Faculteit Bedrijfseconomische Wetenschappen

master in de toegepaste economische wetenschappen

Masterthesis

De gevolgen van emotionele dissonantie in familiebedrijven

Brent Claus

Scriptie ingediend tot het behalen van de graad van master in de toegepaste economische wetenschappen, afstudeerrichting innovatie en ondernemerschap

PROMOTOR :
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2017
2018

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Voorwoord

Gaan familiebedrijven anders om met emoties? De familiale relaties binnen dit soort bedrijven zorgen ongetwijfeld voor een unieke werkomgeving wat de invloed van emoties wel eens zou kunnen versterken. Deze veronderstelling fascineerde me en vormde tevens mijn motivatie om dit artikel te schrijven als finale masterproef voor mijn studies Toegepaste Economische Wetenschappen – Innovatie en Ondernemerschap aan de Universiteit Hasselt. De gesprekken met de geïnterviewde personen waren voor mij stuk voor stuk zeer fascinerend en leerrijk.

Voor de realisatie van dit artikel kon ik rekenen op de professionele begeleiding en vakkennis van mijn promotor, Prof. dr. Pieter Vandekerkhof en copromotor drs. Laura Hoekx. Ik ben hun dan ook zeer erkentelijk voor deze uitstekende en constructieve samenwerking.

De contacten met de geïnterviewde bedrijven heb ik grotendeels te danken aan mijn ouders, die me altijd hebben gesteund en onvoorwaardelijk geholpen hebben. Ik wens hun van harte te bedanken, zonder hun hulp was me dit nooit gelukt.

Tenslotte wens ik ook mijn familie en vrienden te bedanken. Zij zorgden voor de nodige ontspanning en steun die me in staat stelden mijn studies tot een goed einde te brengen.

Brent Claus

Samenvatting

Emotionele dissonantie, het fenomeen waarbij er een discrepantie optreedt tussen werkelijke emoties en de geuite emoties, wint de laatste jaren steeds aan belang. De assumptie dat emoties irrationeel zijn en geminimaliseerd moeten worden op de werkvloer is al lang verleden tijd. Het keerpunt werd het onderzoek van Hochschild (1983) waar ze het rationaliteitsargument counterde, door te stellen dat beslissingen zelden vanuit een compleet rationeel standpunt genomen worden en vaak emotioneel ingegeven zijn. Ze onderbouwde haar argumentatie door het concept emotionele dissonantie te introduceren. Voor het eerst werden emoties op de werkvloer gezien als een belangrijk gegeven en een aandachtspunt voor iedere organisatie. Het werd duidelijk dat mensen die hun emoties herhaaldelijk verdraaien een groter risico lopen op een depressie of burn-out en ook hun jobtevredenheid zien kelderen. Managers realiseerden zich al snel dat dit ook een nefaste impact kon hebben op de prestaties van het bedrijf wat hun aandacht voor emoties onder werknemers aanzienlijk deed toenemen. Dit zorgde ook voor een exponentiële toename in het aantal onderzoeken gewijd aan emotionele dissonantie en de mogelijke gevolgen hiervan. Opmerkelijk is wel dat in deze studies familiebedrijven steevast over het hoofd worden gezien. Gezien de grote hoeveelheid familiebedrijven de niet alleen het Belgisch landschap kleuren maar ook wereldwijd actief zijn, was dit toch een merkwaardige bevinding. Familiebedrijven worden bovendien getypeerd door familiale relaties tussen de verschillende actieve familieleden waardoor de emoties hoog kunnen oplaaien. Deze overlap tussen het familiale en het bedrijfssysteem creëert een unieke setting die zeker het onderzoeken waard is. Deze studie probeert deze leegte te vullen en richt zich specifiek tot de family business. Om dit mogelijk te maken werden twaalf Vlaamse familiebedrijven benaderd voor een diepte-interview. De resultaten van dit onderzoek brengen enkele nieuwe bevindingen aan het licht die zeker implicaties kunnen hebben voor familiale ondernemingen. Kenmerkend voor familiebedrijven is de openheid tussen de familieleden die zorgt voor open communicatie en het ontstaan van een cultuur waarin oprechtheid en vertrouwen centraal staan. Deze openheid zorgt doorgaans voor een positieve invloed waarbij zonder schroom de oprechte mening van familieleden naar boven komt. Naast de werk gerelateerde interacties komen familieleden ook vaak in privé-situaties in aanraking met elkaar. Wanneer er een goede verstandhouding heerst zal dit de relaties alleen maar bevorderen, problematischer wordt het wanneer er conflicten ontstaan. De openheid en regelmatige interacties tussen bloedverwanten zal ook conflicterende meningen aan het licht brengen en tegenstrijdigheden extra in de verf te zetten. Deze conflicten hebben de neiging om steeds weer de kop op te steken bij nieuwe interacties en zijn vaak gebaseerd op kleine en wederkerende argumenten. Dit tot grote frustratie van familieleden die dan vaak beslissen emoties bewust voor zich te houden en andere familieleden te ontwijken aangezien ze het gevoel krijgen dat deze ontmoetingen het bedrijf niet verder helpen en meer kwaad dan goed aanrichten. Deze situatie waar familieleden emoties opkroppen en verbergen wordt vaak problematischer en leidt in vele gevallen tot familievetes. Emotionele dissonantie is dus ook vaak niet de directe oorzaak van problemen maar eerder een tussenresultaat. Wanneer dergelijke taferelen zich niet herstellen, beschadigt dit niet alleen de familierelaties maar heeft dit ook nefaste gevolgen voor het bedrijf. Men beseft dat samenwerken met bepaalde familieleden niet meer lukt en beslist vaak om over te gaan tot een buy-out waar de familiale verstandhoudingen ook onder gaan lijden. Wat eveneens naar boven kwam is dat zulke familiale problemen de bedrijfscultuur negatief beïnvloeden en veel kostbare tijd en

