West and Zimmerman, 2009). Thus, individuals practice gender by conforming to or resisting the cultural and discursive gender practices available to them (Martin, 2003; 2006). Complying with gender practices equates with "doing gender well" or acting in accordance with one's perceived sex category (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, p.220). According to Mavin and Grandy (2013, p.235) resisting gender practices may take the form of "doing gender differently" or going "against perceived sex category and expected gender behaviour". Resultantly, gender ascriptions are multiple, fragmented and ambiguous in nature (Pullen and Knights, 2007; Pullen and Simpson, 2009) with individuals engaging in "femininities and masculinities simultaneously, doing gender well and differently against the gender binary (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013)" (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014, p.441).

1.3.2 Identity

In keeping with the critical perspective of identity and identification processes, this study recognises identity as a process of becoming that is fragmented, negotiable, and historically and culturally specific (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008). This ongoing process of identification involves a conversation between one's self-identity and one's multitude of social identities (Watson, 2008). Following Watson (2008, p.131), self-identity is defined as "the individual's own notion of who and what they are" while social-identities are defined as the "cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be". Thus, individuals engage in a process of identity construction and negotiation, known as identity work (Snow and Anderson, 1987). For the purposes of this study, identity work is defined as:

> The mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms

> with and, within limits, to influence the various social-identities which pertain to them in the various milieu in which they live their lives (Watson, 2008, p.129).

This notion of identity work recognises that how individuals identify is not a solely internal process devoid of social context (Jenkins, 2008), but one that involves "talk and action" with others and with the multitude of "discursively available *social-identities*" (Watson, 2008, p.130, original emphasis). Identity work tends to be associated with tensions and uncertainty as individuals navigate occasional conflicting ideas of who they are with who others believe them to be (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Watson, 2008; Beech, 2011). This is of particular relevance to the participants in this study who must navigate between multiple and potentially competing identities as family members, women and leaders in family business.

1.4 Women in Family Business Literature: Identifying the Gaps

Scholars have long noted women's invisibility or absence from leadership positions in the family business (Rosenblatt *et al.*, 1985; Dumas, 1989; Salganicoff, 1990). Whilst women have risen in prominence within these organisations (see Section 1.2), there is still evidence of how gender biases and norms shape successor choice (Bennedsen *et al.*, 2007; Ahrens, Landmann and Woywode, 2015; Calabrò *et al.*, 2018) and women's roles and involvement in the firm (Curimbaba, 2002; García-Álvarez, López-Sintas and Saldaña Gonzalvo, 2002; Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014). According to Gherardi and Perotta (2016, p.42):

> In family business, gender is still a source of discrimination and domination, not only because daughters are more or less systematically disregarded when sons are available but also because the gender sub-text that disregards gender equality sustains the invisibility of male dominance in business.

Male leadership signifies the norm or standard not only in family business practice but also in the literature where the voices of male informants are privileged and stereotypical beliefs of family business women and the roles they play are perpetuated (Hamilton, 2006; Howorth *et al.*, 2010). Accordingly, family business studies can have a tendency to "sleep walk into presenting and theorizing a male domain" (Hamilton, 2013b, p.93). Although women in family business has experienced a rapid growth in scholarly interest (Campopiano *et al.*, 2017; Sentuti, Cesaroni and Cubico, 2019), there has been limited engagement with gender theory and specifically gender as a social construct or performance (Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017; Byrne, Fattoum and Thébaud, 2018; Kubíček and Machek, 2018).

In particular, "the everyday reality of doing—or undoing—gender is not in view and is not engaged" (Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017, p.229). This is a notable gap in knowledge given the importance of a doing gender approach (West and Zimmerman, 1987), specifically doing gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013), in uncovering the subtle gendered relations and hidden male centric norms which shape and constrain how individuals construct their gendered identities (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; García and Welter, 2013; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). Thus, by focusing on women's gender performances within the family business, the current study answers the call for greater engagement with gender theory in family business research (Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017) as well as further empirical exploration of doing gender well and differently within varied contexts (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013).

Within the wider gender and management field, scholars have repeatedly signalled the importance of identity work for women as they manage and negotiate their social identities in organisations (e.g., Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 2011; Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Swail and Marlow, 2018). According to Hytti *et al.* (2017, p.680) "[family business] women need to engage more strongly in identity work" than their male counterparts as women have to contend with cultural and familial gendered norms. Doing gender and identity work are closely related processes (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013; Nentwich and Kelan, 2014), with Watson's (2008; 2009b) approach to identity work considered highly applicable for revealing gender practices within the family business context (Heinonen and Hytti, 2012; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). Despite this recognition, only a limited number of studies combine a gendered perspective with identity work to understand women's experiences within family businesses (e.g., Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop, 2013; Aygören and Nordqvist, 2015; Hytti *et al.*, 2017).

Moreover, this body of literature has focused on the gendered identity work employed by individuals within first generation, migrant owned businesses (Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop, 2013; Aygören and Nordqvist, 2015) or in relation to particular events such as business entry and succession (Bjursell and Melin, 2011; Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Byrne *et al.*, 2019; Mussolino *et al.*, 2019). Thus, there is a gap in knowledge as to how women in second or later generation family businesses manage their competing identities within "the daily operations of a family firm" (Hytti *et al.*, 2017, p.681). The focus on second and later generation family firms, where family involvement extends beyond the founding generation (Sonfield and Lussier, 2004), is necessary for the current study to capture the gendered identity work of family business daughters. Moreover, by focusing on second or later

generation family firms, the current study can reveal insights into the gender dynamics underlying next generation leadership and succession (Hytti et al., 2017). In adopting a novel approach within this literature by combining an identity work lens (Watson, 2008) with doing gender well and/or differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013), the current study aims to address this gap.

1.5 Research Question and Objectives

The research question is as follows: *How do women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives?* This question was split into two parts: 1. What are the tensions and contradictions associated with their identities? 2. What are the strategies employed in response to these tensions and contradictions?

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- Provide a critical analysis of the existing literatures pertaining to gender and identity work within organisational contexts and specifically, the family business.
- Design and conduct an empirical investigation to address the research question.
- Develop empirical insights that inform our understanding and advance knowledge of gender and identity work within organisational contexts and specifically, the family business.
- Extend practical recommendations for use by family business advisors, consultants and practitioners.

1.6 Overview of Approach

The current thesis is guided by a social constructionist epistemology which recognises that our current understandings of the world are shaped by social interaction between people within a particular cultural and historical context (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 2015). Reality is not fixed and discoverable but is manifesting continuously as individuals engage with each other i.e. intersubjective social realities (Cunliffe, 2008). Hence, this study acknowledges and treats these women's identities as subjective and "as the *ongoing achievements* of human interaction" (Watson, 2001a, p.223, original emphasis). In addressing the research question of this study, an in-depth interview strategy (Johnson, 2001)

is undertaken, resulting in empirical evidence from 14 women leaders in family businesses from across the Republic of Ireland. Following a feminist approach, the researcher aims to prioritise these women's voices and highlight the patriarchal system that frames these women's experiences (Marshall and Rossman, 2006; Sprague, 2016). In analysing the interviews, thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke (2006) will be utilised. Particular attention will be paid to any incidents of identity work such as personal statements and narratives (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Brown and Coupland, 2015) as well as evidence of doing gender well and/or differently or conforming to and resisting the gender status quo (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013). This, in turn, will uncover the tensions and contradictions associated with women leader's identities in the family business and the strategies they undertake to manage them.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a discussion of the research context– women in family business in the Republic of Ireland–to aid understanding of why the subject area was chosen. The guiding theoretical concepts–doing gender well and differently and identity work–were outlined followed by a brief overview of the women in family business literature and the existing gaps in knowledge which this study intends to address. Finally, the research question and objectives were provided and an overview of the approach taken was extended. The next chapter provides a review of the current and seminal literatures pertaining to gender and identity in organisational and family business studies.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide a critical review of the bodies of literature deemed relevant to this study, specifically the gender and identity literatures pertaining to organisational and family business contexts. The chapter begins by defining the key theoretical constructs guiding the study, followed by a review of seminal and current literature. The gaps in knowledge, which result in the identification of a research question, are summarised in the final section.

2.2 Gender

2.2.1 Defining Gender

For the purposes of this inquiry, gender is understood as the "socially constructed assumptions which are stereotypically associated with sex categories" (Marlow and Martinez Dy, 2018, p.6). Gender, as a social construct, is ambiguous, shifting, and enacted through a multitude of masculinities and femininities (Ahl, 2004; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004). This shifts our understanding of gender from that of an identity marker to "a kind of becoming or activity" (Butler, 1990, p.152). Thus, individuals do not possess gender; rather they do or perform gender in interaction with others (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Gender was introduced as a term distinguishing biological sex, physiological characteristics tied to males and females, from the social classifications of femininity and masculinity (Oakley, 1972). Nonetheless, organisational studies continue to co-opt the term gender and treat it as a variable attached to sexed bodies (Ahl, 2006; Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017).

Assumptions of natural sex differences fuel the gender binary (Ahl, 2004); "masculinity and femininity are symbolic universes of meaning which derive from an implicit and explicit opposition" (Gherardi, 1994, p.595). Masculinity, associated with rationality, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness, is traditionally, ascribed to the economic and political sphere, whilst femininity, related to nurturing, compassion and sensitivity, is deemed appropriate for the domestic sphere (Hamilton, 2013a). Another power issue is the hierarchical nature of the binary such that men are understood as the standard or "subject" with women positioned as the subordinate or "the Other" (de Beauvoir, 1953). In the gender and work domain, the

gender hierarchy manifests as the privileging of men and masculinities in organisational practices and processes (Acker, 1990), as well as the hierarchical positioning of femininities, with "overly feminine femininities" often deemed too risky for work (Lewis, 2014, p.1859).

Whilst intending to avoid a dichotomous understanding of femininities and masculinities (Linstead and Pullen, 2006), this thesis also recognises that the cultural understandings of masculinities and femininities are ascribed to bodies coded male and female respectively (Gherardi, 1994). Thus, "as social actors we make sense of others in terms of their ascribed gender" (Harrison, Leitch and McAdam, 2015, p.697) which is necessary for "cultural intelligibility" (Butler, 2004, p.52). Gender is not only associated with bodies but also with concepts, occupations, business sectors and organisations (Ahl, 2006), including the activities of leadership, management and entrepreneurship which are traditionally embedded in masculinity (Calás and Smircich, 1991; Collinson and Hearn, 1996; Alvesson and Billing, 2009; Alsos and Ljunggren, 2017). This approach to gender requires a non-essentialist understanding of men and women and an explicit focus on gendering or the "ongoing processes of sexual differentiation" (Calás, Smircich and Bourne, 2009, p.559).

2.2.2 Doing Gender Well and Differently

Central to current conceptualisations of gender is the notion that gender is done, accomplished or performed (Ahl, 2006). In their seminal article, West and Zimmerman (1987, p.125) introduced "Doing Gender" as "a routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction". Specifically, doing gender comprises "socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'" (West and Zimmerman, 1987, p.126). Importantly, individuals are held accountable to the cultural standards of conduct applied to their perceived sex category (West and Zimmerman, 1987; West and Zimmerman, 2009); thus, studies generally "focus on how gender differentiation, hierarchy and asymmetry are maintained" (Kelan, 2010, p.177).

Gender practices "are available–culturally, socially, narratively, discursively, physically and so forth"–for individuals to comply with or resist (Martin, 2003, p.354; Martin, 2006). Individuals practice or do gender often quickly and non-reflexively as they go about their daily lives (Martin, 2003; Martin, 2006). Doing gender can be recognised as doing masculinity and doing femininity, which are available to both men and women to practice (Nentwich and Kelan, 2014; Olofsdotter and Randevåg, 2016; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). An individual can be considered to be "doing gender well" when they act in accordance with

their perceived sex category (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, p.220). However, some authors have argued for a shift in focus from the reproduction and maintenance of gender difference (i.e. doing gender) to its erasure or "undoing" (Butler, 2004; Deutsch, 2007). Deutsch (2007), in particular, argues that doing gender implies conformity and there is a need to focus on ways of undoing gender by resisting and demolishing gender difference.

According to Kelan (2010) undoing gender may feature as doing gender differently which Mavin and Grandy (2013, p.235) claim entails going "against perceived sex category and expected gender behaviour". Thus, individuals do gender differently through concurrent and alternative expressions of femininities and masculinities (Kelan, 2010; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013; Nentwich and Kelan, 2014). Here, gender as multiplicity, "where binaries are disrupted and displaced by practices and performances" (Linstead and Pullen, 2006, p.1292), becomes key to realising the possibilities of gradually unsettling the gender binary through doing gender differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013).

For instance, women may do gender differently by enacting alternative masculinities or femininities, the latter of which may be considered "the *wrong* kind of feminine" (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, p.225, my emphasis) such as 'girliness'. Thus, individuals are still constrained by the gender binary (West and Zimmerman, 2009); if their gender performances violate their perceived sex category, and socially accepted gender behaviour, they may be penalised (Messerschmidt, 2009) and encounter difficulties in crafting their identities (Mavin and Grandy, 2012). Doing gender well and differently are closely related to identity work, or individual level identification processes (Pullen and Simpson, 2009; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; Nentwich and Kelan, 2014), as both are deemed to be "complex, contradictory, fluid and indefinite" in nature (Mavin and Grandy, 2013, p.248).

2.3 Identity

2.3.1 Defining Identity

Identity is complex and can be viewed differently depending on one's theoretical position and discipline (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft, and Thomas, 2008). As Ramarajan (2014) explains, in some cases, identity and self (self-concept) are used interchangeably while others argue that the self encompasses various sub-identities related to roles or group memberships (Tajfel and Turner, 1979; Stryker and Burke, 2000). Theories focus either on the "internalisation of social positions within a self-structure [i.e. Identity Theory]… [or] on

how consensual, cultural identity meanings are implemented within situations that evoke them [i.e. Social Identity Theory]" (Owens, Robinson and Smith-Lovin, 2010, p.478). Social psychologists generally argue that "selves are constructed from a relatively stable set of meanings" (Brown, 2015, p.27) and that change to the self-concept is gradual and provoked by disruptions, for instance career/role transitions (Pratt, Rockmann and Kaufmann, 2006).

However, critical scholars argue that the notion of a unified self-concept is illusory (Ramarajan, 2014) with individuals requiring identity work to sort through the competing and numerous meanings attached to themselves (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Watson, 2008). Thus, personal identity can be understood as "socially constructed: in the processes of primary and subsequent socialisation, and in the ongoing interaction during which individuals define and redefine themselves and others, throughout their lives" (Jenkins, 2008, p.40). In this vein, identification is viewed as an "internal-external dialectic" (Jenkins, 2000, p.8) or simultaneous interplay between self-identity and social-identities (Watson, 2008). Watson (2008, p.127) also focuses on this internal-external dialectic but treats the external definitions or "*social-identities* as elements of discourses". This is based on the Foucauldian notion that "who and what we are (i.e. our social identity) is confirmed and sustained through our positioning in practices which reflect and reproduce prevailing power-knowledge relations" (Knights and Wilmott, 1989, p.550). Foucault (1976, 1980, cited in Alvesson and Karreman, 2000) focuses on Big D Discourses or bodies of knowledge that construct social reality that, in turn, constitutes the subjectivities (i.e. notions of who one is) which discipline individuals.

Scholars drawing on Foucault generally claim that any indication of a fixed unified self is a result of power operations (Ramarajan, 2014). However, most identity scholars recognise "that identities are neither simply chosen nor merely allocated" (Brown, 2017, p.308) and that individuals can shape, to some extent, the social identities available to them through the process of identity work (Watson, 2008). For instance, Watson (1994; 2008; 2009a) treats the Foucauldian notion of subjectivities as discursive resources that individuals can draw on in different ways to achieve particular objectives e.g., project an identity as a leader. However, identities "exist and are acquired, claimed and allocated within power relations" (Jenkins, 2008, p.45) which constrain individual choice in shaping social-identities (Watson, 2008). In keeping with the broader social constructionist tradition, this study recognises identity as a process of becoming that is fragmented, negotiable, and historically and culturally specific (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003; Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008). Following Watson (2008, p.131), self-identity is defined as "*the individual's own*

notion of who and what they are" while social-identities are defined as the "*cultural, discursive or institutional notions of who or what any individual might be*".

2.3.2 Identity Work

Within the last decade, there has been considerable attention paid to how individual-level organisational identities are constructed and negotiated (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Brown, 2017; Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018). Many of these studies draw on the concept of identity work (Brown, 2019) which was first introduced by Snow and Anderson (1987, p.1348) as "the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self-concept". Since then, identity work has been used as a "key explanatory concept" (Brown, 2017, p.297) to understand individual level identity construction in organisations (Koerner, 2014). In keeping with the social constructionist tradition, Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p.1165) provided an alternative definition of identity work which "refers to people being engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness". Watson (2008, p.127, original emphasis) claims that this conceptualisation of identity work emphasises "the *self* or 'internal' aspect of identity" and that a stronger acknowledgement of the external or social aspect of identity (as explained in section 2.3.1) is needed. Thus, in alignment with a discursive approach (Brown, 2017), this study understands identity work as involving:

> The mutually constitutive processes whereby people strive to shape a relatively coherent and distinctive notion of personal self-identity and struggle to come to terms with and, within limits, to influence the various social identities which pertain to them in the various milieux in which they live their lives (Watson, 2008, p.129).

With this understanding, identity work is framed "as a coming together of inward/internal self-reflection and outward/external engagement – through talk and action – with various discursively available *social-identities*" (Watson, 2008, p.130). Individuals draw, in varying degrees, from "the multiplicity of discourses and social identities" (Harrison and Leitch, 2018, p.141) to develop a relatively cohesive and unique self-identity (Watson, 2008). Identity work tends to be associated with tensions and uncertainty as individuals navigate conflicting representations of who they are with who others believe them to be (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Watson, 2008; Beech, 2011). Scholars generally agree that certain episodes, in particular "transitions, unexpected events, contradictions, and tensions" (Koerner, 2014, p.67), may provoke concentrated identity work among individuals in an

organisational context (Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018). This is particularly relevant to women leaders whose "gender-related social identity" (Watson, 2008, p.139) may clash with the dominant cultural ideas and beliefs that associate leadership with men (Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 2011). Despite the proliferation of studies pertaining to identity work, there is still a need for greater understanding of the relationship between occupational and non-work (gender-related) identities (Ramarajan and Reid, 2013; Atewologun *et al.*, 2017).

2.3.3 Gender and Identity in Organisations

Exploring the interplay between gender and professional identities has captured the attention of organisational scholars (Miscenko and Day, 2016; Caza, Vough and Puranik, 2018). Although not all draw on the concept of identity work (Corlett and Mavin, 2014), a growing number have uncovered the coping strategies women adopt when faced with identity tensions, particularly in male dominated firms and industries (Jorgenson, 2002; Hatmaker, 2013; Meister, Sinclair and Jehn, 2017). These tensions emerge, in part, from the double bind faced by women leaders who are expected to enact culturally ascribed femininities, consistent with their identities as women, in addition to masculinities, associated with their identities as leaders (Eagly and Carli, 2007; Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014).

Women must learn to navigate this double bind (Eagly and Carli, 2007) through gender performances that both dismantle and maintain the symbolic gendered order (Gherardi, 1994), specifically the simultaneous practicing of doing gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013). Women engage in these gender performances by disciplining both their own and other women's bodies and appearances (Kelan, 2013; Mavin and Grandy, 2016a; 2016b), as well as actions in line with "culturally and contextually appropriate behaviours" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015, p.797). If done correctly, these performances allow women to gain legitimacy (Lewis, 2015; Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Byrne *et al.*, 2019), construct positive identities (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013) and "achieve belonging" (Stead, 2017, p.73).

One of the main identity strategies adopted by women leaders is the concealment of certain conduct or appearances that may evoke negative stereotypes e.g., hard-nosed business woman, girly girl (Meister, Sinclair and Jehn, 2017). Such practices include adopting non-threatening identities, such as friend or daughter (Nadin, 2007; Meister, Sinclair and Jehn, 2017) and managing one's appearance so it is not overtly feminine but more gender neutral or masculine (Hatmaker, 2013; Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014). Women may deflect focus from their gender identity by signalling professional capabilities, work ethic or

physical competence (Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009; Hatmaker, 2013; Meister, Sinclair and Jehn, 2017; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2018; Byrne *et al*., 2019). Women may also attempt "to blend in with the masculinised status quo" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015, p.806) by imitating men and enacting masculinities (Sheppard, 1989; Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009) and refrain from engaging in "hyperfemininity" (Paechter, 2006, p.225). However, women must also balance this with doing gender well as they are held accountable to the cultural standards of conduct applied to their perceived sex category (West and Zimmerman, 2009; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013).

Identity work is informed by the discursive resources available to women, such as the notion that women possess particular skills or "additional talents" (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004, p.432). For instance, women may attribute their business skills in building relations and empathising with staff, customers and other stakeholders to their gender-related identity (García and Welter, 2013; Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Martinez Dy, Marlow and Martin, 2017). Although "a limiting strategy", women may also seek to attain "advantage from assumptions of gendered weakness or difference" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015, p.803). Overall, these notions of gender difference may perpetuate stereotypes of women and normalise patriarchy (Billing and Alvesson, 2000; Ahl, 2006; Alvesson and Billing, 2009).

Partnering with men in order to gain credibility and access to networks is another tactic utilised by women in entrepreneurial and family business contexts alike (Godwin, Stevens and Brenner, 2006; García and Welter, 2013; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). Marlow and McAdam (2015, p.808) found that women entrepreneurs were taught by experts and other practitioners in the field how to engage "in specific identity work to address the deficit of femininity". According to Stead (2017), belonging, which is conceptualised as a relational, gendered and fluid construct, is performed by individuals in concert with legitimacy practices and continuous identity work. One such practice is tempered disruption where women upset the gender status quo whilst "emphasising a tempered approach that takes risk into account" (Stead, 2017, p.71). In efforts to belong in the family business, women may actively engage in concealing their leadership and entrepreneurial identities; family women can then use their concealment to exercise influence and gain power over time (Hamilton, 2006; Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Stead, 2017).

As existing gender and organisational research shows, tensions are often ignited between feminised identities such as 'mother' and occupational identities (e.g., Duberley and Carrigan, 2013; Jurik *et al.* 2019). Organisations may construct pregnancy and maternity leave as disruptive events for the work environment (Buzzanell and Liu, 2005; Gatrell, 2011;

Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018). As such, working mothers may have to deal with the potential threat a strong maternal identity poses to their professional selves (Swail and Marlow, 2018; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). Existing literature shows that there is an ideal worker norm that is inherently male centric due to its association with lengthy work days and continuous availability (Acker, 1990; Correll *et al.*, 2014). Women are often negatively affected by these dominant norms because their "available private identities remain so deeply gendered" (Wajcman and Martin, 2002, p.999), such as the continuous framing of work-life balance as women's responsibility (Gherardi, 2015). This is particularly relevant to the Irish context (Central Statistics Office, 2016)[4] where "deeply patriarchal, traditional gendered roles for women and mothers" prevail (O'Hagan, 2018, p.455) and to the family business context where these gendered familial roles seep into the business (Danes and Olsen, 2003; Achtenhagen, Haag and Welter, 2017). Working mothers have been shown to integrate their maternal and professional identities by, for instance, blending their business and family lives (Byrne *et al.*, 2019; Jurik *et al.* 2019), so as to ease these tensions.

Empowering women as a collective is another strategy adopted by women leaders (García and Welter, 2013; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; Carr and Kelan, 2016). This practice also known as "mobilizing" (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014, p.460) or "affiliating" (Carr and Kelan, 2016, p.14) femininities is seen as a way for women to support each other in navigating the hegemonic masculinity within their work environments. Such women leaders may be referred to as "tempered radicals" (Meyerson and Scully, 1995, p.585) i.e. "individuals who identify with and are committed to their organizations and also to a cause, community, or ideology that is fundamentally different from, and possibly at odds with, the dominant culture of their organization". Empowering women is a way of challenging the gendered status quo, and thus re-doing gender or doing gender differently (Mavin, Bryans and Cunningham, 2010; García and Welter, 2013). Despite their positional power, women leaders who engage in empowering other women risk ridicule due to the associations with radical feminism (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; Carr and Kelan, 2016) or self-serving tendencies (de Vries, 2015).