aandacht naar zich toe trekken. Dit leidt het management niet alleen af van belangrijke beslissingen en investeringen om groei na te streven maar creëert ook een onaangename werksfeer die voor bepaalde werknemers onhoudbaar blijkt en een vertrek inluidt. Meerdere familiebedrijven gaven aan op deze manier enkele talentvolle medewerkers kwijt geraakt te zijn. Bovendien bleek dat een niet-familie CEO de afstand tussen werknemer en werkgever vergroot en voor vele medewerkers een barrière blijkt om openlijk hun emoties te bespreken waardoor er zo emotionele dissonantie optreedt en de kans op negatieve gevolgen toeneemt. Bovendien werd er ook bewijs gevonden dat des te meer generaties binnen het familiebedrijf actief zijn, des te groter de kans dat er spanningsvelden ontstaan en authentieke emoties niet meer getoond worden. We kunnen concluderen dat emotionele dissonantie een fenomeen is dat terecht meer in de belangstelling komt te staan. Wanneer emoties verwaarloosd worden kan dit destructieve gevolgen hebben die familiebedrijven duur kunnen komen te staan.

An Exploratory Study on the Consequences of Emotional Dissonance in Family Firms

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Abstract: This study will focus on the possible effects of emotional dissonance in the family firm setting. Emotional dissonance, a person-role conflict, originates from the discrepancy between expressed and experienced emotions. Research on emotions within firms has steadily increased over the years, although almost always neglecting family firms. A remarkable observation given the preeminence of these family businesses in the worldwide economy and the overlap of business and family these firms are confronted with. The intertwinement of these two systems gives emotions in family firms an extra dimension and potentially influences the role of emotions and the way they are dealt with within the company. This study will investigate whether this distinctive family component affects the possible consequences of emotional dissonance.

Keywords: emotional dissonance, family firms, emotions, emotional labor

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To this day, our economy is still largely dominated by family corporations. Family organizations make up for as much as 80 % of all businesses in the world's free economies (Foundation, 2002), giving them an indisputable role of importance in our modern era. Family firms however are a very distinct type of enterprises and differ in various domains from their non-family owned counterparts. These differentiating factors can be grouped under the name *familiness,* described as "a combination of social, human, financial and physical capital resources resulting from interactions between family and business system" (Irava & Moores, 2010). The concept *familiness* illustrates the uniqueness of the family business and we will discuss this in greater depth later on in the article.

This study focusses explicitly on family firms. A first logical question that arises is what separates a family firm from non-family controlled corporations. The opinions about the precise definition of what constitutes a family firm are still strongly divided what makes it difficult, not to say impossible, to give a comprehensive definition on the construct (Steiger, Duller, & Hiebl, 2015). To find an all-encompassing definition for family firms is also not the aim of this research. What matters is whether the family component is sufficiently present and influential in the firms that will be part of our study to check if this family element affects the management of emotions in these businesses. In order to make sure that this is the case, we will use four basic requirements that have to be fulfilled for a business to be labeled as a family firm. The requirements that will be used were written down by Poza and Daugherty (2014) in their book *Family business* and are the outcome of a close comparison of different definitions on the subject and synthesizing the returning requisites.

The first requirement relates to ownership control. Generally speaking, in private companies that will be the target of this study, at least 50% of the voting rights should be in hands of two or more members of a family or a partnership of families (Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino, & Buchholtz, 2001). A second condition that has to be met concerns the strive for continuity across generations, often the number one goal of many starting family businesses (Schulze et al., 2001). Thirdly, the family members should have strategic influence on the management on the firm. They can achieve this by either being active members of the management team, taking an advisory role in the board of directors or taking an equity stake in the company (Astrachan, Klein, & Smyrnios, 2002). The last necessity is the concern for family relationships, making sure that family interest is always taken into account when making a decision inside the company (Poza & Daugherty, 2014).

It goes without saying that family firms are a distinct type of business and differ in quite a few ways from those without the family influence. Family firms can definitely benefit from this uniqueness as the overlap between management, ownership and family can result in competitive advantages that will later be discussed. This overlap might also entail serious challenges for these organizations. Emotions in particular seem to be the cause of many arguments as emotions in family firms prove to be a delicate topic. The presence of the family in both private and professional careers makes it hard for family members to separate emotions felt at the workplace from emotions in their personal lives (Poza & Daugherty, 2014). This family-business duality present in family firms often evokes heated conflicts. In the Belgian context, the geographical scope of this study, most of these conflicts stem from diverging opinions concerning the ownership of shares, the strategy to be followed and a lack of transparency (Lambrechts, 2017). A lot of the aforementioned conflicts are also emotionally loaded and therefore more difficult to manage. However, conflicts might not be the only challenge family firms have to face. Family corporations are known for their strong traditions and reputation that often create an implicit guideline for employees on how to behave. These traditions are seen as the glue that holds the family together and are often considered untouchable by family members. They usually feel the need to fit into the company and therefore adapt their feelings and emotions to values and norms accepted within the business (Gross, 1998).

People possess the ability to effectively manage and respond to an emotional experience, a competence better known as *emotion regulation* (Rolston & Lloyd-Richardson, 2017). This made altering truly felt emotions in order to comply to organizational standards part of employees' everyday work life and even became the standard in most sectors with the aim to increase customer satisfaction and the overall image of the firm (Morris & Feldman, 1996). People unconsciously use emotion regulation strategies to cope with difficult situations many times throughout each day as Rolston and Lloyd-Richardson (2017) conclude. This certainly applies to family firms, where successive generations have established a strong image for the company and don't want emotions to affect the name they build for themselves (Rau, 2013). To avoid family feuds and conflicts, family members often display emotions that are not truly felt, a concept that has been labeled as emotional dissonance (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). What those people often tend to neglect are the stern negative outcomes emotional dissonance might produce. Faking true feelings to comply with organizational requirements might impact health in a negative way. Hiding genuine emotions and feelings could potentially cause emotional exhaustion, job dissatisfaction, burnout, stress, worse decision-making as some opinions will or might not be heard, etc. (Abraham, 1998; Labaki, 2013). These are serious consequences which also negatively affect the firm and accordingly should never be overlooked.