Women may also attempt to rationalise, justify or minimise incidents of sexist behaviour (Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009; Hatmaker, 2013; Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017) and even denying and concealing sexism (Jorgenson, 2002; Jones and Clifton, 2018). The

[4] According to the Central Statistics Office (2016), "the employment rate for women who were lone parents or were part of a couple and who were aged 20-44 years was 67.6%, well below the male rate of 88.3%".

growing denial of sexism in the workplace has been associated with the rise in post-feminist discourses that emphasise autonomy and choice and repudiate feminism and collective experiences of discrimination (Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017; Lewis, Benschop and Simpson, 2017; Ronen, 2018). Known as "gender fatigue" (Kelan, 2009, p.198), women are torn between acknowledging gender bias as possible and denying its existence by constructing their organisations and industries as progressive and gender neutral. Accordingly, women may fail to acknowledge or challenge their subordination as a way of denouncing a powerless or victimised identity (Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012; Jones and Clifton, 2018) and instead project a gender neutral or empowered female identity (Budgeon, 2014; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). Thus, scholars have advocated for a critical orientation to post-feminism by calling on researchers to uncover the politics behind women's "choices" (Lewis, Benschop and Simpson, 2017) and their complicity in maintaining the gendered order (Jones and Clifton, 2018).

As evidenced above, women leaders face many different tensions and contradictions between their competing identities. As argued by LaPointe (2013), although individuals routinely and often non-reflexively practice gender (Martin, 2003; Martin, 2006), they may also engage in conscious efforts at negotiating and managing their conflicting identities. These efforts comprise women's gendered identity work which is recognised as a shifting, reflexive and contextual process, as women vary in their alignment and resistance to gender norms and enact multiple expressions of femininities and masculinities (LaPointe, 2013; Mavin and Grandy, 2013; Lewis, 2015; Marlow and McAdam, 2015). Despite this growing body of research, there is still a need for empirical exploration of doing gender well and differently, and how it relates to identity work, within various contexts, such as the family business (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013).

2.4 Gender and Identity in Family Business

2.4.1 Gender in Family Business

Although women in family business has experienced a rapid growth in scholarly interest (Campopiano *et al.*, 2017; Sentuti, Cesaroni and Cubico, 2019), the heroic male discourse persists due to the perpetuation of stereotypical assumptions about women, and the focus on primarily male owner managers in mainstream family business literature (Hamilton, 2006; Howorth *et al.*, 2010; Hamilton, 2013b). Traditionally, women in family business have been associated with invisibility not only because of their unrecognised contribution to family

businesses, but also due to the dearth of research attention afforded to them (Hamilton, 2006). Past research has attempted to remedy the relative absence of women's experiences; although highly valued, the main focus of this work is on "gender as a stable category of difference" (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011, pp. 472-473) which reinforces a crude male-female binary and perpetuates essentialist notions of womanhood and female family business participation (Hamilton, 2006). As such, "the everyday reality of doing—or undoing—gender is not in view and is not engaged" (Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017, p.229). Thus, there has been limited engagement with gender theory, and in particular how gender is done well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013), within the family business context (Al-Dajani *et al.*, 2014; Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017; Kubíček and Machek, 2018).

Recent reviews and conceptual and empirical work indicate that a greater focus on gender theory and a social constructionist gender lens advances our understanding of the field (Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017; Byrne, Fattoum and Thébaud, 2018; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). Social constructionist accounts attend to gender "as a pervasive force influencing not only women and men but also families, businesses, networks, research, language, competition, and beyond" (Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017, p.237). Recent work in this area has unveiled the gendering of roles, identities and discourses associated with succession (Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Byrne, Fattoum and Thébaud, 2018; Byrne *et al.*, 2019; Mussolino *et al.*, 2019). For instance, Byrne, Fattoum and Thébaud (2018) uncovered how daughters and some sons may be disadvantaged by the hierarchy of masculinities underlying the role of successor. Accordingly, a doing gender approach, specifically doing gender well and differently (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013), has the potential to unveil the subtle gendered relations and the hidden male-centric norms under which family business members operate (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; Byrne and Fattoum, 2014; Gherardi and Perotta, 2016).

2.4.2 Identity in Family Business

Only a decade previous, studies of identity in family businesses were "surprisingly rare", despite the obvious relevance of identity and identification processes to such organisations featuring a "close connection between family and business" (Reay, 2009, p.1269). Current literature has focused primarily on organisational identity (Zellweger, Eddleston and Kellermanns, 2010; Whetten, Foreman and Dyer, 2013) and organisational identification—an individual's "perceived oneness with the organization" (Ashforth, Harrison and Corley, 2008, p.333)—as examined through the lens of social identity theory (Shepherd and Haynie,

2009; Zellweger, Eddleston and Kellermanns, 2010; Deephouse and Jaskiewicz, 2013). Social identity theory has become an increasingly popular explanatory tool in family business research for such phenomenon as "intra- and inter-organisational group behaviour" (Waldkirch, 2015, p.137). In particular, the family business meta-identity i.e. "who we are as a family business" (Shepherd and Haynie, 2009, p.1256) has been used to conceptualise the overlapping and potentially harmonious or conflicting family and business identities (Sundaramurthy and Kreiner, 2008).

However, it has been argued that such an approach "downplays the extent to which identity is a process rather than an entity" (Harrison and Leitch, 2019, p.676). Thus, scholars have called for greater focus on the processual, socially constructed and negotiable nature of identity formation in family businesses (Harrison and Leitch, 2015; Leitch and Harrison, 2016; Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). The processual dynamic approach to identity (i.e. identity construction, identity work) has gained momentum in the closely related field of entrepreneurship (Hamilton, 2014; Leitch and Harrison, 2016) where it has been linked to critical entrepreneurial processes such as obtaining legitimacy (Maura and McAdam, 2015; Swail and Marlow, 2018), engaging in entrepreneurial behaviour (Alsos *et al.*, 2016), and building strong social ties necessary for venture creation (Phillips, Tracey and Kara, 2013). Within the family business context, identity work is pertinent for family business members in managing boundaries (Knapp *et al.*, 2013), as well as for next generation successors in constructing "an authentic, legitimate, and inspiring identity" (Dalpiaz, Tracey and Phillips, 2014, p.1389) that can be accepted and endorsed by organisational members (Salvato and Corbetta, 2013). Next generation negotiate their multitude of social identities (i.e. daughter, sister and successor) through interaction with various family and non-family stakeholders and via engagement with prevailing social and cultural norms (Watson, 2009b; Lam, 2011; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). Accordingly, a critical approach to identity construction is necessary to unveil the power relations that influence and shape individuals' identities (Leitch and Harrison, 2016; Hamilton, Cruz and Jack, 2017) and, in particular, the performance of their gendered identities within a family business context (Heinonen and Hytti, 2012; Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Byrne *et al.*, 2019).

2.4.3 Women's Gendered Experiences in Family Business

Historically, family women (wives, sisters, daughters) have been relatively absent from leadership positions, and even formal roles, within family businesses (Lyman, Salganicoff and Hollander, 1985; Danes and Olson, 2003). Despite their invisibility, women have always made significant contributions and have been considered an untapped resource for family

businesses (Lyman, Salganicoff and Hollander, 1985; Salganicoff, 1990; Dumas, 1992). Although a growing number of women are now undertaking key roles within their family businesses (EY and Kennesaw State University, 2015; PwC, 2019), there is still evidence that women are overlooked for family business leadership.

From a societal perspective, gender norms and stereotyping may position daughters as inappropriate for leadership, leaving such individuals "blind to the possibilities of succession" (Overbeke, Bilimoria and Perelli, 2013, p.209). Whilst birth order is an important factor in determining successor choice (Schenkel, Yoo and Kim, 2016), gender is also found to be influential (Bennedsen *et al.*, 2007; Calabrò *et al.* 2018). Primogeniture, which is the practice of transferring the business to the first born son, is still evident in some cultures (Bennedsen *et al.*, 2007; Wang, 2010), including Ireland. According to Bennedsen *et al.* (2007), male first-child firms are significantly more likely to pass control to a family CEO over their female counterparts, whilst in male first-child firms "the company is significantly more likely to appoint the first-born himself" rather than appoint subsequent born children or other family/non-family to the position (Calabrò *et al.* 2018, p.13). In contrast, daughters are more likely to be appointed as family business successors as a result of "special circumstances" (Wang, 2010, p.475), such as no male heir, or an inadvertent event, such as the sudden departure of the incumbent (Dumas, 1992; 1998; Haberman and Danes, 2007; Ahrens, Landmann and Woywode, 2015).

Sons may be seen as a more natural fit for succession such that daughters may not be encouraged to engage in preparatory efforts (Curimbaba, 2002; Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014) and are seen as "temporary additions" to the family business (Martin, 2001, p.224). Ahrens, Landmann and Woywode (2015) found that female successors demonstrated stronger human capital than their male counterparts, indicating that sons are chosen not for their superior ability but based on gender preferences that induce weaker selection criteria for males. This lends support to the notion that daughters have to work harder than their male counterparts to prove their ability and increase visibility (Vera and Dean, 2005). Women with brothers generally only have a chance at assuming leadership of the firm if they are the eldest child (Curimbaba, 2002; García-Álvarez, López-Sintas and Saldaña Gonzalvo, 2002) or have a brother who lacks interest or chooses to leave the business (Constantinidis and Nelson, 2009).

Another "special circumstance" in which women can assume top leadership roles is through membership of a sibling team (Wang, 2010, p.475), although women in teams with brothers have been found to operate in a "clearly delimited position" (García-Álvarez, López-Sintas

and Saldaña Gonzalvo, 2002, p.200). Most recently, Cater and Young (2019) found that there were opportunities for sisters in sibling successor teams to assume an equal if not dominant position to their brothers, however sisters experienced additional challenges in terms of gender discrimination and managing child-care. While not a daughter-son comparative study, Hytti *et al.* (2017, p.681) found that differential treatment of these two groups was prevalent and manifest in "the ways the sons were more readily invited to join the firm or the ways in which the absence of sons presented a problem". Accordingly, even older and more qualified daughters can be left with secondary roles whilst their brothers are positioned as dominant leaders (Stavrou, 1999; Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014).

At a familial level, the gendered roles and behaviour that exist in the family domain may seep into the business and influence its culture (Danes and Olsen, 2003; Achtenhagen, Haag and Welter, 2017). Family women may be expected to play stereotypically gendered roles, such as nurturer, peacekeeper and emotional leader of the family business (Salganicoff, 1990; Jimenez, 2009; Karataş-Özkan, Erdoğan and Nicolopoulou, 2011; Ward, 2011). Further, predecessors may perceive daughters, more so than sons, to need protection from the cut and thrust of business life (Vera and Dean, 2005; Wang, 2010). In her seminal work, Dumas (1989; 1992) drew attention to the identity conflict that daughter successors may experience in such roles as "Daddy's Little Girl", "Invisible Successor" and "Caretaker of the King's Gold". Dumas (1989; 1992) claimed that father-daughter succession is characterised by complementarity since daughters are often socialised to be collaborative and attuned to others' needs. Smythe and Sardeshmukh (2013) found support for Dumas' finding of complementarity whilst further suggesting that the daughters in their study were more accepting of their fathers' generational shadow or continued influence. The current study treats such claims as emerging from the "discourse of difference that is built around a notion of 'natural' sexual variation" (Lewis, 2013, p.255) rather than evidence of any actual difference attached to male and female ascribed bodies.

Family business women may also be subject to criticism if their commitment to family business leadership overshadows their familial duties (Salganicoff, 1990; Cole, 1997; Vera and Dean, 2005; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). Women's (in)visibility in the family business may shift throughout their life-time, for instance, women with intense family commitments may move into or remain in minor roles whilst raising their families (Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014). Accordingly, not all women want to lead the family business and some may prefer a subordinate role in the business if it aligns with their professional and personal goals (Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014; Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2018). A known advantage of family

businesses is work-life balance, as family business members experience greater flexibility (Lyman, Salganicoff and Hollander, 1985; Salganicoff, 1990) and lower incidents of outsourcing childcare (Avery, Haynes and Haynes, 2000). However, this flexibility may be countered by long working hours (Cadieux, Lorrain and Hugron, 2002; Vera and Dean, 2005) and the pressure to demonstrate loyalty to the firm (Salganicoff, 1990; Karataş-Özkan, Erdoğan and Nicolopoulou, 2011). Accordingly, family business women may encounter a multitude of tensions between their identities as professional managers and leaders and as daughters, sisters, mothers and women.

2.4.4 Gendered Identity Work in Family Business

As discussed previously, organisational scholars have continuously emphasised the importance of identity work for women as they manage and negotiate their social identities in organisations (Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 2011; Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Stead, 2017). This equally applies to a family business context where daughters may "need to engage more strongly in identity work" than their male counterparts in order to navigate gendered norms and biases (Hytti *et al.*, 2017, p.680). Despite this recognition, only a limited number of studies combine a gendered perspective with identity work to understand women's experiences within a family business context (e.g., Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop, 2013; Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Byrne *et al.*, 2019; Mussolino *et al.*, 2019). In one of the earliest studies of gender and identity work in family businesses, Bjursell and Melin (2011) identified two narratives of women who construct an entrepreneurial identity in the family business. Whilst this study provides important insights into the narrative construction of entrepreneurial identity, it focuses on women entering their businesses rather than on their everyday working lives.

In a later study, Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop (2013, p.1645) uncovered how migrant female business owners (of Turkish and Moroccan descent) manage familial "norms of 'being a good woman' and 'dealing with family support'". The authors found that women engaged in strategic manoeuvring, from rebelling against gender norms, to undermining norms or adjusting their effect, to fully complying with norms, or in some cases detaching themselves from family control to "surpass the poles of conflict and compliance" (Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop, 2013, p.1659). In a similar vein, Aygören and Nordqvist (2015) uncovered gender and ethnicity as habitats of meaning relevant to the identity work of two family business owner-managers (i.e. husband and wife) in Sweden. The authors called for further research as to how gender relations influence the identity work of family business individuals. Although these studies illuminate important identity issues facing women at the

intersection of gender, ethnicity and small business ownership, such work does not necessarily reflect an Irish multi-generational family business context.

In recent scholarly work, Hytti *et al.* (2017) focused on how daughters engaged in identity work in order to navigate gendered expectations and construct identities as family business leaders during succession. The study found that daughters temper disruption and facilitate their own sense of belonging by switching identities (i.e. concealing their leader identity and enacting a strong ownership identity) across various contexts (Hytti *et al.*, 2017). Further, Mussolino *et al.* (2019) adopted self-positioning theory to explore how daughter successors in male dominated industries construct their identity post-succession in relation to their predecessor fathers. Daughters, depending on whether they were accepted by or imposed upon organisational members, identified or positioned themselves as close to or distant from their father's leadership style (Mussolino *et al.*, 2019). In latest research, Byrne *et al.* (2019) uncovered how male and female successors in family business do gender (both masculinities and femininities) and how this influences their legitimacy as CEO. Interestingly, the study shows that both men and women engage in "gender gymnastics", by enacting masculine (entrepreneurial, authoritarian and paternal) and feminine (relational, individualised and maternal) identities to achieve legitimacy (Byrne *et al.*, 2019, p.2). Notably, the process is more convoluted for women whose maternal identity actively competes with the CEO identity (Byrne *et al.*, 2019).

Whilst hugely insightful, this emerging body of gendered identity research is focused on first generation, migrant owned businesses or in relation to particular events such as business entry and succession. Thus, there is a gap in knowledge as to how women in second or later generation family businesses manage their competing identities within "the daily operations of a family firm" (Hytti *et al.*, 2017, p.681). This research gap led to the formation of the following research question: *How do women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives?* Moreover, the current study adopts a novel approach within this literature by utilising an identity work lens (Watson, 2008) to understand how women leaders do gender well and/or differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013), and thus unveil important insights about women's identification processes in the family business.

2.5 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to provide a critical review of the bodies of literature deemed relevant to this study, specifically the literatures pertaining to gender and identity in organisational and family business studies. The chapter began with defining the key theoretical constructs—doing gender well and differently and identity work—relevant to this study. This was followed by a review of the current and seminal literatures on gender and identity in organisational contexts. Next, the literatures pertaining to gender and identity within the specific context of family businesses were reviewed which led to the identification of a research gap and question. This leads onto a discussion of the methodological decisions underpinning this empirical study in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological decisions that underpin the empirical examination of the research question: *How do women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives?* The following section details the ontological and epistemological considerations; selection, sampling and recruitment strategies; and data collection method and data analysis that shaped the overall research design.

3.2 Ontological and Epistemological Considerations

This thesis is aligned to a social constructionist lens. In keeping with social constructionism, this study subscribes to the notion that "social reality, identities and knowledge, are culturally, socially, historically and linguistically influenced" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.125). Social constructionists view understandings of the world as shaped by social interaction between people within a particular cultural and historical context; such constructions have real world implications and power effects by determining which actions and behaviours are intelligible (Burr, 2015). Social constructionists are also critical of knowledge claims that are deemed universal or essentialist (Burr, 2015). This thesis draws on the seminal work of Berger and Luckmann (1966) who propose three dialectical processes—externalisation, objectivation and internalization—by which society emerges as both a subjective and objective reality. Externalisation is the process of ongoing human activity that produces a social world; this world is understood as objective as individuals experience it and learn about it (i.e. objectivation); human beings then internalize that social world as objective truth through socialization (i.e. internalization) (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). The authors argue that we internalize a self or "the generalized other" (Mead, 1934, p.154) that corresponds with the roles and attitudes in society (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Hence humans are ultimately social products (Berger and Luckmann, 1966).

Berger and Luckmann (1966) treat agency and structure not as a dichotomy but as a dialectical relationship such that a person is "both agentic, always actively constructing the social world, and constrained by society to the extent that we must inevitably live our lives within the institutions and frameworks of meaning handed down to us by previous

generations" (Burr, 2015, p.211). Such a perspective requires an ontological shift from reality as fixed (i.e. objectivist stance) to reality as a process of becoming and identities "as the *ongoing achievements* of human interaction" (Watson, 2001a, p.223, original emphasis). Language is the conduit to uncovering the socially constructed nature of knowledge and is treated as constituting reality rather than passively reflecting it (Fairhurst and Grant, 2010). Whilst ontology is concerned with the nature of a phenomenon, epistemology is concerned with how one can know about a particular phenomenon. The understanding of social constructionism adopted in this study is that of intersubjective realities and "of our social world emerging continually as we interact with others" (Cunliffe, 2008, p.128). Reality is constructed in dialogue with actual people or "in our minds with the arguments of human others" (Watson, 2001b, p.23).

3.3 Feminist Considerations

The key tenets of a feminist approach are to give voice to the researched and decentre the role of the researcher by building relations and engaging in active listening and reflexivity (Sprague, 2016). Importantly, a feminist approach requires an awareness of patriarchy "as the key structure for understanding experience" (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p.7). Feminist researchers should remain sensitive to three types of power imbalance: 1. the researcher-participant relationship; 2. the researcher's control over the research design and conduct; and 3. the researcher's own worldview and biases dominating study findings (Marshall and Young, 2006). First, the researcher-participant power imbalance may manifest through the gendering of the interview i.e. reinforcing stereotypical expectations of men and women (Golombisky, 2006). Golombisky (2006) warns researchers to remain cognisant of how their assumptions may shape gender performances during interviews. For instance, I did not seek or expect the sisterly bonds and intimacy associated with feminist interviewing (Oakley, 1981), but focused instead on establishing a normal level of rapport through close listening (Reinharz and Chase, 2001). Nonetheless, I engaged in self-disclosure when it was deemed important for rapport or when the participant requested it.

The researcher-participant power imbalance may also occur if researchers exercise greater social privilege over those they study (Sprague, 2016). This was less applicable to the current study since I, as a student researcher (Mavin and Grandy, 2013), was interviewing women with greater social status i.e. company directors/senior managers. Second, the power imbalance created by the researcher's sole control over the research design and conduct, can

be addressed by prioritising participants' voices through the sharing of transcripts (Patterson and Mavin, 2009) and by treating seriously alternative discourses and perspectives provided by the participants (Sprague, 2016). For instance, attention should be paid to what is absent from their speech or is too difficult to articulate (Sprague, 2016). Third, the risk of the researcher's perspectives and emotions dominating interpretations can be managed by researchers engaging in "sufficient reflexivity" by fully accounting for and scrutinising their viewpoints and conduct throughout the study (Olesen, 2000, p.165).

Taking into account these feminist considerations, I began building a relationship with the participants through engagement via an introductory research session, interviews, emails/phone calls, social media and events. I encouraged women interviewees' collaboration in the research process by conducting open-ended in-depth interviews, which allowed dialogue and personal narratives to emerge, and by supplying participants with their interview transcriptions to make clarifications, amendments and additional points. In addition to these feminist considerations, I completed a research integrity online training module and successfully sought ethical approval for the current study from DCU Research Ethics Committee (please refer to Appendix A). Table 1 provides a summary of the social constructionist and feminist commitments underlying the research and Table 2 details the practical application of a social constructionist feminist approach within this study.

Table 1. Social Constructionist and Feminist Commitments.

Commitments to social constructionism	**Commitments to feminism**
Acknowledge that research is not value free and objective; both researcher and participants bring their own knowledge, experience and perspective to the study (Burr, 2015).	The "key commitment is to place women at the centre and to identify patriarchy as the key structure for understanding experience" (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p.7).
Recognise data collection as a co-constructive process between the researcher and researched i.e. not devoid of human interaction (Burr, 2015).	Engage in "sufficient reflexivity" throughout the research process (Olesen, 2000, p.165).
Recognise that knowledge claims are political acts (Burr, 2015).	Remain cognisant of the role of power and unequal power relations (Marshall and Young, 2006; Sprague, 2016).
Avoid generalisations: recognise that participants' accounts are produced within specific cultural and historical contexts (Burr, 2015).	Prioritise relationship building over objectivity and distance (Oakley, 1981).
Know that reality is multiple, processual and constructed; thus participants' often produce conflicting and fragmented accounts of their lives (Watson, 2001a; Cunliffe, 2008).	Relationships are usually built over a long period of time.

Table 2. Practical Application of Social Constructionist and Feminist Commitments

Reflections	**Actions**
Research Design Phase How to incorporate feminist and social constructionist commitments into the research design in the face of practical limitations (i.e. limited access to participants; limited time to conduct research)?	- Conducted in-depth open-ended interviews. - Designed the interview schedule to probe for subjective experiences and views, not factual accounts. - Sampled intensively as opposed to extensively (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006). Sought to capture "hidden dimensions" of gendered power relations (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011, p.477).
Data Collection Phase How to minimise asymmetric researcher-participant power relations during interviewing?	- Referred to myself as a "student researcher" rather than a member of the "academic elite" (Mavin and Grandy, 2013, p.238). - Facilitated individuals' narrative accounts by asking open-ended questions, avoiding interruptions and taking note of questions to ask after accounts are given (Ziebland, 2013). - Built rapport and engaged in active listening (Reinharz and Chase, 2001; Sprague, 2016).
Data analysis & Presentation Phase How to afford control to the participants over research design and interpretations? How to ensure the perspective and emotions of the researcher are not dominating the interpretations?	- Prioritised participants' voices by sharing transcripts prior to analysis to allow them to make clarifications and amendments (Patterson and Mavin, 2009). - Ensured the participants' voices are emphasised by adopting their wording in the analysis and incorporating sufficient context. - Maintained memos from interview phase to write up. In particular, I noted my feelings and thoughts towards the interview, participant and subject matter and was transparent about how these could impact the analysis and presentation.

3.4 Research Methodology

3.4.1 Qualitative Inquiry

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative inquiry following an in-depth interview strategy (Johnson, 2001) was deemed appropriate. Given that the research field —women's identity work in family business—is under-explored (Kubíček and Machek, 2018), and that social constructionism "often leads logically to the use of qualitative methods" (Burr, 2015, p.28), an exploratory qualitative inquiry is apt (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). A key strength of qualitative methodology is "description and understanding of the actual human interactions, meanings, and processes that constitute real-life organizational settings" (Rynes and Gephart, 2004, p.455). Positivist/quantitative approaches assume a single true reality and measure pre-determined constructs that "impose a limited worldview on the subjects" (Marshall and Rossman, 2006, p.54). Scholars aligned to discursive identity work are more inclined towards interpretive qualitative methods given that nuanced identification processes "are not easily tractable using hypothesis-testing research designs and quantitative methods" (Brown, 2017, p.310). Moreover, functionalist methods (i.e. surveys, experiments) are ill equipped to capture subtle gendering processes (Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016).