Despite the negative outcomes emotional dissonance can produce, it is a concept that can be found in every layer of the organizational structure. From family members working on the production line to those involved in the management team, they are all likely to engage in emotion regulation. It's the latter group that is particularly interesting, as the managers often lay out the strategy of the firm and are an important decision-making body. The strategic decisions made by a top management team will have significant influence on both performance and long-term value (Mankins & Steele, 2006). It's this decision-making that can cause severe problems in the family business setting. Family members operating in the management team are often guided by emotional motivations as their main goal is not financial returns but socioemotional wealth through their firm (Gómez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, J. L. Jacobson, & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007). By socioemotional wealth we refer to non-financial aspects of the firm that meet the family's needs, such as identity and protection of the family dynasty (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). Using a socioemotional reference point, family firms prioritize maintaining family control and continuity even if this means accepting an increased risk of poor firm performance, making these firms more risk-averse (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). This strive for socioemotional wealth will cause them to reject certain investments out of fear to lose control and therefore limit their potential growth. A company without growth simply can't survive, hence why it's important to get a good understanding of the role that emotions play in family organizations.

Given the dominant presence of family firms throughout the world and their distinctive characteristics influencing the way emotions are dealt with, it's surprising to see that only few researchers have investigated the role of emotions in family firms (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). Emotional dissonance and its severe outcomes are an undeniable threat for every company. Family firms in particular should watch out for the influence of emotions on day-to-day lives of family members. The overlap of the family and business system in their life leaves them without a "safe ground" where emotions can be discussed away from the people who are directly involved in these disputes (Basco & Rodríguez, 2009). This study tries to further investigate the role that emotions play in the family business setting and in particular the impact of the family-business duality on the consequences of emotional dissonance.

Theoretical background

Emotions in Organizations

Any analysis of emotional labor and emotional dissonance presupposes an understanding of what an emotion is but after decades of research on emotions, researchers are yet to come to an agreement on a precise definition of emotions. Joseph LeDoux, a professor of neuroscience at the New York University, stated that "it's been said that there are as many theories of emotions as there are emotions theorists". The question 'what is an emotion?' was first raised by James (1884). More than 130 years later an overall definition is still absent as most scientists seem to have their own, differential view on what exactly an emotion is (Beck, 2015). This makes it even harder for researchers working on the subject. As Alan Fridlund, professor of psychological and brain sciences at the University of California, perfectly summarizes : "The only thing certain in the emotions field is that no one agrees on how to define emotion" (Beck, 2015). Trying to solve this endless debate is neither the scope of this study nor is it very realistic. In order to still be able to use a workable definition, we will use the explanation of Keltner and Haidt (2003), who define emotions as affective reactions to a specific event. The interpretation an individual makes of an emotionally charged event signals how he or she will feel and behave (Fineman, 1993).

Whereas emotions were already mentioned in literature in the 1880's, the organizational setting was almost never incorporated in these studies. Before Hochschild (1983) made a ground breaking contribution to the emotion field with her book *The managed Heart* and Fineman (1993) introduced the organization as an emotional arena, emotions were regarded as interference with rationality, errors to be minimized. Not much attention was given towards emotions as in the minds of researchers, economic behavior was based on a rational and systematic pattern (Simon, 1955). Hochschild (1983) countered this rationality argument and argued that decisions are rarely completely rational and frequently emotionally influenced. To back up her argument, she theorized the production and fabrication of emotions (emotional labor), the communication of emotions (display of emotions) and the suppression of emotions (emotional dissonance). All of these are emotion concepts that have become common knowledge within the field (Rubin, M. Tardino, C. Daus, & Munz, 2005).

In recent years, the role of emotions in organizations became an important field for exploration. Management scholars became aware of the significant role that emotions play in the organizational setting and the impact they might have on employees (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). As most managers are still being driven by self-interest, they only really started to turn their attention towards emotions when they found out these emotions might lead to dissatisfied employees and therefore negatively impact firm performance (Abraham, 1998). The substantial role of emotions in corporations should be evident by now. In the next part, the focus will be on the family firm setting. It's generally acknowledged that the standard family firm comprises the family, the business and the dimension of ownership, all having their own tasks and goals (Gersick, 1997). Although most researchers consistently distinguish family businesses from their non-family counterparts based on this family component, only few have explicitly used this distinguishing factor to examine the impact emotions have in the family firm framework (Carsrud, 1994). Before we turn to the role and effects of emotions in family firms, we will now first briefly discuss the uniqueness of the family corporation to illustrate why emotions in this environment might provide a more complex dimension. We will demonstrate this unique character building on the systems theory, the resource-based view and the socioemotional wealth theory.

Unique character of family firms

The Systems theory

The Systems theory models the family firm as encompassing three overlapping, interacting and interdependent subsystems, namely the family, management and ownership (Davis, 1983). The different subsystems all strive to achieve different goals. In order to perform optimally, these systems will have to identify common ambitions and be integrated so that the family business functions in a synergetic way (McCollom, 2004). To make this happen, a process of give and take is necessary, where successful integration is achieved through reciprocal adjustments among the three subsystems. For this reason, the family subsystem is predicted to have a vigorous impact on the ownership and management and vice versa (McCollom, 2004). This mutual influence is enabled by blurred boundaries and integration between the different subsystems. Family members often find it hard to separate between their personal and professional lives as the two have become deeply connected. This also creates the risk that emotions might flow from one system to another (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Frustrated family members might lack a safety valve where they can discuss their emotions with non-related individuals as most of their life is centered around their family. These continuous encounters with relatives combined with the fear to be the cause of family altercations increases the possibility they will hide their authentic emotions (Poza & Daugherty, 2014).

Resource-based view

According to the resource-based view, the term *familiness* has been introduced to define the unique bundle of idiosyncratic resources and capabilities existing in family firms (Habbershon, Williams, & MacMillan, 2003). *Familiness* can be defined as "a combination of social, human and financial capital resources resulting from interactions between family and business system" (Irava & Moores, 2010). *Human capital* refers to the required knowledge, skills and capabilities that lead to unique and new actions. A permeated familial culture also falls under this category. (Poza & Daugherty, 2014). *Social capital* influences the construction of effective relationships with all involved stakeholders of which suppliers, customers and supporting organizations are just a few examples (Rau, 2014). Social capital is a very important, underlying strength of family firms. These family businesses often have an image based on trust, the main reason why a lot of other organizations like to get involved with family-oriented firms (Poza & Daugherty, 2014). *The financial* component is strongly characterized by a long-term orientation. Family members find themselves averse towards external capital as they fear losing control. Their main focus is long term survival, which also explains their prudent position towards debt financing (Weston, 2016). When managed correctly, these family-related resources can become a sustainable competitive advantage. The family will experience a high degree of unity which results in a positive family-business interaction and a trustworthy image towards potential partners (Basco & Rodríguez, 2009). The main reason a lot of companies still choose to collaborate with family firms is their accessibility and the solid reputation they have established throughout the years. Family members are aware of this and worry that family conflicts and feuds might harm both their reputation and social capital. To prevent this from happening, they may be more inclined to hide negative emotions from relatives in order to avoid these disputes with potential negative consequences (Rau, 2014).