Within the family business space, quantitative analysis (via databases and surveys) is the most widely used approach, followed by qualitative case study analysis (De Massis *et al.*, 2012; Fletcher, De Massis and Nordqvist, 2016). The women and family business domain has a slightly greater reliance on qualitative methodology, thus deviating from the wider family business field (Campopiano *et al.*, 2017). However, there have been multiple calls for further qualitative research, and methodological variety within qualitative research, on family businesses (Reay, 2014; Evert *et al.*, 2016; Fletcher, De Massis and Nordqvist, 2016). As argued, a qualitative interpretive approach can help develop family business theory (Reay, 2014) and uncover hidden or "hard-to-get-at phenomena at the micro-level of social interaction" (Nordqvist, Hall and Melin, 2009, pp.305-306). In particular, Fletcher, De Massis and Nordqvist (2016) notes the dearth of family business scholarly work utilising in-depth approaches at the individual level of analysis. Accordingly, an exploratory qualitative study within the interpretivist tradition was chosen to uncover how women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives.

3.4.2 Issues of Quality

Research within a social constructionist paradigm does not aim to meet the requirements of quality, such as validity and reliability, applied to research within a positivist tradition (Burr, 2015). In keeping with a non-foundationalist stance, quality is "*internalized* within the underlying research philosophy rather than being something to be tested at the completion of the research or an outcome of the application of robust methods" (Amis and Silk, 2008, p.458). Instead of following a set of criteria to ensure validity, interpretive researchers engage in an ongoing process of validation so that the "trustworthiness or goodness" (Angen, 2000, p.387) of the study can be assessed. Angen (2000) claimed that researchers within a non-foundationalist tradition engage in validation in three ways: ethical validation, substantive validation and the qualities of the researcher. Ethical validation involves engaging in research that is morally accountable and responsible to the voices of those previously silenced or subjugated (Haraway, 1988; Angen, 2000). Ethical validation calls for usefulness and fruitfulness such that the research should be of value in generating knowledge and expanding upon prior findings (Angen, 2000; Burr, 2015). Substantive validation requires researcher reflexivity and maintaining evidence of the interpretations and conceptual developments that have formed the basis of the findings (Angen, 2000). The researcher should strive for "coherence and comprehensibility" (Angen, 2000, p.391) so that their interpretation is recognisable and experienced as "spontaneously valid" (Bjerrum Nielsen, 1995, p.9). Finally, the researcher must exercise qualities such as "good people skills; resilience, patience, and persistence…and versatility, flexibility and meticulousness" (Angen, 2000, p.391).

By following these guidelines, I engaged in a process of validation throughout the study. In addressing ethical validation, I aimed to prioritise the voices of a traditionally silenced community (i.e. family business women) by adopting a more collaborative approach to data gathering i.e., open-ended interviews and shared transcripts. I also sought to enhance the usefulness and fruitfulness of this research (Angen, 2000; Burr, 2015) by asking interview questions that have both practical and theoretical relevance and remaining cognisant of alternative answers and explanations. Further, I endeavoured to produce valuable research by engaging in an in-depth discussion of the theoretical insights, practical implications and future research directions emerging from this study. In addressing substantive validation, I engaged in reflexivity by maintaining a record of decisions, changes and interpretations throughout the research process (Angen, 2000). Further, I presented a convincing and comprehensive narrative account of the research findings and interpretations through the

careful selection of "power" and "proof" quotes (Pratt, 2008, p.501). Finally, I developed my skills as a researcher through formal training (e.g., research integrity; qualitative research methods) which enabled me to manifest important qualities, such as resilience, flexibility and attention to detail, during the research process.

3.5 Selection, Sampling and Recruitment

Family businesses are rich contexts for studies of identity exploration due to the interaction of both personal and professional identities (Sundaramurthy and Kreiner, 2008; Shepherd and Haynie, 2009; Knapp *et al.*, 2013). Thus, it was expected that fruitful insights into identity work would be uncovered through the sampling of participants operating within this context (Alvesson and Robertson, 2016). As discussed in the literature review, daughters of family businesses are generally less visible and less likely to succeed the firm than their male counterparts (Martin, 2001; Bennedsen *et al.*, 2007; Wang, 2010; Ahrens, Landmann and Woywode, 2015). Moreover, they often experience a host of identity issues in navigating gendered roles and norms within the family business (Dumas, 1992; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). Accordingly, it is of theoretical importance to focus on this underrepresented cohort and on the "discursively available narratives" (Watson, 2009a, p.425) that feature in their identity work. It was decided that the sole informants of this study would be women. By including an all-female sample, this study provides an alternative to the dominant informant group of all male owner/managers that generally feature in studies of family firms (Howorth *et al.*, 2010; Heinonen and Hytti, 2012). In so doing, I will avoid drawing direct comparisons between men and women and focus instead on the similarities and differences between women (Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016). The sampling strategy chosen for this study was purposeful in nature, the aim being to provide rich and illuminating insights about the phenomenon rather than derive results that can be generalised to population (Patton, 2015).

In adopting a "generic purposive sampling" approach, sampling was "conducted purposively but not necessarily with regard to the generation of theory and theoretical categories" (Bryman, 2012, p.422). Following the logic of "generic purposive sampling", the criteria for the types of participant that could answer the research question were determined first, followed by the identification of suitable participants, and finally sampling from that relevant pool of participants (Bryman, 2012, p.422). The criteria were always guided by the underlying research question: *How do women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives?* However, an additional criterion—the inclusion of a male family member of the same generation—was factored in to minimise the risk that women's progression within the

company was predicated on there being no male successor (Curimbaba, 2002; García-Álvarez, López-Sintas and Saldaña Gonzalvo, 2002; Wang, 2010). This led to the identification of the following criteria:

- Women who are, or recently have been, managers and/or directors;
- In a business "in which majority ownership or control lies within a single family and in which two or more family members are or at some time were directly involved in the business" (Rosenblatt *et al.*, 1985, pp.4-5);
- Including a male family member of the same generation who has, or recently has been, a manager and/or director.

Beyond these criteria, I did not sample for any other particular features. Snowball sampling, whereby participants suggest other similar individuals for the research (Bryman, 2012), was attempted during the research study and one participant was secured in this way. Please refer to Table 3 for Description of Participant.

Table 3. Description of Participants

Pseudonym	Title	Age range	Education	Industry	Marital & Family Status	Birth Order[5]	Succession[6]
Raonaid	Project Manager	35-40	BSc (Business related)	Hospitality	Married with two children (both dependent).	Middle child; older & younger brother.	Post-succession
Gráinne	Managing Director	35-40	MBA	Transport	Married with three children (two dependent).	Middle child; older sister & younger brother.	Post-succession
Saoirse	Exec. Director	35-40	MA (Business related)	Machinery	Married with no children.	Eldest child; two younger brothers.	Post-succession
Aoibhinn	Junior Manager (Director)	40-45	BBA (Business related)	Healthcare	Married with three children (all dependent).	Eldest child; younger brother.	Pre-succession
Bronagh	Commercial Manager	25-30	BA (Non Business)	Food production	Married with no children.	Youngest child; older brother.	Post-succession
Caoimhe	Financial Director	40-45	BA (Business related)	Machinery	Married with two children (both dependent).	Eldest child; younger sister & brother.	Pre-succession

[5] The birth order is specific to those family members in the business i.e. it does not account for older and younger siblings/cousins who are not directly involved.
[6] Pre-succession refers to those firms that have not yet undergone any formal transfer of management control to the next generation and post-succession are those that have.

Mairead	Senior Commercial Manager (Director)	25-30	BComm.	Textiles	Single with no children.	Second youngest; younger sister, older brother & male cousins.	Pre-succession
Niamh	Senior Manager (Director)	35-40	MBS	Engineering	Married with two children (both dependent).	Eldest child; younger brother and sister.	Post-succession
Orlaith	Non-exec. Director	35-40	Bachelors (Non Business)	Healthcare	Married with three children (all dependent).	Youngest child; older brother.	Post-succession
Róisín	Business Ops. Manager (Director)	30-35	BA (Business related)	Food production	Separated with two children (both dependent).	Middle child; older brother & male cousin & younger brother.	Pre-succession
Eimear	Managing Director	40-45	BA (Business related)	Food production	Married with no children.	Eldest child; younger brother.	Pre-succession
Ciara	General Manager	45-50	Dip. (Business related)	Transport	Separated with two children (no dependents).	Eldest child; two younger sisters & brother.	Pre-succession
Brigid	Financial Director	40-45	Dip. (Business related)	Transport	Separated with two children (one dependent).	Eldest child; three younger brothers.	Post-succession
Shannon	Account Manager	35-40	MBS	Food production	Single with no children.	Eldest child; younger sister and brother.	Pre-succession

The decision regarding sample size evolved as data collection came underway. According to Pratt (2009, p.856) "there is no 'magic number' of interviews or observations that should be conducted in a qualitative research project"; however, Pratt (2009) does recommend that researchers base their sample size on the question they aim to address. Given the subjective and complex nature of identity (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008), a smaller sample (less than 20 participants) was sought to achieve greater depth and intensity, via in-depth interviews, which is preferable to being "extensive with intent to be convincing, at least in part, through enumeration" (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006, p.494). Moreover, the particular sample (women with male family members of the same generation in family business within a single cultural context) was both limited and relatively homogenous, which justifies the use of a smaller sample size (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006; Pratt, 2009). A total sample of 14 women family members participated in the current study.

Once sampling criteria were established and a suitable population was identified, a recruitment strategy (comprising word-of-mouth at an event; email invite, phone calls and LinkedIn messaging; and snowballing) was undertaken. The strategy was aided by the involvement of a university research centre to which I was affiliated.

1. **Event**

   The call for research participation was announced at an event for *Next Generation Women Leaders in Family Business* in November 2018. I made a presentation on the key research insights into women's involvement in family business before introducing my own research project by detailing the purpose of the study, the outputs of the research, and the time commitment for participants. I also handed out business cards with contact details. This initial effort drew limited interest so I moved to the second approach. The narrow criteria for participation, in addition to the timing (pre-Christmas) were contributing factors for the poor uptake.

2. **Email Invite, Phone Calls and LinkedIn Messaging**

   Email invites were disseminated to those who attended the event. My contacts within the university research centre reached out to potential participants also. I also made contact with potential participants via phone and email, if such detail was publicly accessible online, or via LinkedIn messaging. I subscribed to a premium LinkedIn account that allowed me to mail individuals who were not yet connections directly. This proved to be a successful mode of contact.

3.6 Data Collection Method: In-depth Interviews

There is no consensus as to what constitutes feminist methodology with scholars drawing on a multitude of methods from surveys to ethnographies to life story narratives (Marshall and Young, 2006). Popular within feminist research is the in-depth interview strategy (Braches and Elliot, 2017) which is the chosen method for this study. The aim of in-depth interviewing is to gain a greater understanding of a phenomenon by "uncovering what is usually hidden from ordinary view or reflection" (Johnson, 2001, p.106). The researcher typically draws on an interview schedule to guide discussion whilst allowing for participants to respond freely and uninterrupted (Bryman, 2012). Similar to Tomlinson and Colgan (2014), the interviews were not specifically designed to elicit narratives; nonetheless, narratives often emerge naturally in the course of an interview (Mishler, 1986).

Moreover, in keeping with feminist principles of interviewing (Oakley, 1981; Sprague, 2016), the interviews were open-ended and conversational which in turn facilitated the emergence of personal narratives. Each interview commenced with a series of open-ended questions (beginning with "perhaps you could start with a brief history of your family business") with special focus on establishing rapport, listening attentively and avoiding interruptions (Reinharz and Chase, 2001; Ziebland, 2013). The interviewing style was largely unstructured although I occasionally referred to the interview schedule to ask specific questions relating to the topic areas (e.g., biographical detail, family and business life, leadership, succession, and gender relations, roles and norms). Please see Appendix B for the semi-structured interview schedule.

The interviews were conducted in person at the participants' workplace (bar one individual who was interviewed at Dublin City University). In three of the workplaces, I was brought on a tour of the premises and introduced to other members of the organisation. The interviews were held in a quiet private space (as I explicitly requested beforehand) and were audiotaped. Later in private, I recorded my thoughts, feelings and observations relating to the interview and visit. The entire round of 14 interviews yielded 17.3 hours of recordings and 302 pages of transcription. The average interview time was 1 hour and 14 minutes.

3.7 Data Analysis

3.7.1 Thematic Analysis

In uncovering how women in family business employ gendered identity work to manage their competing identities, it was decided that a thematic analysis of the data was appropriate. This method of analysis was deemed suitable, as it is not wedded to any particular epistemological and theoretical position—unlike other methods such as discourse analysis and interpretive phenomenological analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is better positioned to draw comparisons across multiple interviews than narrative analysis, which generally focuses on one or a small number of individual life stories (Chase, 2005; Riessman, 2005). Given my prior knowledge and experience of research in the topic area (i.e. women in family business), a classic grounded theory approach was also deemed unsuitable given its focus on a purely inductive approach based on conceptual sense making (Glaser, 1998). Thematic analysis, as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.79), is a widely used approach in qualitative data analysis (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012).

In keeping with a predominantly inductive approach to data analysis, themes were generated through multiple readings of the data. However, it was recognised that the analysis is not conducted "in an epistemological vacuum" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.84) but is shaped by the researcher's pre-conceptions, knowledge and experience. In framing this analysis, particular attention was paid to the discursively produced identities (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003) that feature in these women's accounts of working in a family business. As such, the data analysis "moved iteratively between the data, the emerging themes, and existing theory" (Creed, DeJordy and Lok, 2010, p.1342). Given that language is understood as constituting reality rather than reflecting it (Burr, 2015), the focus of analysis was on the latent level of the data (Boyatzis, 1998) or the "ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations…that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.84). Therefore, high quality analysis is dependent upon researcher reflexivity, providing rich descriptive accounts and multiple interpretations, and emphasising the role of socio-cultural context in the accounts produced (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.7.2 Phases of Thematic Analysis

As is characteristic of qualitative research, data collection, analysis and write up proceeded simultaneously (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Following Braun and Clarke (2006), the first

step of thematic analysis is to become familiarised with the data through transcription, reading and re-reading. Thus, the interview recordings were transcribed with the assistance of a secure online transcription service. The transcription service provided a near verbatim record of the interaction. I then listened to the recording and cross-compared it with the transcription to ensure greater accuracy and detail consistent with the standard orthographic transcription used in thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

As a reflexive practice and means of ensuring that the women's voices are prioritised (Patterson and Mavin, 2009), the interview transcriptions were shared with the participants to allow for any clarifications or amendments. In total 5 of the 14 participants reverted with changes such as editing (e.g., rewording poorly constructed language, removing ems and ums) or removing passages. Whilst remaining flexible, I was cognisant of maintaining the richness and depth of the interview data and emphasized this point with the participants when sharing transcripts. Once reviewed by the participants, the data set of interview transcriptions was read in its entirety to grasp an overall sense and meaning of the data. Memo writing—where I documented my reflections and thinking process regarding the data—was key to this phase and each subsequent phase of analysis (Birks, Chapman and Francis, 2008).

The second phase involved inductively generating codes within each individual transcript. Boyatzis (1998, p.63) defines codes as "the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon". First, excerpts of the transcripts were sorted into relevant segments based on the interview schedule (early life; educational and career experience; joining the family business; present role; personal life) using excel software. Memos and preliminary codes were recorded in this phase. Once the data was sorted, a phase of initial coding was conducted using the computer data analysis software package – NVivo 12 Pro. Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software is often espoused as "an efficient means for sorting and locating qualitative data" (Creswell and Creswell, 2017, p.192) and for enhancing the transparency of the data analysis process (Bryman, 2012). Whilst always remaining open to new emerging data, I was guided by my theoretical interests in identity work, doing gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013), and gendered relations. Following the guidance of other identity scholars, particular attention was paid to any data that may be evidence of or related to identity work such as personal statements and narratives (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Brown and Coupland, 2015). This process of initial coding was conducted across the entire data set and generated 52 initial codes.

The third phase was focused on searching for themes. Bryman characterises themes in the following ways:

> A category identified by the analyst through [the] data; that relates to [the] research focus [and/or research question]; that builds on codes identified in transcripts…; and that provides the researcher with the basis for a theoretical understanding of [the] data that can make a theoretical contribution to the literature (Bryman, 2012, p.580).

From the initial coding phase, I was taking note of patterns across codes which may be indicative of themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In a systematic fashion, I sorted through the initial and preliminary codes to collate all relevant data within identified themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At this point in the analysis many of the initial codes were refined and recombined to form sub-themes or set aside. An initial thematic map was generated which showcased "the relationship between codes, between themes, and between different levels of themes" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.89). This process led to the identification of eight themes and 34 sub-themes.

The fourth step in analysis was reviewing the themes at the level of both the coded segments and the overall data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006). As I reviewed all the themes at the level of the coded segments, ambiguities and inconsistencies emerged which led to the reworking and combining of themes and recoding and removal of coded extracts (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For instance, a number of data extracts about women vocalising issues were coded at the sub-theme 'Setting Boundaries'; on review, this sub-theme was considered imprecise and so the coded data was merged into the more refined sub-theme, 'Measured Assertiveness'. This process of reviewing themes against data continued until I was confident that the themes adequately reflected the nuances of the coded data. The next level of reviewing themes against the entire data set allowed me to determine whether the themes were representative of the overall data and to code any extracts that may have previously been overlooked (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This allowed me to step away from coding, which can diminish the coherence and "storied quality" of the data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p.52), and assess the themes in light of the original narrative accounts.

The fifth step in analysis involved defining and refining the themes that will feature in the findings (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In doing so, I reverted back to the coded extracts under each theme to develop "a coherent and internally consistent account, with accompanying narrative" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.92). It was also important to link these themes back to the overarching research question. Accordingly, the initial themes—*Tensions as a*

Working Mother; Tensions as a Woman Leader; and *Tensions as a Daughter Successor*—related to the first part of the research question i.e. What are the tensions and contradictions associated with their identities? The subsequent themes —*Blending in, Complementing, Unsettling and Challenging the Gendered Norm*—related to the second part of the research question i.e. What are the strategies employed in response to these tensions and contradictions? In determining the distinct parameters of each theme, clear and concise definitions and names were applied to each (Braun and Clarke, 2006). At this juncture, a final thematic map with seven themes and eight sub-themes was developed (please refer to Appendix C).

The final step was the detailed presentation of the analysis, with the illustration of both "power" and "proof" quotes (Pratt, 2008, p.501), followed by a discussion of the findings in light of the research question and existing literature (Braun and Clarke, 2006). I selected the most compelling and convincing data extracts, known as "power quotes" (Pratt, 2008, p.501), to support the argument for how women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives. Please refer to Table 4 for an outline of the stages of the data analysis process as adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87).

Table 4. Stages of Data Analysis (Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.87)

Stage of Analysis	**Description of Analysis**
1. Familiarising with the data.	- Transcribed data (via online transcription service software) and checked the transcripts against the recordings. - Sent transcriptions to the participants to review, allowed them to make amendments and clarifications. - Read the data set in its entirety, kept track of initial reflections and thoughts in memos.
2. Generating initial codes.	- Sorted relevant segments of the data based on the interview schedule using excel. - Imported transcripts into NVivo 12 Pro and began initial phase of coding which led to the emergence of 52 initial codes.
3. Searching for themes.	- Sorted codes into themes and sub-themes or set aside. - Developed an initial thematic map of eight themes and 34 sub-themes.
4. Reviewing themes.	- Reviewed the themes at the level of both the coded segments and overall data set. - This phase allowed the data to be assessed in light of the original narratives.
5. Defining and naming themes.	- Defined and named the themes by reviewing the coded data under each theme. - Ensured the themes addressed the overall research question and developed a final thematic map of seven themes and eight sub-themes.
6. Producing the report.	- Chose "power" and "proof" quotes (Pratt, 2008, p.501) for the discussion of the analysis in light of the research question and existing literature.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter began with a discussion of the social constructionist and feminist stance guiding this research and the practical ways in which these commitments were incorporated into the research design, data collection, analysis and presentation. Following this, a rationale for the choice of a qualitative interpretive inquiry and the issues of quality that apply to a study within the non-foundationalist tradition were provided. Reflexivity was of central importance as I scrutinised and addressed the power dynamics relevant to this study. This, in turn, enhanced the "trustworthiness or goodness" (Angen, 2000, p.387) of the co-constructed interviews. A detailed account of the selection, sampling and recruitment procedures, followed by a description of the data collection method — in-depth interviews —specific to this inquiry were provided. A discussion of thematic analysis, including an argument for its applicability to this study, was extended. Concluding this chapter was a descriptive account of the stages to data analysis which leads to the presentation of the empirics in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the empirical findings of this study. The data analysis was guided by the following research question: *How do women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives?* In addressing this, the research question was split into two parts: 1. What are the tensions and contradictions associated with their identities? 2. What are the strategies employed in response to these tensions and contradictions? In answer to part one of the research question, three themes emerged, namely: 1. Tensions as a Working Mother; 2. Tensions as a Woman Leader; and 3. Tensions as a Daughter Successor.

In answer to part two of the research question, four themes emerged, namely: 1. Blending in with the Gendered Norm; 2. Complementing the Gendered Norm; 3. Unsettling the Gendered Norm; and 4. Challenging the Gendered Norm. In addition, each theme had two sub-themes. The first theme, Blending in with the Gendered Norm, included: 1. Aligning with men and masculinities; and 2. Minimising disruption. The second theme, Complementing the Gendered Norm, included: 1. Leveraging womanhood and femininities; and 2. Subscribing to gender norms with male family members. The third theme, Unsettling the Gendered Norm, included: 1. Measured assertiveness and 2. Concealed leadership. The final theme, Challenging the Gendered Norm, included: 1. Empowering women; and 2. Dismissing or denying experiences of gender bias.

In keeping with ethical considerations regarding participant anonymity, pseudonyms will be used throughout the findings. These pseudonyms correspond with the biographical data in Table 3 (see Chapter 3) and the overview of interviewees in Appendix D, thus allowing readers to develop a contextual understanding of the data. The key insights emerging from this investigation are illustrated by supporting data in the form of "power quotes" and "proof quotes" (Pratt, 2008, p.501) or supporting data, which are situated in Appendix E.

4.2 Gendered Identity Work: The Tensions and Contradictions

Since identity work is often borne out of and intensified by "contradictions and tensions" (Koerner, 2014, p.67), it was necessary to identify the competing discursive social identities experienced by the women of this study (Watson, 2008). In doing so, three themes were identified that captured the particular tensions relating to their social identities as mothers, women and daughters within their family businesses. These themes are as follows: 1. Tensions as a Working Mother; 2. Tensions as a Woman Leader; and 3. Tensions as a Daughter Successor.

4.2.1 Theme: Tensions as a Working Mother

Accounts from these women interviewees highlighted the societal and familial pressures on women to manage a young family and maintain or build a career in the family business. Certain women, with very young children in particular, sought to shift their work-life balance in favour of family commitments. This was exemplified by Orlaith, who was working part-time in her family business: *"I'm happy to stay in the role that I am in at the moment simply for the fact that I have a young family."* Orlaith, who had withdrawn from management to have a career break and later returned to the family business part-time, felt conflicted about her decreased visibility in the organisation;

> *It does enter my mind weekly at least the amount of time that I have invested in it [i.e. the family business] and I love it. But I have to keep on talking to myself that you have a family and this is what you want to do, you want to spend time with them* (Orlaith).