Socioemotional wealth

A third perspective that tries to disclose the differential character of family firms is the socioemotional wealth theory that refers to non-financial aspects of the firm that meet the family's affective needs. As it turns out, aspects like family control, identification with the firm and continuity are motives that rank highly in terms of importance even if this entails an increased risk of poor firm performance

(Poza & Daugherty, 2014). The desire to keep the firm in hands of the family and secure transmission to next generations often causes family firms to take a more conservative position and avoid business decisions that may increase performance variability (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). The significant importance of family control and continuity is fully reflected by their willingness to incur a greater performance hazard risk, the potential for negative consequences associated with a decision (March & Shapira, 1987), if this is what it takes to preserve their socioemotional wealth. Prioritizing family control and continuity over a healthy state of the firm is a precarious decision that might see the firm end up in financial distress (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). However, family firms may just be as rational as non-family firms when it comes to making risky business decisions. The main difference is the reference point that is used to judge whether a decision is risky or not. The main criteria for family firms will be conserving their socioemotional wealth whereas non-family owned businesses will adopt a more financial standpoint (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). Not every family member will agree with this conservative attitude. This may result in disagreement between family members opting for the preservation of socioemotional wealth and those willing to take additional risks to pursue substantial growth. These socioemotional objectives are often deeply rooted in the culture of the family business. This could raise the threshold for growth-oriented and open-minded family members to express and push through their vision and emotions (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007).

Emotions in the Family Firm Setting

The presence of family in the company creates a unique setting. Relatives tend to be more open towards one another and share their emotions (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). However, as described above, there are certain thresholds that withhold family members from expressing their true feelings. These barriers result from the interconnectedness between private and professional lives, the fear of damaging their image based on trust and the anxiety to stand up to socioemotional goals. This underlines the explicit presence of emotions in family businesses. Stewart and Hitt (2011) also found an emotional impact on the management of family firms. These companies are regarded as more emotional and intuitive in comparison to their non-family counterparts where the focus is on rationality. In the early years of family business literature, the family system was often portrayed as a negative influence on this business system due to its emotive characteristic. Nowadays, family firms are defined as unique organizations with an overlap of both rational, economic principles whilst also embracing emotions (Vries, Carlock, & Florent-Treacy, 2007). We can conclude that family businesses are often driven by emotions which will be further clarified by the following sections.

Hybrid identities

As the systems theory shows, family businesses are built on three different subsystems. Albert and Whetten (1985) specifically focused on the overlap between the family system and the business system and concluded that they are seemingly incompatible. The family is a normative system with an explicit focus on norms, values and altruism where emotions are something natural. The business system tends to neglect this emotional dimension and sees them as irrational and having no place in the organizational context (Whiteside & Herz Brown, 1991). Family firms must learn how to cope with the presence of both systems. However, there is no straightforward answer on how to deal with this. A reoccurring problem is that family members have difficulties solely identifying with either the business or family logic, making it hard sometimes to separate emotions felt at work from emotions in their personal lives (Albert & Whetten, 1985). An example could be a man being angry at his boss. He gets home, talks about it with his wife and she may be able to calm him down. When the boss in question also is your wife, this could create an uncomfortable conversation resulting in even more anger.

Bowen's family systems theory

Bowen's theory is relevant to family firms as it deals with the emotional forces that can be found in families in recurring patterns. He argues that emotional patterns are transferred from generation to generation (Bowen, 1978). He identified three different phenomena, linked with emotions, that can occur in family firms. *Differentiation* suggests that emotions are very old and imbedded in the family context and only when they are complemented with thought, individuals can untangle themselves from these historic patterns. *Triangulation* is the predictable emotional pattern among three people, with the third being *triangled* between the two other family members, an example should clarify. When husband and wife are entangled in a conflict, they may triangle their son or daughter (Poza & Daugherty, 2014). The son or daughter will likely be brought into the discussion and therefore risks to get caught up into the conflict. This may lead to the child having to choose sides between its parents, which also translates to the family firm and may start a "competition" between the parents. At last, Bowen (1978) also described the potential for *cutoffs* from the family origin. Unresolved emotional attachments to parents may lead to family members distancing themselves from their families of origin, for example by distancing themselves from a spouse (Bowen, 1978).

Emotional ownership

Björnberg and Nicholson (2012) refer to emotional ownership as "a cognitive and affective state of association that describes a family member's attachment to and identification with the family business". This emotional attachment gives rise to emotions of pride and joy as well as wanting to be in control. In the context of family firms, psychological ownership is also present. It refers to the feelings on *oneness* with the family firm and possessiveness becomes a prominent feature (Björnberg & Nicholson, 2012). This oneness and possessiveness may lead to a family member fully identifying him or herself with the firm in the sense that it becomes necessary for one's well-being and feelings of emptiness when lost (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). These feelings of emotional ownership where family members start to identify themselves with the firm also explain why some members adapt their emotions in order to stay within the lines of what is seen as "normal" in the family business. The culture of long traditions and genuine relationships among family members is what holds family members together and make them fit into the business. Going against these values and norms is inadmissible in some businesses, forcing some family members to adapt their emotions to acceptable standards (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). When people start to manage their feelings and expressions to fulfill the emotional requirements of their job, they often unknowingly engage in emotional labor (Wharton, 1993).

Emotional labor

Over the last decades, we saw a clear shift towards a more service-oriented economy (Wharton, 1993). The number of jobs that required direct, face-to-face interaction rose sharply. As a result, customers have issues to isolate service quality from the quality of the interaction during service delivery. For the customer, these two are inextricably linked, giving the customer's evaluation of the service interaction a central place in his evaluation of the overall customer experience (Korczynski, 2001). Since the customer's perception of service quality is also influenced by how the service employee expresses her/his emotions in the service interaction (Pugh, 2001), displaying organizationally desired emotions became part of their job (Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005). It's clear however that a discrepancy between felt emotions and organizationally desired emotions might arise, which requires employees to make an effort to display the emotions as required by the organization. The act of expressing organizationally desired emotions is termed emotional labor (Morris & Feldman, 1996). The main scope of this labor remains the service sector, although emotional labor has become commonly adopted across all industries, including family businesses (Mishra, 2007).

Previous research showed that employees' true feelings do not always conform to the roles they are expected to play as part of their job (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000). These desired emotions do not appear automatically which requires employees to make an effort to modify their emotions. In order to achieve such modification, either surface acting or deep acting might be the preferred approach (Hochschild, 1979). As Hochschild (1983) stated : "feelings do not erupt spontaneously or automatically in either deep acting or surface acting. In both cases the actor has learned to intervene—either in creating the inner shape of a feeling or in shaping the outward appearance of one". Deep acting, often referred to as "faking in good faith", has the intention to make an authentic impression towards the audience. The actor attempts to modify feelings to match the required display. The employees will change their internal feelings to align with organizational expectations, which results in a more natural and genuine emotional display (Grandey, 2003). On the contrary, Surface acting has been labeled "faking in bad faith" as the employees conform their emotions to the display rules merely for job security, not to help organization nor customer (Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). In this strategy, an employee will modify their displays without shaping inner feelings. Engaging in surface acting also entails emotional dissonance, a situation in which expressions and feelings diverge (Hochschild, 1983). It's the emotional dissonance construct that we are especially interested in as it has often been regarded as having negative consequences for both the employee and organization (Mishra, 2007). We will now turn to a more elaborate discussion on emotional dissonance and its potential consequences.

Emotional Dissonance

When employees start adapting their emotions to organizationally desired norms, emotional dissonance, described as the difference between expressed and experienced emotions (Hochschild, 1983) might arise. Individuals do not necessarily display the emotions that are consistent with their authentic feelings (Ekman & Oster, 1979). This discrepancy between displayed and felt emotions is possible since emotions can be masked, hidden, controlled or displayed without actually experiencing these emotions (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). This may go as far as individuals being indoctrinated into the emotion rules that he or she feels the emotion they display even when they don't actually experience this emotion. Hochschild (1983) illustrated this by using her iconic flight attendant example. When they put on their work uniform, they might spontaneously identify themselves so much with their role that they truly feel joy in relation to the passenger even if they are dead tired and stressed at the same time.