This inner conflict was mirrored by Raonaid, whose part-time role in the family business allowed her to prioritise family life. *"In the last couple of years I realised that it was a big thing for me working full-time and running my own business to then working part-time as a project manager. Your ego and self-esteem can take a hit."* Raonaid's increased focus on family life resulted in the diminishment of her entrepreneurial identity (Swail and Marlow, 2018). Other working mothers of young children also perceived family responsibilities as incongruent with the demands of their professional identities. For instance, Aoibhinn, whilst recognising that the non-family male MD was *"hugely interested"* in her succeeding the firm, she herself was concerned that such a promotion (from junior manager) would jeopardise her work-life balance. *"I'm able to do the four days now in the company which is great, work has become more flexible. I enjoy the marketing side, and yes want to do more, but I know my limits."* A similar sentiment was expressed by Niamh who opted out of

succession, when asked by her father to do a rolling CEO agreement with her younger brother. *"It's partly the confidence thing and it's partly the family thing as well that I have in terms of time commitment…life is busy enough...So I felt like that would be a step too far."*

Whilst sacrificing career progression, these women were afforded a greater degree of flexibility as Orlaith and Raonaid worked part-time, Niamh worked from home two days a week, and Aoibhinn worked four day weeks with one day from home. For the part-time mothers, in particular, the family business complemented parenthood (Lyman, Salganicoff and Hollander, 1985; Salganicoff, 1990; Avery, Haynes and Haynes, 2000). *"Family always came first and that was the great thing with family like [older brother] everyone understood that. I think sometimes if you're working somewhere else [i.e. non-family business] it would be different, perhaps not as flexible"* (Raonaid). As evidenced here, certain women in this study intentionally assumed less visible positions (e.g., part-time) within the family business or pre-emptively opted out of potential leadership roles (e.g., as successor) to accommodate family commitments (Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014).

Other career focused women in the sample were conscious of the sacrifices required for maintaining a family business career. For instance, Ciara claimed: *"My kids' lives revolve around me working here."* This dedication to her identity as a senior manager of the family business clashed with her identity as a single mother. *"I'm you know five minutes late and he's [i.e. son] saying: 'Aw late again. Whole life waiting for mother'."* According to Brigid, who was also separated with children, late management team meetings often conflicted with her domestic and childcare duties. *"It's now half six and at seven o'clock you might still be there going: 'We still haven't come to the answer that we need to come to. Can we decide?'".* Mairead, who had no children, anticipated the future difficulties she may face navigating motherhood and senior leadership of her family business. *"I'm sure I'd love to have kids but that's a hurdle I know I have to come to because I also want a career and I want to have, you know, a leading role in the company."*

Some of the women claimed to experience a trade-off between flexibility and long hours or unyielding commitment to the family business. According to full-time working mother, Caoimhe:

> *I do work incredibly long hours…because I suppose it's not just a job. It's something that's in us. But on that other side I've got that flexibility that…if I have to go somewhere with the kids…I've moved my working hours around a bit* (Caoimhe).

As highlighted in this quote, Caoimhe justified the high level of commitment associated with her family manager identity by highlighting the flexibility afforded to her as a mother. This was mirrored by Niamh: "*I'm very lucky in that I can be flexible and if one of the kids are sick…But on the other side then you have the added stress that you can't really turn off".*

Other women referred to the societal and familial pressures on them to balance being a committed family business leader with being a devoted mother. This was exemplified by an interaction between Raonaid and her father as she pitched a business idea:

> *But I sat down with Dad and we discussed it and he said to me "Did you not say you wanted to have another child?" But he could say it because he's my father asking me. But he's also my boss. And then he said "Is that not your priority at the minute?" And I was like "It is". And I actually got upset because if I was a guy this wouldn't even be an issue* (Raonaid).

Raonaid felt that she was discounted by her father who struggled to see the entrepreneurial and maternal aspects of her self-identity as co-existing. Thus, a number of daughters in this study experienced pressure to fulfil familial duties, which are largely attributed to the strong cultural notions that women are primarily responsible for domestic life (Central Statistics Office, 2016; O'Hagan, 2018). This is exemplified by Brigid: *"If the kids were sick say, my Mommy rings in [to say]: 'Do you not think you should be going home?' She'd never ring [eldest brother] and say 'The kids are sick. Do you think you should go home?'".* In a similar vein, Aoibhinn referred to the contradictory demands of producing grandchildren and maintaining commitment to the family business. *"I'm sure three maternity leaves hasn't been the best for the business but the fourth generation has to come from somewhere."* Interestingly, Aoibhinn reframed her strong maternal identification from a negative to a more positive perspective of securing multi-generational family involvement.

In sum, these women's accounts highlighted the tensions between their identities as 'good mothers', successful career women, and dedicated family business leaders. Some of the women attempted to resolve this conflict by adopting less visible roles, whilst others attempted to balance their commitments to both business and home.

4.2.2 Theme: Tensions as a Woman Leader

Some interviewees, particularly those based in traditionally male dominated firms and industries, experienced tensions between their gender-related and leadership identities. As Saoirse explained: *"It's very male focused I suppose or dominated. So yeah I was more nervous about that side of it than actually being part of the business."* Saoirse, who worked

with a predominantly male staffing, also referred to the difficulties in asserting her authority with older employees.

> *Sometimes that can be a little bit more difficult when, you know, especially when there's somebody who's maybe 20 years your senior and they've been here for 40 years and you're kind of reprimanding them…I don't want them to think "Oh who does she think she is?"* (Saoirse).

Similarly, Gráinne also struggled initially to see how she, as a female in her mid-twenties, could command respect from the older male workforce and senior management. *"The lack of respect from you know older men in the business. The general manager, our transport manager, they were all males. There was no female manager in the business back then at all."* Although her father recognised her and her sister as credible successors, Gráinne knew that she would not be taken seriously as the only female manager within the organisation and so her and her sister withdrew themselves from consideration. *"I think…the main reason for shying away from taking on that role [i.e. successor] was because we were female and we just felt that we weren't going to get that respect."* Similarly, Caoimhe also struggled to be seen as a credible business leader among *"the older guys on the floor".* Whilst Caoimhe claimed to be the likely successor and *"more senior"* member of the management team, she also felt as though her leadership identity was challenged. *"I might have to do things a little bit differently [than a man]…there are people who would query your decisions because you are a woman."* This is mirrored by Niamh's account of male employees who occasionally undermined her identity as a family business leader.

> *Going out on site like as the health and safety officer. First of all they never wanted to see the health and safety officer coming anyway. And then the fact that you were a girl. Yeah I had lots of lads, you know, you get the comments* (Niamh).

Although these women were placed in positions of authority by family management, their gendered identities clashed with the dominant cultural norms that associate leadership with men and masculinities (Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 2011), thus their identity as a leader was challenged by primarily older male non-family employees.

Whilst most of the women in this sample were socialised into the family business from youth (Smythe and Sardeshmukh, 2013), some had limited exposure to certain facets of the business. As exemplified in the following quote from Saoirse: *"It was kind of a sexist thing…the boys would work in the warehouse…I think if I asked when I was 15 'Can I work in the warehouse?' he'd [i.e. dad] be like 'No way. You're not working there.'"* Bronagh was

also protected from an area of the business deemed physically demanding, namely the cold store.

> *The shifts start at 4pm you could finish at one or two at night, three at night. It's freezing because it's obviously in a fridge basically. So it's not easy work either. So that's why I think Dad was like "…I'll find a job for you up here"* (Bronagh).

In Bronagh's case, her father's attempt to find a job for her *"up here"*, or in the offices, delayed her exposure to vital business operations. Notably, her brother gained such exposure immediately upon joining. *"I don't know if it's being a male or what it is. He was made to go down onto the floor for six months so he had to work on the cold store line which is the best thing ever."* Similarly, Niamh described how her and her brother's exposure to the business differed.

> *The only way I can describe it is that he [i.e. father] probably did try to protect me more from overwork or from this, that or the other. I think he did look on [it as] this was his daughter as opposed to his son, who was well able* (Niamh).

These telling quotes highlight how these women leaders struggled with being perceived as daughters in need of protection by the previous generation (Vera and Dean, 2005; Wang, 2010).

Moreover, certain women of this study alluded to the conflicting representations between being female and being a senior manager/leader within their male oriented family businesses and industries. Eimear referred to the senior management level within her industry as *"not a world for women at the moment".* She also claimed that the industry itself, which she described as *"tough"* and *"messy"*, was a deterrent for women. This sentiment was mirrored by Shannon who claimed her industry was *"not a fluffy area for women"* whilst Saoirse stated that it was initially *"hard for me to get interested in that kind of stuff [i.e. machinery]".* Perhaps unsurprisingly, these interviewees never wanted to join the family business growing up and only joined permanently in their early thirties.

In sum, these interviewees' accounts showcased their difficulties in managing their identities as women and leaders. This was evidenced by these women's challenges in gaining respect from male (especially older) employees; their limited exposure to male oriented sides of the business; and the conflicting notions between their identities as a female and senior manager/leader within their male oriented businesses and industries.

4.2.3 Theme: Tensions as a Daughter Successor

Most women were disinterested or ambivalent about undertaking the role of successor (Wang, 2010; Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2018), which, in part, may reflect the dominant logic favouring male successors that was found to underlie these family businesses (Ahrens, Landmann and Woywode 2015; Gherardi and Perotta, 2016). All post-succession firms (bar one) were led by sons, including those in which daughters were the eldest[7] (Stavrou, 1999; Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014). Brigid was one such daughter, whose younger brother undertook leadership. *"I suppose the 'Irishness' of the eldest son does still play a part. So I suppose I was lucky in that I did not want to be the CEO of the company."* Brigid downplayed the influence of exclusionary gendered norms by highlighting her disinterest in the role.

Moreover, Brigid claimed there was little discussion with her about her brother's take-over, and with regards to the possibility of her succeeding, she responded: *"it never entered my head".* Similarly, Saoirse, whose younger brother's succession warranted *"no negotiation or debate"*, also claimed the role *"wasn't something I ever wanted"*. Nonetheless, she recognised that she was not prepared to undertake the position. *"I do wonder if it was now, and we were only growing up now, would there have been more encouragement."* This interesting revelation showed that Saoirse did feel conflicted about being overlooked for succession. Raonaid mirrored the same inner conflict, as she described how *"arrangements would be made"* for both her and her sister as they were excluded from the succession plan.

> *There's all sorts of emotions kind of going on at the time because it's a business you've known from a very young age…"Are you…are you being selfish then that you want a bit of this? You didn't stay working here all the years when he [i.e. brother] did" but then we were so encouraged to get outside…And actually we were encouraged not to get into the family business* (Raonaid).

Raonaid was in a bind knowing that she could not make claims to the family business that her brothers earned, yet she felt unfairly treated when she was excluded from the family legacy. Although she claimed all children were discouraged from joining the business, it was ultimately her two brothers who rose to leadership positions.

[7] Sons were CEOs in six of the seven post-succession firms (daughters were the eldest in five firms and the youngest in two firms). Only two of the five eldest daughters were asked to succeed the business. The first daughter, Gráinne, refused so her younger brother succeeded and she later succeeded him as the current CEO. The second daughter, Niamh, was asked to consider a rolling CEO agreement with her brother but she refused the offer and her brother is the current CEO.

Interestingly, the eldest daughters who succeeded, or were expected to succeed the family business, made reference to the "special circumstances" (Wang, 2010, p.475) of their involvement. For instance, Ciara stated:

> *So we [i.e. sisters] came into the business before the boys did only because of the way we were born. You know so I don't think Dad would have reckoned when we came into the business that we would have [stayed]* (Ciara).

As inferred, Ciara was seen as an imposed successor since the circumstances for her involvement and advancement were predicated on birth order. This sentiment was also mirrored by Aoibhinn: *"I want to give [younger brother] a chance. I think it's just because of the sequence of age that I was here first in one way."* Eimear too made reference to the special context in which she was likely to undertake the CEO role over her younger brother: *"Would we vie for it? I don't think he's bothered… It's quite likely he'll just leave me do it but down to the fact that he just doesn't like doing it [i.e. dealing with banks and accountants]."* As demonstrated here, the brother's disinterest may have served as a prerequisite for the sister to assume a leadership role (Constantinidis and Nelson, 2009). Similarly, Gráinne, who was asked previously to be the successor and refused, was later instated as her brother's successor only when he chose to depart the family business. *"Brother was like 'you know you're my successor, you're in the role of COO for a reason and it was to eventually sort of pass on the reins to you'".* Whilst Gráinne had plans to retire from the business, with her family's persuasion, she acquiesced to a limited timeframe as CEO. As evidenced by these eldest daughters, their dominant leadership position in the firm was borne out of "special circumstances" (Wang, 2010, p.475) which led certain daughters to see themselves as imposed successors, whilst others felt obliged to relieve their brothers of the assumed duty.

Moreover, a number of women described themselves as less suited to leadership than their male family members based on a lack of appropriate skills, knowledge and business exposure. In particular, women cited difficulties in commanding respect, exuding confidence, and demonstrating decisiveness and vision. This was exemplified by Shannon, who drew the following distinction between her and her father as managing director: *"He is so innovative, so creative, and he has an accountant's head on him as well. So I certainly am not going to be taking over from him because I don't have that skill set."* Interestingly, Shannon described her younger brother as having *"the same head"* as her father. This was mirrored by Orlaith who saw her cautious nature as flawed and inferior to the risk taking propensity of her managing director brother. *"If I were to expand the business would I have*

been as daring and as timely as we had been." Moreover, Saoirse described herself as lacking sufficient *"natural aptitude"* for the technical side of the business. *"The boys [i.e. brothers] would've been naturally more like…they would have been into that [technical side]. And that is a very sexist view but it's the reality you know.*" Thus, Saoirse drew on the "discourse of difference" (Lewis, 2013, p.255) as evidence of her own lack of legitimacy and of her brothers' "natural" suitability to the family business. Moreover, according to some women, sons were better suited to leadership based on their greater level of business exposure.

> *I suppose his role was different. It led him more in that direction. Whereas I was more in the finance and kind of— even though you know everything that's going on in finance you know he was more on the road, you know, doing sales, meeting people* (Brigid).

As inferred from Brigid's quote, her brother's *"role was different"* because he was being groomed for leadership and thus required experience in strategic facets of the business.

In sum, this theme signalled the tensions between these women's identities as daughters and as potential successors of the family business. This was evidenced by the implicit cultural and familial preference for sons as successors; the "special circumstances" (Wang, 2010, p.475) under which daughters succeeded or expected to succeed; and women being perceived as less suited to leadership than their male counterparts due a lack of skills, knowledge and exposure to the business.

4.3 Gendered Identity Work: Managing the Tensions and Contradictions

As discussed in the previous section, women experienced various tensions and contradictions between their competing identities. In order to manage such tensions, women needed to engage in gendered identity work. Four themes were identified that captured the particular gendered identity work strategies employed by women leaders in their family businesses. These themes are as follows: 1. Blending in with the Gendered Norm; 2. Complementing the Gendered Norm; 3. Unsettling the Gendered Norm; and 4. Challenging the Gendered Norm.

4.3.1 Theme: Blending in with the Gendered Norm

Blending in with the Gendered Norm was the first strategy utilised by women to manage the tensions and contradictions between their competing identities. Blending in, as understood

in the context of this study, refers to how women conform to the masculinised norms and standards of conduct in their businesses and industries (Marlow and McAdam, 2015) and how they imitate men and enact masculinities (Sheppard, 1989, Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009). Identified as relevant to this theme were two sub-themes that captured the ways in which blending in manifests as gender practices (Martin, 2003; 2006). These sub-themes are as follows: 1. Minimising disruption; and 2. Aligning with men and masculinities.

4.3.1.1 Minimising disruption. Some women within this study engaged in efforts to "minimize the 'disruption'" (Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018, p.506) caused by childcare and maternity leave. For instance, Gráinne remarked that she did not take any maternity leave after the birth of her first child. *"I couldn't because dad never got a replacement for me to cover my maternity leave. So basically like the week after I had her it was like 'Gráinne, you know, it's peak season…eh get back to work'."* Whilst it was not Gráinne's choice to forego maternity leave, she found a way to justify her father's decision (Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009). *"I was so young I probably didn't want to stay at home, you know, six months maternity leave. What are you going to do? Sitting at home, munching biscuits and drinking tea, looking after a baby."* This account from Gráinne highlighted the dominance of the work domain and the devaluing of the private sphere in her family business.

Whilst Gráinne took maternity leave for her two youngest children, she again felt a duty to minimise disruption and return to work. *"I really at that stage did contemplate you know not retiring but you know maybe focusing in on motherhood…but again the family put pressure on me to start coming back to work."* Gráinne gradually returned full-time to the business. A similar sentiment was expressed by Brigid who had 12 weeks of maternity leave before returning to work in the family business full-time. *"I'd a section so it was you know it was six weeks before you could get on your feet. And here we are nearly going back to work… which I did."* Although Brigid was given certain flexibility upon returning to work, she was cognisant of minimising disruption.

> *Daddy might say "Aw go on home there I'll finish up for ya"…That's all right for the first month or two like and then after that you're—you'd want back into it yourself anyway. You know, you don't want any favouritism* (Brigid).

As evidenced by this account, minimising disruption was an important strategy for Brigid who wanted to downplay any special dispensation regarding workplace flexibility. As with

Ciara, the strategy of minimising disruption was an organisational norm for family women. *"There's never a situation where you left the job for three months or six months. Couldn't do it."* She then recounted an anecdote about her sister who returned to the family business to do the payroll four days after giving birth. *"She says: 'Look if I didn't come in to do the wages [second eldest sister] would have been under pressure because she would have had double the amount of work to do'."* Ciara explained that family employees were in charge of overseeing sensitive areas such as payroll which highlights the indispensability of family business women's roles (Aldamiz-Echevarría, Idígoras and Vicente-Molina, 2017).

For Aoibhinn, who took maternity leave for each of her three pregnancies in the family business, minimising disruption was a self-initiated effort so she would not be seen as the *"person who's inconvenienced everyone".* First, as a junior manager, she implemented changes to ensure her duties, which were absorbed by existing staff within the sales administration department, were managed effectively whilst she was on maternity leave. *"I've always trained colleagues to do my job as I have, empower them to know as much as I do. I used shared drives and everyone can access all the sales information they need."* Second, as a director, she maintained her presence at board meetings throughout her maternity leave.

> *I missed one board meeting during my maternity leave and that was because I was in [hospital] after a section and I couldn't make it. From seven weeks on I went to them all and it worked well to keep informed and being able to give input during my maternity leave. I think I gained some respect making the effort to attend when I could* (Aoibhinn).

Aoibhinn's efforts to attend board meetings and consolidate her knowledge for other employees formed part of a larger strategy to downplay her maternal identity. As evidenced here, family business women[8] engaged in efforts to minimise disruption in order to blend in with the masculinised norms in their family business and reduce the negative connotations (i.e. inconvenience and disruption) attached to their maternal identity.

4.3.1.2 Aligning with men and masculinities. Certain women of this study made implicit and explicit references to aligning with men (particularly male family members) and masculinities (Sheppard, 1989, Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty,

[8] It should be noted that in the time that maternity leave was relevant for Ciara, Brigid and Gráinne (on her first child), maternity leave was a lot shorter (14-18 paid weeks) in comparison to Ireland's current minimum entitlement of 26 paid weeks' maternity leave. Two week statutory paternity leave was only introduced in 2016 (OECD Family Database, 2019).

2009). First, there was the notion that women in the family business workspace should avoid girliness or "hyperfemininity" (Paechter, 2006, p.225), particularly in situations where physically demanding work was required. For instance, Niamh described how she would engage in masculine behaviour when on site with the men. *"I probably was kind of up for showing you know I'll go up the ladder or I'll do, you know, I'm not gonna be the girly girl."* As highlighted here, Niamh found it preferable to engage in displays of masculinity than assume the "powerless position" (Paechter, 2006, p.256) of *"girly girl"*. This sentiment was mirrored by Ciara who rejected any portrayal of herself as the helpless woman in need of male assistance.

> *I don't drive the forklift. I don't do stuff outside. It doesn't stop me from going and opening a trailer up or something. I wouldn't necessarily say to one of the lads "Could you ever open that up for me?" I'm as likely to be in the middle of whatever is going on* (Ciara).

For Ciara, demonstrating independence and willingness to get involved were important elements of assimilating into a highly masculinised space (such as the work yard). Interestingly, Brigid, who also featured in a male oriented business avoided an overly feminine appearance (Hatmaker, 2013). *"I think that's what people see, you know, that, you know, she hasn't got her suit on her and her makeup done to the last. She'll come down and she'll drive the forklift".* As evidenced here, Brigid, who wished to appear approachable to the predominantly male workforce, distanced herself from the image of a highly "polished" woman (Carr and Kelan, 2016, p.11). Moreover, she signalled her proficiency at operating the forklift, a physical competency that was typically ascribed to male employees (Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2018).

Additionally, certain women aligned themselves with so-called masculine qualities and attributes. For instance, Shannon claimed: *"I think men take a lot of the emotion and the drama out of it. And I think women are less emotional when you're working with men."* She found that *"some women have that skill set"* before elaborating on the difference between men and women in meetings. *"Meetings [with former male manager] it was like 'This is what we've to do, okay we're done here, bye'. Women you know there's too much sort of 'Yeah and what you think of…?'".* As exemplified by this quote, Shannon aligned herself with men and the stereotypical masculine qualities of rationality and decisiveness, whilst distancing herself from women who she perceived to be less effective or efficient in their business dealings (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014). This is further evidenced by Aoibhinn who found that "*a male direct approach actually cuts out a lot of the bullshit".*

She elaborated on this point with an account of a board meeting during which complaints from disgruntled employees were addressed.

> *I remember someone was saying a while ago at a board meeting going "Well look, you know, they're not happy" and I say "With all due respect you know there's the door" and the meeting kind of stopped and everyone looked at me and I was like "We can't solve the world"* (Aoibhinn).

Aoibhinn's assertiveness, which is a form of doing masculinity well (Olofsdotter and Randevåg, 2016), was deemed excessively harsh in comparison to her usual compromising approach which was in keeping with her gender-related identity. In another case, Bronagh referred to a role model of hers (a senior female manager in her organisation) as having "*nearly more of a male brain".* She then recounted how this female manager remained level headed and cool when faced with an unexpected audit. *"Absolutely nothing fazes her… And she's very good at dealing with people. She just gets the job done. She never gives out."* Although Bronagh treated gender as socially constructed—something that is done and not tied to bodies per se (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Ahl, 2006)—she still maintained the gender hierarchy by referring to valued business qualities as male oriented and so, in turn, devalued women and femininities.

Moreover, certain women tried to align themselves with male family members and their stereotypically masculine behaviours. For instance, Saoirse observed how employees *"stood up straighter"* when her retired father entered the office. *"How can I get to that stage where you know they're kind of, not afraid of me, but a little bit more 'oh god, the boss is here'."* As evidenced here, Saoirse struggled to envision a way to emulate her father's commanding presence. For Brigid, growing up with brothers enabled her to adapt to a masculinised work environment, and in particular to recognise and respond to masculine banter and mischief.

> *I have three brothers that definitely prepared me for the world in that whenever there was a rugby or a wrestling match, which they all loved, I was in the middle of them. It's not as if you know you just stood and watched, you got involved* (Brigid).

As evidenced here, Brigid was tutored by her brothers in "specific identity work to address the deficit of femininity" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015, p.808) which in this case represented meekness or passivity. This was mirrored by Ciara who claimed her father *"moulded"* her to think and act similarly to him. *"It doesn't faze me to jump on a plane and go to a meeting …but then I'm a bit like my dad. Talking kind of comes naturally."* As evidenced here, in order to blend in and belong, certain women aligned themselves with men and masculinities.

Women's attempts to align with masculinities involved distancing themselves from particular femininities or types of women whose behaviour was misaligned with the stereotypically masculine attributes of business (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014; Carr and Kelan, 2016). It also involved aligning with male family members' behaviour and being coached in appropriate gender practices (Marlow and McAdam, 2015).

4.3.2 Theme: Complementing the Gendered Norm

Complementing the gendered norm was the second strategy utilised by women to manage the conflict between their competing identities. As a strategy, it is similar to blending in as it maintains the existing gender order (Ahl, 2004). However, instead of doing masculinity well, complementing valorises "women's way" of leading and so called feminine qualities and skill-sets (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011). Identified as relevant to this theme were two sub-themes that captured the ways in which complementing manifests as gender practices (Martin, 2003; 2006). These sub-themes are as follows: 1. Leveraging womanhood and femininities; and 2. Subscribing to gender norms with male family members.

4.3.2.1 Leveraging womanhood and femininities. A cohort of women within this study leveraged culturally ascribed femininities as well as their status as women to create a complementary alternative to the male norm (Ahl, 2006). Interviewees spoke of using stereotypically feminine characteristics (e.g., intuitive, empathetic, detail oriented) as strengths, without specifically labelling them as feminine (Kirton and Healy, 2012). For instance, Brigid referred to her capacity for empathy as an important quality in building relationships with employees and ensuring high staff morale.

> *I would have empathy for people. You know I'm not hard to get on with so you kind of just sit beside someone and say well "What's this job like?" You know. Or "Is there an easier way of doing it? Because, you know, that looks difficult to me"* (Brigid).

Brigid attributes her smooth transition into the family business to her sensitive and empathetic approach to non-family staff. Similarly, Niamh found that her skills as a woman benefitted her in the workplace, particularly in how others perceived her ability as a quality manager.

> *I've had auditors for example…one of them said to me—and it was a year that it was myself and another girl kind of leading it—and he said "Oh if I come in and two*

> *women are the quality managers I know my job's going to be really easy". But again just I do think we're more detail oriented* (Niamh).

As exemplified here, the notion that women, as a general category, embody certain skills (i.e. attention to detail) is often perpetuated as socially accepted knowledge. By adhering to the notion of natural sex differences, certain women were able to rationalise the gendered division of labour in their businesses. For instance, Ciara used the following stereotype to explain the predominantly female presence in her office: *"Maybe we're better organised or we've a better thinking pattern."* In Aoibhinn's family business, it was evident that roles and whole facets of the business were gendered. *"I did some roles in finance department, covering reception…It might sound odd, but it's easier for girls to fit into those admin roles. And that's why I think it was harder for [brother] to come in and get experience".* As evidenced here, Aoibhinn perceived the wider range of female oriented junior positions as an advantage in gaining access to the family business.

Moreover, certain women made reference to leveraging their gendered identity in navigating interactions with employees, particularly non-family staff members. Aoibhinn, who as a junior manager was based in an open plan office, made the following observation: "*The gender thing can help you—me being a girl chatting with female colleagues. If someone wants to chat about something, I'll ask if they want to have a chat in the office or go for a walk."* Aoibhinn's womanhood, combined with her junior managerial position, facilitated her in building a relationship with the non-family female workforce. This inclination towards doing femininity well was mirrored by Orlaith who worked with a mostly female staff. *"I'm very chatty…I communicate quite a lot and so I wouldn't let anything slip under. You know so I'd like to keep conversation open, dialogue open all the time."* Moreover, Orlaith, as a part-time working mother, was afforded access to industry networking groups for working mothers.

> *[Brother] is very interested in knowing my views and knowing what a woman would want and I'm on Facebook. I'm not great at it personally but on a business aspect there's great groups, there's a [business industry] moms group and they would run surveys on what kind of job would you like to have. And so they're very interesting because you know you want to find out what's happening in other people's businesses as well* (Orlaith).

As evidenced by this quote, Orlaith's access to female networks was an important source of information that enabled her managing director brother to ensure employee retention and business competitiveness.

Additionally, certain women based in highly masculinised firms claimed to leverage soft skills (e.g. gentle persuasion) occasionally in an effort to bring male employees around to their perspective. *"Sometimes drivers work better with women than they do with men. I think because they don't mind being told —you know you can gently, gently get what you want done"* (Ciara). This strategy was also adopted by Caoimhe who influenced her male workforce by *"playing to their ego".* She claimed: *"There's a way that you can get around people to do things because you're a woman because a man cannot say some of the stuff…I will use the fact that I'm a woman to get some jobs done."*

As showcased by this sub-theme, certain women in this study leveraged culturally ascribed femininities as well as their status as women to create a complementary alternative to the male norm (Ahl, 2006). This practice allowed women to emphasise their value to the family business and create a space to exercise certain femininities, such as relationship building with family and non-family stakeholders. However, this strategy, which preserves gender essentialist ideas about men and women, also had the potential to further disempower women.

4.3.2.2 Subscribing to gender norms with male family members. In their relationships with male family members in the family business, a number of women explicitly or implicitly subscribed to gender norms. For instance, Bronagh referenced her cautiousness as an important counterweight to her brother's propensity for risk-taking. *"I'm probably a lot safer whereas he makes me take a bit more risks as well. So that's probably one way that the two of us do kind of weigh or balance each other out a bit."* Bronagh viewed her relationship with her brother as a complementary dynamic that necessitated the skill-sets of both individuals. Similarly, Orlaith referred to her relationship with her brother as follows: *"He would come to me for advice and I would go to him for advice because we know we've opposing kind of ways of doing things."* Perhaps unsurprisingly, this brother-sister dynamic reflected stereotypical gendered roles and behaviours.

> *I've seen it in my marriage and I've seen it in other peoples' marriages as well. That when someone takes on a role such as "I'm going to be the cautious person" the other person can sit back and relax 'cause I know that person's going to be worried about that. So I don't need to worry about it. So equally in our [brother-sister]*

> *relationship here. If he's going to take on the drive then I'll know "OK well I'll do this*" (Orlaith).

As exemplified by this quote from Orlaith, the performance of gendered normative behaviours by her and her brother (i.e. doing gender well) were key to the smooth functioning of their work relationship. This gendered dynamic was also experienced by Raonaid who described women as *"better users of emotional intelligence"* and used the following incident as a case in point.

> *[Older brother] came up and I was just having lunch but I was chatting to one of the staff members and then he was like "Can you go for a minute because I need to talk to [Raonaid]?" But I'd never say to someone '"Can you go? I need to talk…" because they'd naturally go back to work. So sometimes if you're going like that you're obviously not giving things the time, you know what I mean. So you might miss something* (Raonaid).

Raonaid valorised her own approach which was based on stereotypical feminine qualities (i.e. empathy, self-awareness) and disapproved of her brother's style which was perceived as more masculine (i.e. straight forward, direct). These gendered relations were echoed by Brigid, who was known by senior management as *"the empathy piece"*, particularly in regard to her involvement in disciplinary procedures with staff. Brigid constructed an image of herself and her brother as polar opposites by countering his uncompromising approach with her empathetic outlook.

> *I would always be the one "Well let's look at both sides of the coin. OK. This is what they've done…Why did they do it?...Did we not give enough support or did we not..."...I'm not black and white. [Eldest brother]'s black and white* (Brigid).

Interestingly, women who subscribed to gender norms were often in positions of less power and authority than their male counterparts. So although this strategy allowed women to highlight their value as partners, it also disempowered them further by restricting women's discursive resources (Watson, 1994; 2008; 2009a) to reflect the stereotypically gendered roles of peacekeeper and nurturer.

4.3.3 Theme: Unsettling the Gendered Norm

Unsettling the gendered norm was the third strategy utilised by women to manage the tensions and contradictions between their competing identities. Unsettling, as understood in the context of this study, refers to how women unsettle the gendered norms of their

businesses and industries by enacting multiple femininities and masculinities simultaneously (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012). Identified as relevant to this theme were two sub-themes that captured the ways in which unsettling manifests as gender practices (Martin, 2003; 2006). These sub-themes are as follows: 1. Measured assertiveness and 2. Concealed leadership.

4.3.3.1 Measured assertiveness. Measured assertiveness was identified as the varied ways in which women were deliberate and thoughtful about being assertive. First, certain working mothers were outspoken about structural barriers to managing home commitments. In particular, Róisín, as primary care-giver to her young children, found she needed to be a *"bit vocal"* about the male centric norms of business—long hours and constant face-time (Acker, 1990; Correll *et al.*, 2014) —clashing with the less visible private home domain.

> *So I would have to set the boundaries. And when I set the boundaries on that they [i.e. brothers] have no issue whereas maybe they wouldn't be forthcoming and say "No you go home". My dad would be "Oh my God [Róisín] get out, it's five o'clock". Whereas the guys are just workaholics* (Róisín).

Brigid also openly questioned the expectation of long working hours, which encroached on her family life. "*We've got better at dealing with them because I call them on it…So most of our meetings you'll find are now first thing in the morning meetings and definitely first thing after lunch if there's something needed."* Whilst asserting their need to leave work on time, these women were also very willing to work late hours at home. *"I'll pick up on any e-mails when the kids are asleep if I need to but I wouldn't even have to say that, I do that naturally. I'd want to do that"* (Róisín). Thus, Róisín moderated her efforts to unsettle the ideal worker norm in family businesses by maintaining out-of-hours work. This was mirrored by Brigid's assertion: *"As long as I was home in time to collect them [i.e. children], I didn't mind working late."* These women's assurances about working late hours may also reflect the pressure to conform to the ideal worker norm within their businesses (Acker, 1990; Correll *et al.*, 2014). Male management were described as *"workaholics"* (Róisín) and as *"having all the time in the world [for work]"* (Brigid) i.e. no pressing need to attend to responsibilities outside of work.

There was also evidence that women undertook measured attempts at asserting themselves in dealings with employees. For instance, Saoirse struggled to command respect in her male dominated business: *"I wouldn't be naturally that way inclined at all."* However, she recognised that, as a female manager, she needed to be firmer at times (e.g., if a HR issue

ensued): *"You just have to stand your ground a bit more and be a bit tougher because somebody might think because I'm female they can walk over me but maybe that's just my issue."* As highlighted here, Saoirse's "natural" inclination was to be passive and non-confrontational—doing gender well—until she was required in her managerial role to be assertive—doing gender differently (Nadin, 2007). Similarly, Caoimhe described the dynamic between her and her male work force as a *"give and take type of relationship"*. Specifically, her approach to managing male subordinates was to be empathetic whilst ensuring her authority was understood. *"I listen to them if they say something then I'll say 'Fine, it might be the reason why that took longer. However, it's still not acceptable that it took 20 percent longer'."* Thus, these women became adept at doing gender well and differently in their dealings with staff.

Finally, there were examples of how women asserted themselves in a measured way among family members in order to enhance their visibility and autonomy as leaders. This was exemplified by Bronagh whose insistence on attending board meetings was part of a larger effort to enhance her visibility in the family business.

> *I just said I don't care if I'm not a director, I'm going. So I put the foot down there and that was fine and [eldest brother] was brilliant. Again I think it was probably more dad was probably "Oh maybe you don't have the experience"* (Bronagh).

Although her brother made director two years after joining, Bronagh was five years in the business at the point where she insisted on attending board meetings. For Bronagh, building her father and brother's trust was a gradual process involving years of learning the business and proving her capabilities. *"I put the time in as well…They [i.e. father and brother] know that I know what I'm talking about as opposed to—I know when I would have come in [to the business initially] I would've been kind of floating around the different departments."* In a similar way, Róisín claimed to have limited decision making authority as her brothers in management expected everything to be passed by them. *"With the guys, what I learned straight away is you keep them informed with everything. You don't go any solo runs."* Róisín felt at times frustrated with this shared decision making process which she deemed slow and inefficient. *"Sometimes I would make decisions and, I'd know, I'd have it filtered to a fine art as to the guys would have no problem with this."* Hereby, Róisín found a way to exercise autonomy without undermining her brothers' authority. As evidenced here, these women asserted themselves in a measured way by working hard to prove their capabilities and not undermining male management.

This strategy required women to be adept at doing gender well and differently through the concurrent enactment of femininities and masculinities (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013). As such, these women were able to assert themselves (doing gender differently) and unsettle the gendered norms of business leadership whilst also adhering to the gendered status quo (doing gender well).

4.3.3.2 Concealed leadership. Similar to Hytti *et al.* (2017, p.665), there was evidence that certain women exerted considerable influence in their family businesses, whilst "concealing their leader identity". This strategy allowed these women, who were older daughters with younger brothers as CEO, to maintain the gendered status quo, whilst still exerting influence and power in the background. For instance, Gráinne, who refused to undertake the role of successor, due to unfavourable gender dynamics, used her close partnership with her brother as a means to exert influence in the family business.

> *When [younger brother] took on the role I was delighted because it was a weight off my shoulders…And I'm sure [older sister] felt probably exactly the same way. We worked very closely then as a sibling partnership the three of us working together supporting [younger brother] in his role* (Gráinne).

Later as managing director, Gráinne *"felt a lot more confident"* about unsettling the gendered status quo by adopting a more visible leadership identity. Niamh, who also refused to undertake the role of CEO claimed to prefer working in the background whilst her brother assumed the position of managing director.

> *Well I never felt as easy, you know, kind of networking…with a roomful of guys rather than, you know, if it was a mixed room you're kind of more, I think more comfortable with it. And being honest I probably do shy away from still—like [younger brother] would be much more kind of maybe the face of the company but that's kind of down to me as opposed to him* (Niamh).

As exemplified here, certain women in this cohort actively avoided visibility and relied on a male leader to secure credibility for the partnership (Godwin, Stevens and Brenner, 2006; García and Welter, 2013; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). However, as Niamh explained, her invisibility (with regard to the top leadership position) did not preclude her power and influence. "*I mean we both have the same duties and whatever it's really only a visual thing: managing director versus director.*" Although an image of her brother as dominant leader was projected outwards to staff and management, behind the scenes Niamh was willing to challenge her brother and leverage her status as the eldest child. *"Definitely we probably*

have more heated conversations than two other colleagues would...because there's like 'you're my younger brother, like I'm not going....' You know". Thus, Niamh could exert considerable influence without being *"the face of the company"*.

In a similar way, Saoirse concealed her leadership through her sibling partnership with her brother at the helm. "*I see it more as for staff he's obviously the boss. But I really see the running of the business as equally between the three of us."* Although Saoirse's younger brother was endorsed as the dominant leader, she projected her own identity as equal partner. Moreover, as a sibling dynamic, Saoirse occasionally referred to her status as the eldest child. *"I do sometimes joke about you know that I'm the eldest and really I should've been managing director and it should have naturally fallen to me and that kind of stuff but really it's only a joke."* Whilst dismissing such comments as sibling banter, Saoirse was also reinforcing her seniority and perhaps indicating a desired identity as successor. This finding that elder daughters exerted influence whilst concealing their leadership (Hytti *et al.*, 2017) was exemplified in the case of Brigid, whose younger brother was managing director.

> *[Younger brother] still runs everything past me just to make sure 'well what do you think?' Now not everything. But 90 percent of the stuff he would say, you know, 'What do you think?' or 'Should we do this or should we do that?'* (Brigid).

Given the extent of her influence on the strategic direction of the firm, Brigid was all but named Co-CEO, whilst to most others her brother was seen unequivocally as the dominant leader. *"We'll have the discussion off line. So then whenever we come back with a decision [eldest brother]'s coming back with the decision. It's not 'we decided'."* Thus, Brigid used the practice of concealed leadership to play a key role in the firm without overtly challenging the gendered order. *"You know I suppose the fact that we run it pass each other helps probably in…in being content."* This narrative represents a vivid example of identity work (Watson, 2008) as although Brigid was not recognised as the family business successor, her key role in decision making allowed her to maintain her self-identity as "de facto" leader.

As such, the gendered practice of concealed leadership allowed these elder daughters to do gender differently by exerting influence whilst doing gender well by concealing their identities as leaders (Hytti *et al.*, 2017). They unsettled the norm of "the heroic male owner-manager and invisible women" (Hamilton, 2006, p.267) through their simultaneous enactment of feminised and masculinised identities (Byrne *et al.*, 2019) as supportive sister, senior sibling and director/owner.

4.3.4 Theme: Challenging the Gendered Norm

Challenging the gendered norm was the final strategy utilised by women to manage their competing identities. Challenging, as understood in the context of this study, refers to two distinct practices. The first practice relates to how women challenge the gendered norms of their businesses and industries by empowering non-family women (García and Welter, 2013; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; Carr and Kelan, 2016). The second practice relates to how women challenge the relevance of gendered norms by dismissing or denying gender bias (Jorgenson, 2002; Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017; Jones and Clifton, 2018). Identified as relevant to this theme were two sub-themes that captured the ways in which challenging manifests as gender practices (Martin, 2003; 2006). These sub-themes are as follows: 1. Empowering women and 2. Dismissing or denying experiences of gender bias.

4.3.4.1 Empowering women. A number of these family women engaged in activities that empowered non-family women within the family business. For Eimear, she was particularly *"conscious"* of her dual identities as a managing director and member of the board of directors for a childcare centre. As such, she fostered a culture of workplace flexibility, with all of her female managers working flexi-time. *"It's trying to encourage people through the hard times, the sleepless nights and all that to take time."* Eimear engaged in "mobilizing femininities" (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014, p.460) by supporting the recruitment of female candidates to more senior positions. *"I had pushed that we try to get someone, a lady, into supervisor. So we're nearly there…I'd mention it, as in I'd like it to happen, so it takes a while but it will happen."* As evidenced here, Eimear utilised her positional power to advocate for other women, whilst managing the risk of being perceived as too radical or forceful by accepting that *"it takes a while"* for such changes to materialise. Thus, Eimear tempered her approach to challenging the gendered norms (Stead, 2017) by introducing positive changes, whilst not threatening the economic goals of the family business. "*Again we can't afford to do massive things for them but where we can I would be pushing for it."* This tempered approach was mirrored by Orlaith whose commitment to women's progression appeared at odds with the goals of the family business.

> *I would definitely be more in tune with fairness in terms of opportunities for women in the business and I would be encouraging them to speak up…because the male employees would be happy enough to say "I want to be paid more" whereas the women would sit there for ages and ages and…maybe feel that but not say anything. So…even though I'm the one whose paying them I want them to be more confident and assertive because that actually adds to their performance overall* (Orlaith).

Orlaith's encouragement of women to negotiate better pay increases was reflective of the ongoing pressure to incentivise and retain a predominantly female workforce who struggled with the inflexible and unpredictable work hours of her family business. "*I know that women, before they're even married or even in a relationship, they're always thinking you know 'this is not something that I can keep going'."* Thus, Orlaith's empowerment of non-family women made financial sense for the business.

In a similar way, Róisín wished to change the dominant masculine culture in her family business that associated maternity leave with disruption. *"I just felt like it shouldn't be looked at as an inconvenience. We get somebody to replace them. I want to make sure I keep them because everybody's coming back to work after they have children."* Accordingly, Róisín began with a small change to improve workplace flexibility. "*I've started that in the first year where you have a baby, if you want to take an extra day's leave, that's fine."* Róisín had other flexible work initiatives she wanted to implement, but was also aware to "*pick my timings"* before introducing such proposals to the predominantly male senior management team.

Interestingly, certain women claimed that, as senior women leaders in their family businesses, they played an important role in ensuring that female-related issues were not overlooked. According to Caoimhe, flexibility for female staff was "*something that I like to think that we brought in here because we know what it's like juggling things as women because no matter what you say it falls back on our plate".* As this quote indicates, Caoimhe and her sister's introduction into the family business brought a mainly hidden female oriented issue (i.e. workplace flexibility) to the fore. This was made explicit by Orlaith: *"You know if it's all brothers then I don't see the same opportunities for women employees."* As the only senior family woman, Orlaith saw it as her responsibility to raise women's issues. This sentiment was also echoed by Róisín. *"You know it's the voice of the women in the company as well that I think is required and maybe without that they wouldn't have that consideration."* Interestingly, Róisín's quest for greater workplace flexibility stemmed from her own personal circumstances.

> *We would be very much full time here five days per week…[Requesting three-day work weeks] was probably maybe more an issue than anything because that's not how they work here…But they were happy to accommodate it and maybe it was just because it was me. Whereas I want to make sure that from the rest of the female perspective that we can work around it* (Róisín).

Although her motivation for championing workplace flexibility stemmed from self-interest (de Vries, 2015), Róisín was adamant about using her success to improve the lives of other working mothers.

As evidenced by this sub-theme, women drew on the gender practice of empowering women as a way of doing gender differently (García and Welter, 2013) and disrupting the gendered norms that impede women's career development within the family business.

4.3.4.2 Dismissing or denying experiences of gender bias. At certain points in the interviews, women dismissed or denied experiencing gender bias. First, there were women in the sample who recalled instances of gender bias yet also downplayed and dismissed the relevance of these instances. For example, Niamh claimed: *"They [i.e. sexist comments] were there. There's no point in saying no. But nothing that ever made me feel really uncomfortable or anything like that…I think I was lucky being honest."* Niamh's claim of being relatively fortunate in her experience of gender bias highlights the difficulty she faced in challenging powerful discriminatory norms (Jones and Clifton, 2018).

This attempt to dismiss bias was reflected by Brigid who admitted to feeling intimidated at a male dominated leadership course. *"There definitely was a bit of male dominance and they like to think that they own the place. But, you know, I think once you take them down a peg or two, they're okay."* Later in the interview, when the topic of gender inequalities was explicitly broached, Brigid was quick to dismiss the leadership course incident. *"I don't put a whole pile of emphasis on male and female really. Even though I am nervous about walking into that room that's kind of just my personality more so."* As interpreted here, Brigid reframed this experience of male domination as her own personal issue, thus denying gender "as a structuring force" (Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017, p.234) and concealing sexism (Jones and Clifton, 2018).

Other women referenced the subtle ways in which sons were favoured for succession, yet struggled to qualify these as gender-based disparities. *"Things like if a machine broke or something like that they'd [i.e. parents] be inclined to ring [brother] first rather than me and maybe that was an older child thing as well"* (Orlaith). This was mirrored by Bronagh, who implied that her brother was fast tracked to succession. "*I think you have to prove yourself a bit more as a female…And again that could be an age thing. He's eight years older than me as well. So he has a lot more experience."* As evidenced here, these women with an older brother struggled to attribute their differential treatment to either gender or birth order, resulting in them both acknowledging and denying gender bias as possible (Kelan, 2009).

Moreover, there were women who denied or dismissed experiencing any gender-based inequalities. Interestingly, these women featured in large sized family businesses. According to Eimear: *"I know I'm lucky because I've seen plenty of women who are impeded on gender. I have not been."* Eimear recognised gender discrimination as something that existed, yet happened to others, and believed that confidence and competence enabled her leadership identity. *"I mean if you're confident it is highly unlikely someone's gonna challenge you."* Eimear claimed that *"gender was never a thing in our family"*, although she recognised that her father was the dominant leader in his business partnership with her aunt. *"She isn't as strong against him if you know what I mean. Whereas we [i.e. her and her brother] are more even…I think that's a generational thing".* For Eimear, an important part of her identity work was projecting an image of herself as an empowered woman by locating sexism in the past (Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017)— as a feature of her father and aunt's generation—and highlighting the equitable working relations between her and her brother.

Shannon also claimed to have never experienced gender discrimination and argued that women were advantaged over men (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014; Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017). *"Everyone is giving out that that you know men are nearly afraid now to apply for the big jobs because there was so much discrimination that women weren't getting them and it's actually done a twofold on it."* Although featuring in a non-managerial role, Shannon claimed that her family business had a large female managerial force and required greater male representation. Whilst Shannon alluded to the cultural preference for the *"first born son"* in family businesses, she found no obvious difference in how her and her brothers were treated. *"I don't think I'm treated any differently to how the boys would be. I think dad expects the same amount from us."*

Similarly, Mairead refuted ever feeling held back as a woman, and further claimed that her family business had a traditionally pro-women stance. *"Gender is definitely not a deciding factor. If anything there's definitely an unconscious bias towards women."* Mairead positioned herself as empowered rather than victimised. "*I'm sure I've come across comments. I'm sure they annoyed me at the time but I don't let them faze me."* Whilst this can be perceived as Mairead's way of coping with gender bias (i.e. downplaying its effect), it may also be a way for her to reject any feeling of powerlessness (Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012; Jones and Clifton, 2018). Although Mairead *"was the first female family member to ever join the business, at least at board level",* she found no differential treatment between family men and women. *"There is no kind of man's club here, not in the family anyway."*

As evidenced by this sub-theme, women drew on the gender practice of dismissing or denying gender bias as a way of doing gender well and constructing a favourable gender neutral or empowered female identity (Budgeon, 2014; Byrne *et al.*, 2019).

4.4 Conclusion

In the introduction to this chapter, the research question was restated and framed in relation to the key themes emerging from the data. In presenting the findings, the initial three major themes – Tensions as a Working Mother; Tensions as a Woman Leader; and Tensions as a Daughter Successor – were presented as the tensions and contradictions between these women's competing identities. The final four themes – Blending in, Complementing, Unsettling and Challenging the Gendered Norm – were presented as the strategies women utilised to manage these tensions and contradictions. The most exemplary interview data featured as power quotes, whilst supplementary evidence or proof quotes can be located in Appendix E. A discussion of the findings in light of the guiding theoretical lens and current literature is featured in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In answering the research question of this study— *How do women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives?* —the researcher analysed the in-depth interviews which led to the emergence of a number of important findings. This chapter describes the significance of these findings in light of the theoretical lens and current literature relevant to this study.

5.2 Gendered Identity Work: The Tensions and Contradictions

As evidenced in the findings, women experienced multiple "contradictions and tensions" (Koerner, 2014, p.67) between their identities as mothers, women and daughters in management and leadership. Cultural and familial gendered norms dictate the range of discursive social identities available to these women (Watson, 2008). These tensions manifest in the beliefs, behaviours and "choices" (Lewis, Benschop and Simpson, 2017) of women as they navigate their daily working lives within the family business.

5.2.1 Clash between Motherhood and Profession.

Consistent with recent research from Byrne *et al.* (2019), this study found that family business women experienced a clash between their identities as mothers, career women and family business managers/leaders. In support of Cesaroni and Sentuti (2014), certain women in this study sought less visibility by assuming minor roles that could accommodate intense family commitments. These women, in particular, experienced a considerable degree of flexibility for childcare (Lyman, Salganicoff and Hollander, 1985; Salganicoff, 1990; Avery, Haynes and Haynes, 2000), thus highlighting how the family business identity can complement the maternal/parental identity. In saying that, there can be structural forces at play that influence women's so-called choice (Lewis, Benschop and Simpson, 2017) to undertake less visible positions (e.g., part-time) or pre-emptively opt out of potential leadership roles.

Interestingly, Niamh claimed that undertaking the role of CEO whilst managing family commitments would have been *"a step too far"*, whilst Aoibhinn also considered the balance as too difficult: "*I know my limits".* This highlights the continuous construction of work-life

balance as women's responsibility (Gherardi, 2015). Even Orlaith and Raonaid, who undertook part-time positions in their businesses to accommodate motherhood, struggled with moments of self-doubt and uncertainty (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Watson, 2008; Beech, 2011) over the threat to their professional selves (Swail and Marlow, 2018; Byrne *et al.*, 2019).

As the findings show, certain career focused women also referred to the incongruities and tensions between their maternal and professional identities. Both Ciara and Brigid's accounts of being kept late in work when needed at home, suggests the existence of an ideal worker norm that valorises lengthy work days and continuous availability (Acker, 1990; Correll *et al.*, 2014). The clash between maternal and professional identities was also made apparent by the desire for progression, such as Mairead's aspiration to fulfil "*a leading role in the company*". Caoimhe and Niamh's experience of a trade-off between flexibility (Lyman, Salganicoff and Hollander, 1985; Salganicoff, 1990) and long hours (Cadieux, Lorrain and Hugron, 2002; Vera and Dean, 2005) or unyielding commitment to the family business (Salganicoff, 1990; Karataş-Özkan, Erdoğan and Nicolopoulou, 2011) shows how the family business can simultaneously enable and hinder these women's familial identities.

Moreover, there was evidence of women encountering criticism for their supposed neglect of familial duties (Salganicoff, 1990; Vera and Dean, 2005; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). This finding reflects the pervasiveness of cultural norms relating to working women's gendered roles (Central Statistics Office, 2016; O'Hagan, 2018), as well as the familial norms that hold daughters to account for not adequately devoting time or energy to motherhood (Cole, 1997; Vera and Dean, 2005). In sum, this research shows that these family business women experienced multiple and competing subjectivities (Alvesson, Lee Ashcraft and Thomas, 2008; Watson, 2008) as good mothers, successful career women, and dedicated family business leaders. These competing tensions were salient in how women chose to undertake less visible positions (e.g., part-time) or pre-emptively opted out of potential leadership roles to manage family commitments and struggled with balancing their care of duty to their family and their family business.

5.2.2 Standing Out as a Woman in Leadership.

As evidenced by the findings, these women described the occasional difficulties in visibly standing out as female (Marlow and McAdam, 2015) and as leaders of their family business. In particular, women operating in masculinised or male dominated environments encountered identity conflict, which is consistent with previous work (Jorgenson, 2002;

Hatmaker, 2013; Meister, Sinclair and Jehn, 2017). The finding that some women struggled with older male employees supports earlier arguments that family business women's lack of legitimacy in male dominated sectors is compounded by youth and limited experience (Constantinidis and Nelson, 2009; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, these women's fears of not gaining respect and having their authority undermined evidences the prevalent cultural logic that associates leadership and management with men and masculinities (Calás and Smircich, 1991; Alvesson and Billing, 2009; Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 2011). Gráinne tried to manage these tensions by *"shying away"* or opting out of succession, whilst Caoimhe accepted she would have to *"do things a little bit differently [than a man]"* in order to gain employees' respect. This finding mirrors Mussolino *et al.*'s (2019) claim that daughter successors' identity construction is shaped by the pervasive masculine culture of the business and by her appointment being imposed upon or accepted by employees.

Although most women were socialised into the family business from youth (Smythe and Sardeshmukh, 2013), some, unlike their brothers and male cousins, had limited or no exposure to certain facets of the business (Overbeke, Bilimoria and Perelli, 2013). In particular, certain daughters did not experience the same level of exposure to the business as their male counterparts, which supports the claim that previous generation's tendency to protect children is more of an issue for daughters than for sons in family businesses (Vera and Dean, 2005; Wang, 2010).

As the findings demonstrate, terms such as *"messy"*, *"tough"* and *"not a fluffy area"* were used by these women to highlight how their family business industries fail to appeal to women. By drawing on stereotypical assumptions (i.e. women are particularly averse or unsuitable to rough or unpleasant work), rather than structural barriers to explain the infrequency of women leaders, these women were complicit in perpetuating the masculine logic underlying their industries (Jones and Clifton, 2018).

Although the managing director of her business, Eimear described the leadership level in her industry as *"not a world for women at the moment",* which suggests that the family business can provide women with access to male dominated industries "that would otherwise be closed to them" (Salganicoff, 1990, p.128). Further, the finding that these women never wanted to join their family business, and only joined in a long-term position in their thirties, may be indicative of the potential difficulties they had in identifying with their stereotypically masculine jobs and industries (Constantinidis and Nelson, 2009; Barbulescu and Bidwell, 2013). In sum, this theme demonstrates the tensions between the gender-related

and leadership identities of these family business women. Those tensions manifested in difficulties gaining respect from male (especially older) employees; limited exposure to certain facets of the business deemed male-oriented; and perceived dissonance between their identities as a female and senior manager/leader of their male dominated businesses and industries.

5.2.3 Not the Natural Successor.

As evidenced by the findings, these family business women experienced tensions between their identities as daughters and as potential successors of the family business. Whilst birth order is an important factor in determining successor choice (Schenkel, Yoo and Kim, 2016), gender is also a strong indicator (Bennedsen *et al.* 2007; Calabrò *et al.* 2018), which is supported by this study's finding that sons were appointed successors in all but one post-succession firm, including those in which eldest daughters worked (Stavrou, 1999; Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014). Saoirse and Raonaid in addition to Brigid, who made explicit reference to the cultural norm of primogeniture (Bennedsen *et al.*, 2007; Wang, 2010), were not encouraged to pursue top leadership and as such were "blind to the possibilities of succession" (Overbeke, Bilimoria and Perelli, 2013, p.209). Accordingly, Brigid and Saoirse's disinterest in the successor role (Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2018), may have operated as a way to deny and conceal their exclusionary treatment (Jorgenson, 2002; Jones and Clifton, 2018). In particular, the bind experienced by Raonaid, who could not make claims to her brothers' businesses yet felt unfairly excluded, was indicative of the subtle gendered power relations at play in family businesses (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011; Byrne and Fattoum, 2014). These accounts, in particular, highlight the pervasive cultural logic that favours male successors for family business leadership (Wang, 2010; Ahrens, Landmann and Woywode 2015; Gherardi and Perotta, 2016).

For those daughters who succeeded or were expected to succeed the family business, their progression was precipitated by "special circumstances" (Wang, 2010, p.475), which included being the eldest child (Curimbaba, 2002; García-Álvarez, López-Sintas and Saldaña Gonzalvo, 2002) or having a brother who lacked interest or was choosing to leave the business (Constantinidis and Nelson, 2009). As eldest children, Ciara and Aoibhinn perceived themselves as imposed successors, who had taken the rightful place of a son. Furthermore, Eimear and Gráinne undertook the successor role, in part, to relieve their brothers of the duty, which shows how daughter succession can enable groomed sons to avoid the successor role and pursue other career avenues guilt-free (Lyman, Salganicoff and Hollander, 1985). As observed by Cesaroni and Sentuti (2014), it is not only the case of

wives and daughters succeeding the family business as a result of special circumstances, but also sisters who support their brothers in running the business, as evidenced in the case of Gráinne.

Finally, certain women's references to being less suited to leadership than their male family members based on a lack of appropriate skills, knowledge and business exposure may stem, in part, from the perception that women do not possess the characteristics (confidence, assertiveness, vision, drive) that are associated with masculinities and the public and economic sphere of activities (Hamilton, 2013a). In particular, Shannon and Orlaith describe their male family members' behaviour in the business as *"innovative"* and *"daring"*, which are words that are closely linked to entrepreneurship and masculinity (Ahl, 2006). Saoirse perceived her brothers' superior technical ability as a *"natural"* sex difference (Ahl, 2004), which in turn reinforced her belief that her identities as a woman and a leader in her industry were incongruous.

Moreover, the claims that brothers were better suited to leadership due to their greater business exposure shows how daughters are inadequately prepared for future leadership (Dumas, 1992; Vera and Dean, 2005; Overbeke, Bilimoria and Perelli, 2013). These women referenced the absence of such skills and experience as proof of their illegitimacy or unsuitability for leadership, thus showing how women can be perceived as deficient due to their misalignment with business traits that are "culturally coded as masculine" (Ronen, 2018, p.518). In sum, this theme shows that these women experienced competing notions between their identities as daughters and potential successors of the family business. This conflict was evident in how women were overlooked for succession or were expected to succeed as a result of "special circumstances" (Wang, 2010, p.475), in addition to being perceived as less suited to leadership than their male counterparts due a lack of skills, knowledge and exposure to the business.

5.3 Gendered Identity Work: Managing the Tensions and Contradictions

As discussed in the previous section, women experienced various tensions and contradictions between their competing identities. In order to manage such tensions, women needed to engage in gendered identity work, which as a contextual reflexive process required them to vary in their alignment and resistance to gender norms and enact multiple femininities and masculinities (LaPointe, 2013; Mavin and Grandy, 2013; Lewis, 2015; Marlow and McAdam, 2015). Interestingly, this research showed how these different forms

of identity work related to various gender practices associated with doing gender well, doing gender differently and doing gender well and differently simultaneously (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013).

5.3.1 Blending in with the Gendered Norm and Doing Masculinity Well.

The first form of identity work that was identified in the current study was *Blending in with the Gendered Norm*. In the literature, Sheppard (1989, p.146) refers to "blending in" as women's attempts to present themselves as sufficiently feminine, "so that conventional rules and expectations of gender behaviour can be maintained", yet professional enough (or stereotypically masculine) "so that the issue of gender and sexuality are apparently minimized". Blending in, as understood in the context of this study, is partially aligned to Sheppard's definition as women attempted to downplay their gender identity by conforming to the masculinised norms and standards of conduct in their businesses and industries (Marlow and McAdam, 2015), and imitating men and masculinities (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009). Blending in is closely aligned to enacting masculinities or doing masculinity well (Olofsdotter and Randevåg, 2016); thus, women must also manage the risk of negative appraisals for going against perceived sex category i.e. being seen as insufficiently feminine (Powell Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009). Within this study, blending in manifested as two main gender practices: 1. Minimising disruption and 2. Aligning with men and masculinities.

5.3.1.1 Minimising disruption. One of the major competing tensions between women's identities was the clash between motherhood and profession. In response to this, certain women felt compelled to "minimise the 'disruption'" (Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018, p.506) caused by maternity leave and childcare, and thus emulate the ideal worker norm within their family businesses (Acker, 1990; Correll *et al.*, 2014). Similar to Aldamiz-Echevarría, Idígoras and Vicente-Molina (2017), this study found that some women (i.e. Gráinne and Ciara) forgo maternity leave, due to the essential roles they played in the family firm. For Brigid, who made a quick return to the business full-time, and Aoibhinn, who attended board meetings during maternity leaves, and organised duties to be absorbed by staff, minimising disruption was an effort at blending in and downplaying the disruptiveness associated with their maternal identities (Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018). This finding begins to address the sparsity of maternity research in family firms (Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018) by highlighting the conditions (i.e. no maternity replacement cover; family women responsible for sensitive areas such as payroll; fear of favouritism or inconveniencing the organisation) that trigger family women's efforts to

minimise disruption. This study argues that minimising disruption was an important strategy for these women who contended with the cultural and institutional notion that maternity leave and pregnancy are inconvenient and burdensome events for business (Buzzanell and Liu, 2005; Gatrell, 2011; Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018).

5.3.1.2 Aligning with men and masculinities. The conflicting notions between women's gender-related and leadership identities also triggered women to align with men (particularly male family members) and masculinities. This was interpreted as an attempt by women "to blend in with the masculinised status quo" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015, p.806) and to achieve a sense of belonging to the family business (Stead, 2017). This strategy was salient in how women avoided behaviour that might be construed as girliness or "hyperfemininity" (Paechter, 2006, p.225), which are typically taboo in organisations (Lewis, 2014). In keeping with prior work (e.g., Meister, Sinclair and Jehn, 2017; Rydzik and Ellis-Vowles, 2018; Byrne *et al*., 2019), this research shows that family business women deflected focus from their gender-related identity by emphasizing their professionalism, physical competencies and work ethic. There was also evidence of how these women held themselves and other women to account with regard to socially acceptable behaviour and appearance (Kelan, 2013; Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014; Carr and Kelan, 2016; Mavin and Grandy, 2016a; 2016b), including Brigid who avoided having *"her makeup done to the last"* and Shannon who found women were *"less emotional"* when working with men.

Accordingly, certain women argued for the benefits of a masculine approach to leadership, based on qualities of rationality, decisiveness, assertiveness and level-headedness, thus highlighting the pervasiveness of the "discourse of difference" (Lewis, 2013, p.255) and the continued gender labelling of leadership styles (Billing and Alvesson, 2000; Fletcher, 2004). Women doing masculinity well (Olofsdotter and Randevåg, 2016) can be perceived as going against sex category, which can incur resistance (Messerschmidt, 2009; Mavin and Grandy, 2012) as was evident by Aoibhinn's attempt at a *"male direct approach".* The finding that certain women attempted to align themselves with the masculine qualities of their male incumbents lends support to Byrne *et al.*'s (2019) claim that successors try to accentuate their similarity to incumbents by emulating their gender identities. Interestingly, the findings showed that women not only aligned themselves to men's behaviour "but also were tutored in identity work to address the deficit of femininity" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015, p.808). Thus, the current research posits that blending in, via alignment with men and masculinities, was a two-way process with male family members coaching women in playing the "male

game" (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004, p.432) and women attempting to emulate male organisational members' gendered practices and behaviour (i.e. doing masculinity well).

5.3.2 Complementing the Gendered Norm and Doing Femininity Well.

Another major form of identity work utilised by the women of this study was *Complementing the Gendered Norm*. As explained by Ahl (2006, p.604), promoting women's supposed advantages over men, based on gender differences, "does not challenge the male norm" but complements it. Complementing, as understood in the context of this study, refers to how women create "an alternative" (Ahl, 2006, p.597) to the masculinised norms of their business and industries by valorising their feminised identities (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004) and aligning themselves to stereotypically feminine qualities and attributes (García and Welter, 2013; Martinez Dy, Marlow and Martin, 2017; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). By complementing, women are closely aligned to enacting femininities or doing femininity well (Mavin and Grandy, 2012); thus, women must also manage the risk of negative appraisals for not acting in accordance with masculinised norms associated with leadership and management (Calás and Smircich, 1991; Collinson and Hearn, 1996; Alvesson and Billing, 2009; Ely, Ibarra and Kolb, 2011). Within this study, complementing manifested as two main gender practices: 1. Leveraging womanhood and femininities and 2. Subscribing to gender norms with male family members.

5.3.2.1 Leveraging womanhood and femininities. The findings show that gender-related and leadership identities can be constructed as complementary rather than conflicting (Chasserio, Pailot and Poroli, 2014). This was evidenced in how women leveraged womanhood and femininities in order to emphasise their "additional talents" (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004, p.432) within the family business. Women referred to their stereotypically feminine characteristics (e.g., intuition, empathy, attention to detail) as strengths that bolster their professional identity, which prior research has also identified as an important strategy for women (García and Welter, 2013; Martinez Dy, Marlow and Martin, 2017; Hytti *et al.*, 2017).

In particular, Hytti *et al.* (2017, p.678) found that family business women temper their disruption in masculinised environments via "feminine leadership practices and making use of the firm's female clientele". Building on this line of inquiry, the current study argues that leveraging womanhood and femininities may also be a tactic for inducing positive gendered relations with non-family employees. This unexpected insight is important as little is known

about gendered relations between family women and non-family employees in the family business (Campopiano *et al.*, 2017).

Salganicoff (1990, p.135) claims that offering support to other women in family business is "often taboo for a female family member", which this research shows might not always be the case. In particular, Aoibhinn and Orlaith appeared to develop strong relations with non-family female colleagues which could be interpreted as a way of boosting staff morale and fostering collegiality among women as they navigate the hegemonic masculinity within their work environments (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; Carr and Kelan, 2016). Moreover, other identity markers, such as lower occupational status and motherhood, appeared to enable these connections with non-family female staff. There was also evidence of Ciara and Caoimhe, who worked in highly masculinised environments, doing femininity well by utilising exaggerated femininities (softness, gentle persuasion) to influence male employees. Although deemed effective, seeking advantage on the basis of "gendered weakness or difference" is a "limiting strategy" (Marlow and McAdam, 2015, p.803) that may undermine women's future attempts at being direct or assertive.

Similar to Byrne *et al.* (2019, p.16) who showed that successors drew on relational femininity "to gain legitimacy and foster relationships with different stakeholders", this study found that women leveraged their womanhood and femininities in order to build positive relations with non-family staff and emphasize their value as members of the family business. Although effective, this practice was based on stereotypical assumptions about gender difference which fuelled the gender binary and the dominant social order (Gherardi, 1994; Ahl, 2004), which, in turn, had the potential of disempowering women.

5.3.2.2 Subscribing to gender norms with male family members. As previously discussed, women in this study experienced tensions between their identities as daughters and as potential successors of the family business. Since male heirs are generally expected to succeed the family business (Bennedsen *et al.*, 2007; Ahrens, Landmann and Woywode, 2015; Calabrò *et al.* 2018), leaving daughters with secondary and less visible roles (García-Álvarez, López-Sintas and Saldaña Gonzalvo, 2002; Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014), it is not surprising that the women of this study, who experienced this unbalanced power dynamic, subscribed to gender normative relations with male family members. This practice of doing femininity well was interpreted as a way for women to signal their complementary role as partners to their brothers in power. For instance, Bronagh and Orlaith drew on stereotypical gendered roles and behaviours in describing their brother-sister dynamic i.e. women are

more risk averse and cautious and men are more risk taking and driven (Ahl, 2006; Hamilton, 2013a).

Further to the notion that father-daughter succession is characterised by complementarity (Dumas, 1989; 1992; Wang, 2010; Smythe and Sardeshmukh, 2013), this finding indicates that brother-sister work relations may also be constructed as collaborative or interdependent. Such relations help to maintain or reproduce the gendered order or status quo (Ahl, 2006) so that men are positioned as the drivers of the family business and women are the supporters or maintainers of peace and harmony in the business (Salganicoff, 1990; Jimenez, 2009; Karataş-Özkan, Erdoğan and Nicolopoulou, 2011). This was particularly evident in how Raonaid and Brigid described their key roles in providing "emotional leadership" (Ward, 2011, p.164) in dealings with employees. Whilst subscribing to gender norms with male family members, via doing femininity well, enabled these women to highlight their value as partners to their brothers in power, this strategy also disempowered women (Ahl, 2006; Jones and Clifton, 2018) by restricting their discursive resources (Watson, 2008) to reflect the stereotypically gendered identities of peacekeeper, nurturer and emotional leader.

5.3.3 Unsettling the Gendered Norm and Doing Gender Well and Differently.

The next major form of identity work that women utilised in this study was *Unsettling the Gendered Norm*. According to Mavin and Grandy (2012, p.223), although the dominant gendered order constrains individuals in how they *do* gender, "new forms may arise and indeed over time unsettle the gender binary". Unsettling, as understood in the context of this study, refers to how women unsettle the gendered norms of their businesses and industries by enacting multiple femininities and masculinities simultaneously (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012) through measured assertiveness and through using their concealment to exercise leadership (Hamilton, 2006; Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Stead, 2017). By unsettling, women are engaging in gender multiplicity (Linstead and Pullen, 2006) or doing gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2013; Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014). Within this study, unsettling manifested as two main gender practices: 1. Measured assertiveness and 2. Concealed leadership.

5.3.3.1 Measured assertiveness. The first gender practice that allowed women to manage their competing identities by doing gender well and differently was measured assertiveness, which represented women's attempts at being deliberate and thoughtful about being assertive. Similar to Kirton and Healy (2012), it was found that working mothers (i.e. Brigid

and Róisín) attempted to unsettle the ideal worker norm in their family businesses by asserting their need to leave work on time and attend to home responsibilities. These efforts to unsettle the male-centric norms of lengthy work days and continuous availability (Acker, 1990; Correll *et al.*, 2014), were moderated by their willingness to work out-of-hours at home, for instance *"when the kids are asleep"* (Róisín). This mirrors Jurik *et al.* (2019, p.331) who found that women in copreneurships blended "business duties around housework and childcare". These women's motivation to work late hours may stem, in large part, from their strong identification with the family business (Zellweger, Eddleston and Kellermanns, 2010; Deephouse and Jaskiewicz, 2013). However, it may also stem from the pressure to keep up with brothers in management, who may not experience the same level of difficulty in managing childcare responsibilities (Cater and Young, 2019).

Measured assertiveness was also a practice utilised by women who encountered difficulties asserting themselves with employees. Specifically, Saoirse and Caoimhe had become adept at doing gender well (being passive and non-confrontational) and doing gender differently (being assertive and direct) in their interactions with staff. For Saoirse, her "natural" inclination was to be passive and compromising, reserving her assertiveness for occasions (i.e. HR issues) where a strong leader identity was needed. This mirrors Nadin (2007) who found that women entrepreneurs in the care sector will adopt a non-threatening identity (i.e. "friend") with employees until their authority is undermined and their identity as "boss" emerges. Further, Caoimhe signalled her ability to "enact femininities and masculinities simultaneously" (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014, p.441) through her "*give and take type of relationship"* with male employees. Moreover, the findings show that certain women asserted themselves in a measured way with family members in order to enhance their visibility and autonomy within the firm. In particular, Bronagh was patient and *"put the time in"* to proving her capabilities before seeking visibility via presence at board meetings (Vera and Dean, 2005; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). Similarly, Róisín learned how to exercise autonomy without undermining male management's authority. This research posits that measured assertiveness allowed women to enact femininities and masculinities simultaneously, and thus "unsettle the gender binary" (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, p.223).

5.3.3.2 Concealed leadership. The second gender practice was concealed leadership whereby women operating in a male partnership could conceal their leadership identity yet still exert considerable influence (Hytti *et al.*, 2017). This ties in with extant literature highlighting how family business women may actively conceal their identities, in order to

fit into the family business, and use this concealment to exert influence and build power (Hamilton, 2006; Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Stead, 2017). Interestingly, these women who were able to exert considerable influence were older daughters with younger brothers who were the CEO of the family business. Avoiding visibility was a conscious effort for Gráinne and Niamh, who refused to succeed, and instead relied on a male leader (i.e. brother) who could secure credibility for the partnership (Godwin, Stevens and Brenner, 2006; García and Welter, 2013; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). Whilst Gráinne later unveiled her leadership identity and assumed the role of managing director (Hytti *et al.*, 2017), Niamh still *"shied away"* from leadership, thus showing how women's "desire for invisibility can manifest itself in a fear of success, low risk behaviour and/or avoidance of conflict" (Simpson and Lewis, 2005, p.1259).

Nonetheless, these women were still able to play powerful roles as directors and owners which shows that "the 'heroic male' owner-manager and the 'invisible women'" (Hamilton, 2006, p.267) discourse portrayed by family businesses does not necessarily reflect individuals' lived experiences (Hamilton, 2006; Hytti *et al.*, 2017). This research shows that behind the scenes these women were able to challenge their brothers' decisions, reinforce their seniority as eldest children, and play a key role in deciding the strategic direction of the firm. Whilst publicly, the normative gendered order was maintained through the positioning of men in top leadership and women in less visible, secondary roles (McAdam and Marlow, 2013; Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014). This required women to do gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013) through the simultaneous enactment of feminised and masculinised identities (Byrne *et al.*, 2019) as supportive sister, senior sibling and director/owner. Accordingly, this finding builds on Hytti *et al.* (2017) by uncovering the specific ways in which women conceal their leader identity yet exert influence in partnership with their brothers in power.

5.3.4 Challenging the Gendered Norm and Doing Gender Well or Differently.

The final major form of identity work that women utilised in this study was *Challenging the Gendered Norm*. Challenging, as understood in the context of this study, refers to two distinct practices. The first practice relates to how women challenge the gendered norms of their businesses and industries by empowering non-family women (García and Welter, 2013; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; Carr and Kelan, 2016). Through female empowerment, women are engaging in redoing gender or doing gender differently (Mavin, Bryans and Cunningham, 2010; García and Welter, 2013); thus, women must also manage the risk of

negative appraisals for enacting "the 'wrong' kind of feminine" (Mavin and Grandy, 2012, p.224) i.e. expressing solidarity with women. The second practice relates to how women challenge the relevance of gendered norms by dismissing or denying gender bias (Jorgenson, 2002; Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017; Jones and Clifton, 2018). By dismissing or denying gender bias, these women appeared to be doing gender well by not questioning the gender status quo (Jorgenson, 2002; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012).

5.3.4.1 Empowering Women. Interestingly, this research uncovered a previously unexplored tension between family business women's identities; specifically, the contradiction between their identities as leaders in the family business and as women committed to supporting other women. Those most aligned to "tempered radicalism" (Meyerson and Scully, 1995, p.585) included Eimear, Orlaith and Róisín, who as individuals "intertwine professional and feminist identities" (Ramarajan and Reid, 2013, p.629). This study argues that managing these potentially competing identities was a precarious position for these senior family business women to navigate. If strongly aligned to female empowerment, they could be perceived as radical and self-serving (Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; de Vries, 2015) and potentially disloyal to the family business, where building friendships and offering emotional support to working women "are often taboo" for female family members (Salganicoff, 1990, p.135). On the other hand, if these women were strongly aligned to the organisational status quo, they could be seen as hypocritical or as a queen bee by other female employees (Mavin, 2008; Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014). Women were found to manage these tensions through "tempered disruption" (Stead, 2017, p.61). Specifically, they used their positional power to introduce change whilst tempering their approach by being patient and wary not to threaten the business' economic goals, making the business case for gender equity (Mattis, 2001; Kelan and Wratil, 2018), and choosing the right moment to pitch changes to management. As such, these women challenge the gendered norms of women struggling to progress or negotiate better pay and of maternity leave treated as a disruption.

Furthermore, some women believed that, as senior women leaders, they played an important role in ensuring that female-related issues (i.e. workplace flexibility and gender balanced recruitment) were not overlooked. For Caoimhe, her experience of managing home responsibilities gave her special insight into *"what it's like juggling things as women";* thus she was keen to "empower women as a group" (García and Welter, 2013, p.396) by affording flexibility. Further, Orlaith and Róisín claimed that their presence was necessary for ensuring that women's voices within the family business were heard, thus highlighting the important

role senior family business women can play in empowering non-family women within the business. This finding is supported by the literature which shows that greater representation of females in high status positions is linked to less workplace gender segregation (Stainback, Kleiner and Skaggs, 2016) and a narrower gender pay gap (Cohen and Huffman, 2007). Whilst empowering women was an important strategy for challenging gendered norms, and doing gender differently, it also perpetuated the notion that gender equality remains "women's work and women's problem" (de Vries, 2015, p.31). Moreover, the focus on empowering women through greater workplace flexibility fails to challenge the notion that managing work-life balance is continuously constructed as women's responsibility (Gherardi, 2015).

5.3.4.2 Dismissing or denying experiences of gender bias. The second gender practice was challenging the relevance of gendered norms by dismissing or denying gender bias (Jorgenson, 2002; Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017; Jones and Clifton, 2018). According to Jones and Clifton (2018, p.560), it is necessary to examine "the gendered identity work that people perform and which informs their evaluations of experiences as sexist, or not". Gender fatigue, which emerges from the simultaneous acknowledgment and denial of gender bias as possible (Kelan, 2009), featured in this study, as per other gender and organisational studies (e.g., Marlow and McAdam, 2015; Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017). For instance, Niamh feeling fortunate that her experience of sexism was not worse and Brigid framing her experience of gender bias as her issue may represent their attempts at coping with their experiences (Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017). In particular these efforts may be a way to assimilate by doing gender well and not questioning the sexism within their businesses and industries (Jorgenson, 2002; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012). The finding that youngest daughters struggled to attribute their differential treatment from sons as sexist or as a result of lower birth order/less experience, highlights how gendered power relations can be difficult to detect and, as a result, go unchallenged in the family business (Kelan, 2009; Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011; Byrne and Fattoum, 2014; Jones and Clifton, 2018).

Further, some women drew upon discursive resources that are commonly used to deny sexism and express gender fatigue (Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017). For instance, Eimear referred to sexism as something that happened in the past (in her father and aunt's generation) and to other women outside of the organisation (Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017). Moreover, Eimear and Mairead's claims of avoiding or managing sexism by exercising confidence and not being fazed feeds into the wider issue of structural inequalities not being

problematized and women being encouraged instead to craft "their selves towards ideal career women in line with masculine norms" (Lewis, Benschop and Simpson, 2017, p.218). Drawing on another discursive resource used to deny sexism, Shannon and Mairead claimed that women are already empowered or advantaged over men (Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017; Ronen, 2018); this narrative relies on the unquestioned acceptance that female empowerment and gender equality are prevalent so that when women advance they are "advantaged" whilst men's progression remains the invisible norm (Gill, Kelan and Scharff, 2017; Lewis, Benschop and Simpson, 2017).

Accordingly, dismissing or denying gender bias was interpreted as these women's strategy of doing gender well by not challenging the gender status quo or their subordination (Jorgenson, 2002; Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012). According to Watson (2009b, p.268, original emphasis), "identity work is as much about people defining *who they are not* as about identifying *who they are"*. Thus, this study argues that for these women denying or dismissing gender bias was as much about rejecting any image of themselves as powerless or victimised (Patterson, Mavin and Turner, 2012; Jones and Clifton, 2018) as it was about constructing an identity as gender neutral (Byrne *et al.*, 2019) or one that was aligned to the "new 'empowered' feminine ideal" (Budgeon, 2014, p.330).

The preceding discussion has detailed the significance of the findings in advancing knowledge of how women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives. In addressing this gap in knowledge, the present empirical study provides important contributions to the literature, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 6.

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter began by restating the pertinent findings of this study, beginning with the tensions and contradictions between family business women's competing identities, followed by the ways women managed these tensions through different forms of gendered identity work. The significance of these empirical insights was discussed in relation to the current literatures pertaining to gender and identity work within organisational contexts and specifically, the family business. For a synthesis of the key arguments and contributions of this study, the conclusion of this thesis follows next in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In concluding the thesis, this chapter commences with an overview of how the research question, aim and objectives were addressed by the present study. This is followed by a description of the three main contributions of this thesis to gender and identity work within organisational contexts and specifically, the family business. The implications for practice relevant to family business advisors and consultants, educators and practitioners are provided. In close, the limitations of the current study are discussed and the avenues for future research are extended.

6.2 Research Overview

Through an exploratory qualitative inquiry, the current study addressed the following research question: *How do women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage the competing identities relevant to their daily working lives?* By drawing on a gendered lens to examine women leaders in family business, this study aimed to advance knowledge of the gendered norms that position women's identities as competing and the identity work required to manage this conflict.

In articulating and addressing the research question and aim of this study, a set of objectives were met. The *first objective* was to provide a critical analysis of the literatures pertaining to gender and identity work within organisational contexts and specifically, the family business. In Chapter 2, the key literatures were presented and two main gaps in existing knowledge were identified. The first gap referred to the limited engagement with gender theory, and in particular how gender is done well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013) within the family business context (Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017; Byrne, Fattoum and Thébaud, 2018; Kubíček and Machek, 2018). This is despite the importance of a doing gender approach (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013) in unveiling the subtle gendered relations and hidden male centric norms under which family business members operate (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011; Mavin and Grandy, 2012; Byrne and Fattoum, 2014; Gherardi and Perotta, 2016).

The second gap in knowledge is of how women in second or later generation family businesses manage their competing identities within "the daily operations of a family firm"

(Hytti *et al.*, 2017, p.681). This is despite family business women needing "to engage more strongly in identity work" than their male counterparts (Hytti *et al.*, 2017, p.680) due to the cultural and familial norms that position women and daughters as inappropriate for business leadership (Salganicoff, 1990; Wang, 2010; Overbeke, Bilimoria and Perelli, 2013). Thus, the current study undertook a novel approach within family business research by combining an identity work lens (Watson, 2008), with doing gender well and/or differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013), to uncover how women manage their competing identities in their daily working lives.

The *second objective* of this study was to design and conduct an empirical investigation to address the research question. In doing so, a qualitative inquiry following an in-depth interview strategy (Johnson, 2001) was deemed most suitable. An exploratory approach was not only deemed necessary due to the relatively under-explored topic (Kubíček and Machek, 2018), but also due to its relevance to a social constructionist study uncovering identification and gendering processes (Burr, 2015; Henry, Foss and Ahl, 2016; Brown, 2017). Moreover, in uncovering the identity work of women family business members, this research responded to calls for more micro-level qualitative family business research (Nordqvist, Hall and Melin, 2009; Reay, 2014; Fletcher, De Massis and Nordqvist, 2016). In following a predominantly inductive approach to Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, the interview data was critically analysed in order to address the guiding research question.

The *third objective* of this study was to develop empirical insights and advance knowledge of gender and identity work within organisational contexts and specifically, the family business. This research shows that women in family business engage in different forms of gendered identity work—*Blending in, Complementing, Unsettling and Challenging Gendered Norms*—to manage their competing identities within "the daily operations of a family firm" (Hytti *et al.*, 2017, p.681). Moreover, it evidenced how these different forms of identity work related to various gender practices associated with doing gender well, doing gender differently and doing gender well and differently simultaneously (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013). The description of how these insights inform and advance the literature on gender and identity work within organisational contexts and specifically, the family business, is provided next in Section 6.3.

6.3 Contributions to the Literature

The current study has made three main contributions to the literature. First, this study contributes to the emerging literature on gendered identity work in family business (e.g.,

Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Byrne *et al.*, 2019; Mussolino *et al.*, 2019). Specifically, this research has shown how women engage in different forms of gendered identity work—*Blending in, Complementing, Unsettling and Challenging Gendered Norms*—to manage their competing identities—as mothers, women and daughters and as leaders and managers—within "the daily operations of a family firm" (Hytti *et al.*, 2017, p.681). In undertaking a novel approach within family business research by combining identity work (Watson, 2008) with doing gender well and differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013), this research unveiled important insights.

Specifically, this research highlighted that these different forms of identity work related to various gender practices associated with doing gender well, doing gender differently, and doing gender well and differently simultaneously. Thus, these women situationally, and often non-reflexively, adapt their gender performances (Martin, 2003; 2006) which enables their conscious attempts at crafting favourable, non-conflicting identities (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013; Marlow and McAdam, 2015). As evidenced, doing masculinity well allowed women to downplay their gender identity and blend into their masculinised environments (Sheppard, 1989, Knights and Kerfoot, 2004; Powell, Bagilhole and Dainty, 2009); doing femininity well enabled them to leverage their gender identity to induce positive and complementary relations with stakeholders (García and Welter, 2013; Martinez Dy, Marlow and Martin, 2017; Hytti *et al.*, 2017); doing gender well and differently allowed them to present both masculinised and feminised identities to manage tensions with organisational members, including brothers in power (Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Byrne *et al.*, 2019); doing gender differently enabled them to identify as supporters of women (García and Welter, 2013; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; Carr and Kelan, 2016); and finally doing gender well by denying or dismissing gender bias allowed them to project an identity based on gender neutrality or empowered femininity (Budgeon, 2014; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). As such, this research unveils how women's attempts at doing gender well and/or differently (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013) relate to how they manage their competing identities in their daily working lives.

Second, this study advances knowledge of gendered relations within the family business literature, and of how such relations influence the identity work of family business individuals (Aygören and Nordqvist, 2015). Specifically, it builds understanding of how women leaders in family business construct their identities in relation to important others (Hytti *et al.*, 2017; Mussolino *et al.*, 2019), such as brothers who are also managers and/or directors. Similar to Marlow and McAdam (2015), women were found to engage in a two-

way process of blending in by which they aligned to or emulated male family members' gendered practices and behaviour (Byrne *et al.*, 2019) and were coached by male family members in playing the "male game" (Knights and Kerfoot, 2004, p.432). Moreover, women were found to engage in gendered normative relations with brothers and conceal their leader identity yet exert power in partnership with their brothers (Hytti *et al.*, 2017). Such insights further knowledge of how women construct their identities "in relation to their male partners and other family members" (Hytti *et al.*, 2017, p.679).

Further, this research sheds light on the under-researched area of gendered relations between family women and non-family employees in family business (Campopiano *et al.*, 2017). Some women leveraged their womanhood and femininities to induce positive gendered relations with non-family employees, which shows that offering support to other working women in the organisation is not always "taboo for a female family member" (Salganicoff, 1990, p.135). Most interestingly, this research showed that women temper disruption (Stead, 2017) as a way of navigating the precarious position of being both a leader of the family business and a woman leader committed to female empowerment (Meyerson and Scully, 1995; Van den Brink and Benschop, 2014; de Vries, 2015). Finally, this research contributes insights into the gendered relations surrounding maternity leave in family businesses (Stumbitz, Lewis and Rouse, 2018), by highlighting the conditions (i.e. no maternity replacement cover; family women responsible for sensitive areas; fear of favouritism or inconveniencing the organisation) that trigger family business women's efforts to minimise disruption.

Third, this study contributes to our knowledge of gendered identity work more broadly. By focusing the inquiry on women's lived experiences within the family business, this study answers the call for empirical exploration of doing gender well and differently within varied contexts (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013). The findings show that although women were often limited by discursively available social identities based on gendered norms (e.g., peacekeeper, nurturer, protected daughter), they also had agency to defy such norms (Essers and Benschop, 2007; Essers, Doorewaard and Benschop, 2013) by engaging in simultaneous expressions of masculinities and femininities e.g., as supportive sister and influential partner to their brothers in power (Mavin and Grandy, 2012; 2013; Byrne *et al.*, 2019). This suggests that gender performances within the family business are paradoxical; family business women are constrained by the cultural and familial norms applied to their gendered identities yet empowered by the opportunities to do gender differently as leaders of the family in business. Building on Mavin and Grandy's (2012) argument that there may be greater possibilities for

unsettling the gender binary in entrepreneur-led organisations, where women leaders can directly influence the culture, as opposed to larger firms, where gender performances can be more covert, this research suggests that family businesses occupy a middle ground.

6.4 Implications for Practice

The *fourth objective* of this study was to extend practical recommendations for use by family business advisors, educators and practitioners. The first major implication for practice relates to family business advisors and consultants who may be working with next generation men and women. The finding that family business women are doing gender well and/or differently to manage their competing identities highlights the necessity for family business advisors and consultants to avoid perpetuating gender essentialist assumptions about leadership styles and behaviours, and instead empower men and women to enact both femininities and masculinities. It is of particular importance that next generation development programmes do not single out women as objects for self-improvement (Lewis, Benschop and Simpson, 2017) nor bolster women on the basis of their supposed talents and strengths (e.g., relationship building, emotional leadership).

The second major implication for practice relates to higher level and executive level education in business and management. Educators should incorporate theory on doing gender well and differently and identity work into their discussion of management and leadership principles. In particular, executive level education targeted towards next generation family business leaders would benefit from an explicit discussion of the gendered dynamics that were of prominence in this study. Specifically, the insights with regard to brother-sister gendered dynamics could be incorporated into a wider discussion on managing sibling team relationships. Similarly, the findings with regard to family women and non-family employee gendered relations could feed into the broader topics of workplace culture and employee relations in family businesses. In treating gender "as a pervasive force influencing not only women and men but also families, businesses, networks, research, language, competition, and beyond" (Nelson and Constantinidis, 2017, p.237), educators can support and foster consciousness-raising among the next generation of family business leaders.

The third major implication for practice relates to family business practitioners. As this research has shown, cultural and familial norms regarding gendered roles continue to pervade family businesses. The finding that family business women still experience

stereotypical gendered identities (i.e. nurturer, peacekeeper and daddy's little girl) highlights the need for greater gender awareness among incumbent family business leaders. By ensuring that potential successor candidates, be they sons and/or daughters, have equal opportunities for leadership preparation, incumbents can help to discredit the notion that daughter successors are less equipped or capable than sons. Furthermore, this study found that family business women can challenge gendered norms by empowering women through greater workplace flexibility. Although welcomed, these practices need to be formalised and spearheaded by the family in business and not simply delegated to a family woman at the top of the organisation to lead.

6.5 Limitations and Future Research

Notwithstanding the important empirical and practical insights emerging from this research, there were also a number of limitations that need to be acknowledged. One of the contributions of this study was to show how women construct their identities in relation to brothers who were also managers and/or directors. It is acknowledged, therefore, that interviewing an all-female sample offers only a partial understanding of this two-way relationship. Although the privileging of women's voices is necessary in supplementing the dominant male informant group in family business research (Howorth *et al.*, 2010; Heinonen and Hytti, 2012), it is recommended that future research should also incorporate the perspectives of male family members, perhaps through the use of joint interviewing as advocated by Watson (2009b).

Another limitation of this study was the uneven breakdown of firm size in the sample. The majority of firms were small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs) whilst two firms were large in size. The women who featured in the three largest firms denied any personal experiences of gender bias, which may indicate the presence of a more gender equitable culture within large as opposed to small and medium-sized family businesses. It may also signal support for Mavin and Grandy's (2012, p.228) claim "that in larger organizations these gendered expectations of women leaders and managers are either more unconscious or covert". Future research might delve into this further by comparing women's gendered identity work between large and small and medium-sized family businesses.

Despite the provision of rich insights from this qualitative study, the empirical base was cross-sectional in nature. Given the processual and contextual nature of identity, future studies of women's gendered identity work in the family business may benefit from a

longitudinal investigation drawing upon a range of data sources such as field observations, archival data and video diaries (Brown, 2017).

Other fruitful avenues for future research emerged through the analysis of the empirical data. Although an outlier, the case of the daughter who was excluded from succession and advised to leave the firm (i.e. Raonaid) represented "another important expression of women's invisibility" (Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014, p.374). Further attention should be afforded to excluded daughters, including the coping strategies undertaken to manage their experiences of exclusion from the business.

Another outlier was the case of brother-sister succession which represents an under-researched phenomenon in family business. Whilst the current study sheds some light on the circumstances that precipitate a sibling-to-sibling hand-over (i.e. the brother's decision to depart the firm to build his career elsewhere), further research should delve deeper into the antecedents and consequences surrounding this form of succession.

In keeping with the rise in scholarly interest in family heterogeneity in family business research, this study recognises the potential in empirically exploring the gender performances and identity work of individuals from different types of families. For instance, family structures and family events (e.g., death, childbirth, divorce) can influence the gendered norms and relations within the family business (Jaskiewicz and Dyer, 2017), including women's enhanced or reduced visibility in the business (Cesaroni and Sentuti, 2014). Although falling beyond the scope of the current study, it was evident from the findings that certain family events (e.g., separation/divorce, illness, single parenthood) effected these women's experiences of identity work, thus prompting the need for further research.

Finally, a promising area of further research is family business women's intra-gender relations with non-family female colleagues and staff. Whilst this study focused on the positive elements of intra-gender relations (i.e. female empowerment), negative relations, such as "intra-gender competition and female misogyny" (Mavin, Grandy and Williams, 2014, p.439), may also occur between family and non-family female employees. For a more holistic understanding of intra-gender relations in family businesses, the perspectives of both female family and non-family employees should be sought.

6.6 Conclusion

This qualitative exploratory study was undertaken to uncover how women leaders in family business employ gendered identity work to manage their competing identities. In addressing this aim, the unique lived experiences of 14 women leaders in family businesses across the Republic of Ireland were captured. This study has provided significant empirical insights that expand existing knowledge of identity work and gendering processes within family business, as well as extending implications for practice and future avenues for research. In conducting this thesis, it is anticipated that the challenges, learnings and reflections of these women will inspire further study of this historically hidden yet vital cohort within family business.

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Appendix A: DCU Research Ethics Committee Approval

Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

Ms Martina Brophy

DCU Business School

7th September 2018

REC Reference: DCUREC/2018/110

Proposal Title A Gendered Analysis of Next Generation Entrepreneurial Leadership in Family Business

Applicant(s): Ms Martina Brophy, Professor Maura McAdam, Dr Eric Clinton

Dear Martina,

Further to expedited review, the DCU Research Ethics Committee approves this research proposal.

Materials used to recruit participants should note that ethical approval for this project has been obtained from the Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee.

Should substantial modifications to the research protocol be required at a later stage, a further amendment submission should be made to the REC.

Yours sincerely,

Donal O' Gorman

Dr Dónal O'Gorman
Chairperson
DCU Research Ethics Committee

DCU Research & Innovation

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Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Opening Questions

1. In terms of background details, may I have your age range, marital status and family status (children) please?
2. How many individuals are there in your immediate family (birth order, gender)? Who works in the business and what are their titles?

Early Life/Introduction to Family Business

1. I would like if you could start with a brief history of your family business. Probe: Were female family members involved in the business and if so in what capacity?
2. What strong memories do you have of the previous generation running the family business?
3. How were you first introduced to the family business? Prompts: What age were you?; Who was involved at that stage and what were their titles?
4. Growing up, how did you view the family business? Prompt: did you see yourself joining permanently or running the family business one day? Was there any expectation on you to join? Please explain.

Educational and Career Experience

1. Please provide detail of your education. Prompts: Was third level education a stipulation of joining the family business? In what ways did your education shape your career choices? How did you view the family business at that point?
2. Please describe your career experience outside the family firm. Prompts: Was external work experience a stipulation of joining the family business? What leadership/managerial experience did you acquire while working? (give examples) How did you view the family business at that point?
3. If applicable, please describe any leadership/enterprise training or development courses you have ever undertaken. Probe: were any such courses targeted specifically at women/family businesses?

4. What were the key learnings you garnered about your approach to management/leadership from (a) education, (b) career experience and (c) training and development? Prompt: How might these experiences have influenced the way you lead/manage now?

Joining the Family Business

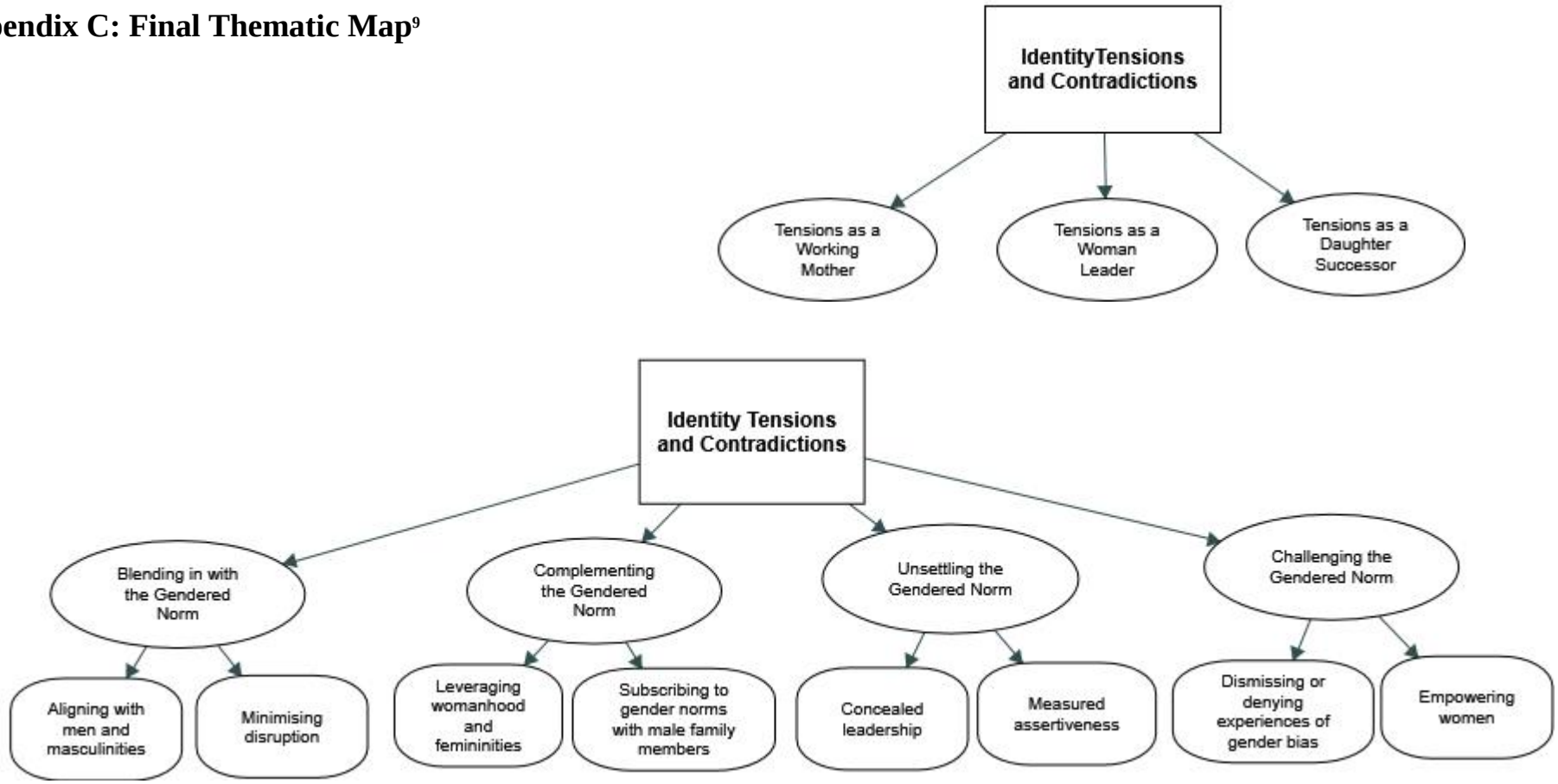
1. How did it come about that you would join the family business in a formal role? Prompt: who were the key decision makers?
2. How do you believe your appointment to the family business was received by family members? How do you believe your appointment to the family business was received by non-family members?
3. How did you feel about joining the family business in a formal capacity?
4. What mentoring (if any) did you receive when you joined the business? Probe: If mentoring occurred, was it internal or external? Who acted as the mentor?
5. Please describe your first formal role in the family business. Prompt: What were your responsibilities/tasks? Who did you report to?
6. In your experience, what role (if any) did gender play in preparing next generation for leadership of your family business? Prompt: Can you recount any times when you were treated differently to your brothers in terms of exposure to the business, access to social capital (meeting suppliers) and educational opportunities (training courses), encouragement, etc.?

Present Role

1. Please describe your current role. Prompt: What is your title? What are your responsibilities (i.e., leading a team of people/division)? Who do you report to?
2. How would you describe an effective leader? Probe: Do you see yourself as a leader? If so, give examples of leadership in your present role- i.e., led a team through crises, transitions, etc.
3. How does your approach to leadership compare with your brother's/male next generation's? Please give examples. Probe: In your view, do men and women differ in their styles of leadership? If so, how?
4. How would you describe your relationship with non-family staff and management? Prompt: How do you think they view you? How would you like to be viewed?

5. How would you describe your relationship with family staff and management? Prompt: How do you think they view you? How would you like to be viewed?
6. What challenges have you faced in being seen as a leader/manager of your family business? Have any of these challenges resulted from being a woman?
7. Who are your business role models, either inside or outside the family business? Probe: how did they inspire you?
8. As individuals, we have many different identities (e.g., boss' daughter, mother, manager). Please describe any time where you felt you've been seen and treated as a female/sister/daughter/mother when you'd have preferred not to? What strategies have you undertaken to be seen/treated in a preferred way?
9. In your experience, how might the experience of being a daughter in the family business differ from that of being a son? Prompts: Please describe anytime you've ever experienced feeling the odd one out/different as a result of being a daughter.
10. Please describe any plans or discussions regarding succession of your family business. Prompts: Are you aware of who the successor(s) will be? If so, whom? Do you see yourself leading the family business one day? How so? How was it decided that XXX would take over the business? How did you feel about that decision?
11. Could you indicate the breakdown of males to females for a) overall employment and b) company management?
12. Finally, do you know of anyone in a similar situation to yourself who I may contact in relation to this research?

Appendix C: Final Thematic Map[9]



[9] The rectangles represent the two parts of the research question; the ellipses represent the themes; and the rounded rectangles represent the sub-themes.

Appendix D. Overview of Interviewees

Raonaid grew up working summers and weekends in her family's hospitality business. Motivated by her involvement in the family business, she studied a business related degree at university. She worked for a number of employers before establishing her own business. In her early thirties, she left her business to seek new career opportunities, when her father offered her a part-time role in the family business. Seeing it as an opportunity to contribute to her family business, whilst also having the freedom to raise her young family, Raonaid agreed. Both her younger and older brother already worked for many years inside the business and were MDs of their respective businesses within the hospitality group. In terms of succession, it was decided that her brothers would have the family business and "arrangements would be made" for both her and her sister. Raonaid discontinued employment in the family business shortly before her participation in this study.

Gráinne helped out in her father's transport business from a young age. She joined the business formally in her late teens. Down the years, she underwent formal education and training and graduated through the ranks of the family business. In her mid-twenties, her father asked whether she would be his successor. She declined, as did her older sister, as they both felt that they would gain no respect from the male dominated workforce[10]. Gráinne and her sister chose to support their younger brother in the role of CEO instead. After a few years, their brother moved on from leadership of the family business to build his career elsewhere and declared Gráinne as his successor of the family business. With certain reluctance, Gráinne agreed to undertake the role of CEO for a limited timeframe. Both her brother and sister are now non-executive directors of the family business.

Saoirse worked during her school going years in the office of her family's machinery business. Saoirse studied a business related degree in college and worked for a number of years outside the family business when her father asked her to join the sales team. Having never seriously considered working for the family business, Saoirse agreed to join but was apprehensive of her fit with the male oriented nature of the business. She spent a few years in the sales team before leaving to work outside the family business. Both her younger

[10] Gráinne described her work environment as male dominated because no females featured in management (at the time she was asked to be successor) and the majority of the workforce were men due to the male oriented nature of the work.

brothers were employed in the family business, with the eldest of the two working there continuously since college. In her early thirties, having returned home and needing a stop-gap, Saoirse re-joined the family business on a temporary basis but soon applied to a newly available managerial role, to which she was subsequently appointed. Saoirse and her youngest brother, who are both executive directors, support their eldest brother as Managing Director.

Aoibhinn remembers from a young age helping out in her family's healthcare business. Throughout her teenage years and twenties, Aoibhinn did various stints in administrative roles within the business. She did a business-related degree and worked abroad for a few years. Having returned home in her late twenties, she sought a formal position within the family business and was interviewed by the non-family MD for a sales administration role. The role allowed Aoibhinn to develop an intimate working knowledge of the business and to work closely with non-family colleagues with whom she shared an open office. Both Aoibhinn and her younger brother, who is a sales representative, are directors of the business. The non-family MD believes Aoibhinn would be a good fit as successor, however she is reluctant to undertake this role. She sees her brother as progressing towards senior management and wants to give him a chance to be considered.

Bronagh did not work in her family business from a young age, unlike her older siblings who knew the business as a smaller scale operation. She had no intentions of joining and did a non-business related degree. After college, her father notified both her and her older brother of his intention to step down and checked whether either of them were interested in the business. Her brother, who was working in management, decided to join the business, but Bronagh delayed doing so as she believed she could add no value. Bronagh's father convinced her that she did not need a business degree so she joined in her early twenties in a marketing role. She struggled in her first year with a lack of structure which led her to orchestrate her move into other parts of the business. Her brother is managing director of the business and Bronagh, who is now commercial manager, aspires towards a more senior role as commercial director.

Caoimhe worked summers as a teenager in the machinery business founded by her father. She trained as an accountant and worked for many years at an international firm. At her father's request, Caoimhe joined the family business as financial director. She found the transition into the family business daunting due to the lack of structure around her role.

Both Caoimhe's younger sister (also a director) and younger brother (a manager based in another company location) work for the business and are shareholders. In terms of succession, Caoimhe believes she is the likely successor. Her father still remains as managing director but his focus is on R&D, whilst the day-to-day running is left to Caoimhe, her siblings and the non-family male general manager, with whom she has a positive working relationship.

Mairead joined her large family business as one of a fourth generation cohort comprised of her and her two male cousins, older brother and younger sister. She completed a business degree and accrued five years' work experience, which included two years at a large multinational company. Mairead had no plans to join the family business until her father suggested the idea but exerted no pressure. She joined the family business in her late 20s as a Regional Commercial Manager. Mairead is the first female family member to join the family business (at least at board level). Succession planning is underway but there has been no formal discussion to date. Of the cohort, Mairead is most closely aligned to her older male cousin, who is also a Regional Commercial Manager, and imagines that they will both seek a senior position (as a Commercial Director or Sales Director).

Niamh was involved from a young age in her family's third generation engineering business. Whilst she was more office based, her younger brother accompanied her father on site visits growing up. She studied a business degree at university and worked outside the family business for three years. While working, her father asked her to consider doing a course to assist the family business to which she agreed. Following completion of the course, Niamh joined the business full-time but was a little concerned initially about specialising in an area that was not of huge interest and had no obvious route to management. Her brother also joined the business full-time but was focused on the operational side. Retiring from the family business, their father asked both children about each undertaking the CEO position on a rolling basis, however Niamh was adamant that her brother should succeed. Niamh's brother is now CEO and she supports him in her role as a senior manager and director.

Orlaith fondly remembers helping out as a child in her father's healthcare practice. As an adult, she became qualified and worked outside the family business for a few years. During this time, her father was expanding the business by opening new practices. Orlaith's older brother joined the family business first and was followed by Orlaith two years after. Their

father retired from practice at the time but maintained involvement as managing director. Both siblings ran their own practices with Orlaith's brother becoming more aligned to the strategic side and Orlaith focusing more on the day-to-day operations. In terms of succession, Orlaith's brother assumed the top spot as managing director. In the same period, Orlaith took a two-year career leave for personal reasons, before returning to the business in a part-time role whilst completing a diploma. She deliberately stepped aside from management to focus on raising her young family. Orlaith, who is also a director, intends to take on a full-time executive role in the future.

Róisín worked weekends as a kid in her family business. It was always her intention to work elsewhere so that she might eventually bring a new perspective to the family business. She completed a finance degree and gathered over a decade of outside experience. Both her younger and older brothers worked in the business during this time. For five years, Róisín provided consultations to the family business whilst working full-time outside. As this became too demanding, Róisín gradually moved into the family business, starting one day a week before joining full-time as Business Operations Manager. This role was designed to oversee the departments that support the core businesses run by her two brothers. Róisín also has an older male cousin who is general manager and her father is managing director, although he is less focused on the day-to-day operations. In terms of succession, her father is in the process of transferring a portion of shareholding to Róisín (equal to that of her brothers). Róisín envisions a shared leadership arrangement between her and her two brothers or sees herself as successor rather than her father choosing between two equally capable sons.

Eimear's family business was founded by her grandparents and grown by her father and aunt who each manage two separate businesses within the group. Eimear remembers her brother and male cousins working in the factory growing up, whilst she had minimal involvement as the work never enthused her. She qualified as an accountant and worked for an international firm for almost a decade. During her career, she was always aware of dealings in the family business, and took leave from her employment on two separate occasions to work at the family business. Eimear had just finished a career break, when her father asked her to run a newly purchased business under the family group. Having always wanted to run a business, Eimear agreed. Her father is group CEO and her aunt and brother are also group executive directors. There has been no formal discussion about succession but Eimear assumes the previous generation will want to retire in the near

future. She sees herself as the likely CEO, given that her brother is not interested in the role, or else as a Co-CEO with her brother.

Ciara was only a teenager when she first joined the family business in a formal position. As was normal at the time, she left school in her teens and did not attend university. She worked in the office of her family business for a few years, before moving to another similar company where she worked for six years. At her father's request, she re-joined the family business where she has remained for close to 30 years. As general manager, Ciara is based in the office and works closely with her younger brother who is the garage and fleet manager. Their father is still managing director and Ciara's two younger sisters work in administrative office positions. Ciara claims they have spoken about succession but nothing formal has been agreed. None of the current generation have shareholding in the business and her father has no plans for retirement.

Brigid always worked summers and weekends in her father's transport business. In college, she studied a business degree and expected to join the family business following her qualification. However, her father told her to work elsewhere and gain valuable experience that she could bring back to the family business. She worked outside for six years before her father asked her to return to help grow the business to the next level. Brigid joined with no specific title or role but worked around the different departments. Her younger brother (next in line) also obtained relevant education and experience and joined the business two years after Brigid. Their two youngest brothers already worked in the business as operatives and were not expected to gain external experience. Brigid's parents began succession planning, of which she had little involvement, and her brother was appointed CEO whilst shares were split equally.

Shannon says passion for her family's food production business was instilled in her from early youth. The business founded by her grandfather is now third generation with her father at the helm. By way of education, Shannon obtained a Master's in business studies and a project management certification. She had no intentions of joining the family business and worked in both the private and public sector. In her early thirties, Shannon was searching for new job opportunities when she suggested to her father that she would work on improving the family business website. Gradually she took on more responsibilities and began full time employment with the family business. Shannon has a wide ranging remit, however her main responsibilities are account management, project

management and marketing. Shannon is the eldest of her family, and her sister and eldest brother are company directors. She does not see herself or her sister as CEO but expects one of her brothers to undertake the role or, if not, an external CEO overseen by the siblings as board members.

Appendix E. Proof Quotes

Themes and Sub-themes	Proof Quotes
Tensions as a Working Mother	Raonaid: *"I remember being at a women in business event and one woman kind of saying don't use your children as an excuse and then this other one's saying 'No if you've to leave because you've got to collect your children say I'm going to collect my children'."* Gráinne: *"I find things that are the most challenging is you know events come up, briefings, morning briefings, and business networking events. They're all at half seven in the morning I can't attend any of them because I have kids to prep for school and I have kids to drop at school and by the time I get into the city for any of these events it's 10:00 in the morning so I don't think em that sort of those type of briefings have evolved to allow for females to be able to attend them properly."* Aoibhinn: *"The kids are used to me working and you do feel guilty leaving them at crèche."* Mairead: *"If we choose to have children we're the ones who have to carry that child for nine months and then naturally there's a lot of for maybe six months afterwards if people choose to breastfeed there are attachment issues and things like this. So there's more dynamics for women to overcome in their own physical body em and mentally than men. And it's only because of science it's not because I'm saying that men are greater than women or women are greater than men by any means."* Niamh: *"Em since I'm doing the two days from home now it's a bit easier. Em but like I do very long days on the other three. You know I'd need to you know kind of up at half five and out the door at five to six em just to skip the traffic so I'm usually here by about half seven. And then I often say I will get on the road early and get home but it never happens. So I could be gone. I literally get home kind of an hour or half an hour before bedtime for the girls."* Róisín: *"I suppose people having children and stuff like that can be an inconvenience from a male perspective." "I found myself having to stay late just to catch up with maybe things that happened*

	during the day and that's fine. That's part and parcel of it but when you have children to go home to and they've homework and stuff like that."
Tensions as a Woman Leader	Gráinne: *"He [father] did ask me when I was about 24 or 25 before [younger brother] took the role of CEO would I take up that role. But I felt to be honest with you it's an industry it's very male driven, transport is, and it's it's changing but it's still you know the majority of our workforce will be male drivers don't have many but we've got probably three female drivers out of about 60 so. And I was so young that I knew I just wouldn't get the respect from the males."* Aoibhinn: *"I think women are being more respected and have more senior and board roles than ever before but it's still a very male dominated area here..."* Bronagh: *"Especially in our industry like if you're meeting buyers a lot of them can be men. So I think that's important for me to be able to deal with that as well."* Caoimhe: *"It's a very male dominated sector. Obviously the sector but also the environment we're in is very male dominated."* Niamh: *"It probably did contribute a little bit to my feeling of 'can I do this?' is that it is male dominated."* Eimear: *"I know I'm in it but never wanted to be in it. That was the preference was not to be in the family business I suppose because it's a tough, tough business and yeah never had the desire really. I did some hours here and there, some summers, a couple of hours in the office, but I would never have done the-the proper full blown work that all the guys [brother and male cousins] did." "Like women don't go into the [specific] industry. Unless we were born into it. So that's different."*
Tensions as a Daughter Successor	Saoirse: *"The operations director, who would have worked very closely alongside my dad, he retired three years previous to that and [younger brother] had kind of taken over that role. Em so he'd become more on the sales side and more on the operational side anyway. So it felt like a more natural fit that he [younger brother] would take over the whole company."*

	Aoibhinn: *"I think he felt a bit under pressure to take over the family business being the only boy and somebody could've said something like that to him."* Bronagh: *"...with eldest brother coming in he did like six months on the floor and then you're made a director whereas I'm like longer in it but I'm working my way up."* Caoimhe: *"So you know do they [male employees] have a problem with a woman on the floor? Do they jump more when brother is on the floor? Yes. There's no doubt about it...I don't know is it because he's a male. Probably. But is it maybe because he comes and goes. That could be an element of this as well."* Shannon: *"I think he's [dad's] very glad that [sister] and I are involved in it. Of course he is but em. I'd say he's hopeful that one of the boys will go into it in time too."*
Blending in with the Gendered Norm: Minimising Disruption	Ciara: *"But [Youngest sister] had her youngest one on a Thursday. And dad walked into the office upstairs on the Monday and he kind of looked at her and says 'I thought you were taking a couple of weeks off'. And [Youngest sister] says 'well I have the wages to do'. And she says 'look if I didn't come in to do the wages [second eldest sister] would have been under pressure because she would have had double the amount of work to do and they all have to be gone into the bank for the payroll to get everyone paid'. So dad's kind of looking and 'where's the baby?' But the two desks were pushed up against each other and there was a matt in the middle and [the baby] was asleep."* Brigid: *"You know I didn't mind being at home and working. Em though you know you'd like your time off for your maternity leave. But then like any other job you were back to work and that was it you know."*
Blending in with the Gendered Norm: Aligning with Men and Masculinities	Ciara: *"I think with some it's perception it's not you know...I was down in the yard on Friday. And eh I was getting diesel and Adblue and filling the water bottle in the car and this, that and the other. And one of the drivers—not one of ours—another driver said 'God I wish I had a woman at home like you, knows how to do all these things'."*

Complementing the Gendered Norm: Leveraging womanhood and femininities	Aoibhinn: *"I'd be interested on the gender thing like some people think that women's intuition is better." "I've got a network outside of here that I can lean on which is fantastic the way it's worked out. But girls can be better at going networking than the guys."* Róisín: *"I said [to male management team] 'God lads we need more female managers more for detail'. I'd be just into the detail. I think women are great for detail."* Caoimhe: *"I think I can guilt people into doing things purely because I'm a woman. Do I do that? Of course I do. Of course I do …and does it get the job done? Yes it does. Yes I will use the fact that I'm a woman to get some jobs done. Yeah and play to their ego. Their male ego. Absolutely no problem doing that."* Orlaith: *"I would have a different relationship I know to the women than [brother] would and that's natural. You know. Em so you get to know them quicker and definitely very—I love working with women. Really do."* Ciara: *"Sometimes I suppose maybe you have a laugh and a joke and you get away with a bit more because you're a woman."*
Complementing the Gendered Norm: Subscribing to gender norms with male family members	Orlaith: *"Well I was just thinking there like of women being cautious or you know so I would be very much detail orientated so em an agreement has to be pushed over the line for something and he [brother] would see that the ultimate goal and go 'right grand that's it done' whereas I go 'hold on a second'. Hand me all of that and I'm going to read word for word and I want to know and I want to question everything so I'd be very cautious checking out my surroundings if it was a primitive environment if you know what I mean. Whereas he'd be like out there with the spear whereas I'd be checking around to see what's going on."* *"He'd be more direct and em just wants things done. And then I'll be the one putting the flowers around it trying to go 'will we do it this way just to make sure that they take it well and they do it nicely?'"* Niamh: [This quote is in reference to a staff request that her brother initially refused] *"My thoughts on it was 'listen if it's something that's really important to them it's not going to cost the earth, let's*

	just for morale purposes and whatever go with it'. Em so anyway he [brother] gave in eventually but it took him—what I just mean is you know his initial thing is just the practicalities you know and he probably pissed a few people off in maybe his manner of saying no." Brigid: *"[Eldest brother]'s style would be more direct. He would definitely be most things by email. He's travelling a lot. You know he's a lot busier. Em follow-ups very important."* *"So when somebody knows exactly what they're doing and what you want out of it. I think you've jumped the hurdle. You know whereas if you just send an email you know 'get me this by whatever time'. I think you're you know 'look at her looking for that'."*
Unsettling the Gendered Norm: Measured assertiveness	Brigid: [This quote is in reference to being kept late at work for meetings with male management]: "*I will always be the one to say 'Can we make a decision or can we finish this up? We need to go.' Because I find sometimes they will rehash what they've just said."* Gráinne: *"I'm one of these types of managers who's got a very big heart and I empathise with people. And then sometimes people can take advantage of that. So then you're nearly being their agony aunt. Em so yeah I suppose I got a lot of mentoring and coaching off her [life coach] as to you know putting boundaries in place and again not being over responsible for your—for your team members."*
Unsettling the Gendered Norm: Concealed leadership	Saoirse: *"It's like we've shared the responsibility between the three of us and we certainly support [younger brother] in all decisions."* Brigid: *"I'd say to him [brother] 'gosh I don't know about that. Do you think we should do that?' You know we'd go off and have a separate conversation about something and we'd work it out and we'd say you know maybe this time we'll not do it for whatever reason or we 'let's go for it'."*
Challenging the Gendered Norm: Empowering women	Orlaith: *"I remember having a conversation with someone whose worked with us till today like 10 years ago and her saying 'Well I won't be here when I'm married because— or when I have children'. She doesn't have children yet but I said 'why?' and she goes 'because I couldn't do these hours'. 'But we'll work around you. You know we can change.'"* Róisín: *"I want to change some of the hours I want to make sure that people have better work-life balance. So nobody wants—sometimes if they're living close by here, to be spending an hour for lunch*

	here they might just prefer 30 minutes and go home early. So I think I bring the perspective of others…. Maternity leave we have maybe 10 women in managerial positions that I don't want to leave over the fact that they might go to a public sector job just for the maternity leave. So they're the sort of things that I'd be trying to put on the table that I'm getting some adherence to which is good and I want to take it a little bit further but I'll pick my timings and so on." Brigid: *"As a mother firstly I suppose I know the hardships there is when kids are sick and appointments to be made and school runs and all that kind of stuff. So I would be flexible em to the staff and in return I'd want that flexibility when something comes up... So apart from [one particularly busy time of the year] if anyone has an appointment you know they can take their time off and then they always make it up."*
Challenging the Gendered Norm: Dismissing or denying experiences of gender bias	Caoimhe: "*I had two very, very strong grandmothers. Dad's mother in particular would be very much 'It doesn't matter if you're a girl'. And that was very much the philosophy growing up in her house- it didn't matter whether you were a girl or a boy. We all had certain things we had to do. All of us had to do it. And there was no such thing as this is the girl's job and that is the boy's job…It was never an issue on our agenda. But that was how we were brought up. It was very much our home."* Mairead: *"I mean we [next generation] really were given the same education, opportunities which then you know kind of led to if we want to tap the same career opportunities."* Eimear: *"I've always been confident. Ever since I was small. So yeah you know it makes a huge difference. Life's much easier when you're confident….I and that would have come—a lot of it would have come from home because again we weren't treated differently because you know you were allowed to do anything you wanted to do, you were encouraged to do everything you wanted to do."* Ciara: *"I would never think that I wouldn't or couldn't do something or go somewhere [as a woman]."* Shannon: *"I don't think I'm treated any differently to how the boys would be. Em. I think dad expects the same amount from us. Certainly my experience of us working in the factory to date in terms of boys having to work the summers the same way as [sister] and I did. I don't see any difference."*