Over time, our society has evolved into one were emotional display is demanded and people take happy employees for granted (Mishra, 2007). Expressing organizationally desired emotions became common trying to increase customer satisfaction and the overall image of the company. Managers do have to make sure that hiding emotions doesn't become an internal routine as well. This could lead to emotional cultures where contradictory opinions are not expressed, it is seen as normal to hide true feelings towards executives and colleagues and creativity and performance potential are undermined (Brundin & Hartel, 2014; Sy, Côté, & Saavedra, 2005). Undoubtedly this creates an unhealthy environment that undermines creativity, collaboration and efficiency (Hartel, 2008). To overcome these emotional obstacles, executives play a crucial role to create a positive work environment where emotional health and welfare of employees are not neglected (Hartel, 2008). Superiors should stress the importance of a culture in which openness to others is embedded and emotions can be discussed internally (Sy et al., 2005). Emotional support provided by co-workers and executives may reverse the deleterious effects of emotional dissonance, which calls for the creation of informal networks where genuine emotions can be expressed (Abraham, 1998).

Most companies concentrate exclusively on performance and figures, causing them to overlook the possible negative consequences of faking or hiding emotions. Adjusting genuine emotions could cause stress in the best case scenario but the results of emotional dissonance could also go as far as causing burnouts, depressions or job dissatisfaction (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). Employees faking their true feelings to keep customers satisfied and fit into the company culture thus risk impacting their own well-being in a negative way. If emotional dissonance might cause such an unhealthy situation, one might ask why people still adapt their feelings to others' expectations. Research found several reasons as to why modifying emotions might occur in the workplace (Morris & Feldman, 1996). A first explanation lays in the concept of *loss of face*. Employees might regulate the experience and expression of emotions in the work setting to avoid possible discomfort, as a consideration to others. Their aversion to such discomfort can be so deeply rooted that they start acting against their authentic feelings and often search the limits on how far to go to fit into the business culture (Lawrence, Troth, Jordan, & Collins, 2011). A second reason that can be put forward as to why employees adjust their emotions is to obey organizational emotional display norms. A great deal of businesses constitutes rules concerning emotions and how they should be displayed, causing most employees to stick to these rules out of fear of a potential lay-off (Morris & Feldman, 1996). Organizations should try to get rid of these framing rules by making the workplace a psychological safe community where emotions are made discussable and the faking of emotions is prevented (Abraham, 1998). A last explanation focusses on an egocentric point of view. According to some researchers, people fake their emotions to try and strategically influence others with the intention of achieving instrumental goals (Lawrence et al., 2011). For example, employees often hide their negative feelings in order to facilitate task goals and maintain relationships (Diefendorff & Richard, 2003).

We can conclude that employees have several, diverse reasons to regulate their emotions and the organization plays an important role in trying to tackle these issues. A corporate culture where openly discussing emotions and feelings is not embedded and keeping silent is the norm might be the cause of emotional dissonance. This can have destructive consequences for the firm as well as negatively impact employees. These serious effects made emotional dissonance an interesting area for research. However, one thing that is yet to be thoroughly examined is the influence of emotional dissonance in family firms. Most firms indirectly require their employees to modify their emotions for business purposes. In family firms, emotional dissonance norms are designed by family members to conform to both family and business objectives (Labaki, 2013). This dual requirement makes emotional dissonance in family firms an intriguing subject.

Emotional dissonance in family firms

In family firms, family members are impelled to comply both with organizationally and family desired emotions. The desired norms of emotional expression may stem not only from the business system but also from the family system. For example, family members might want to protect the reputation of both family and business by prohibiting relatives to express negative emotions that would put the family business at stake (Lansberg, 1988). These rules set up to determine what is accepted as regards to showing emotions will be quickly transmitted to other family members thus creating a collective emotional climate that influences the business in a negative or positive way (Labaki, 2013). The emotional climate therefore plays an important role as it determines how emotions will be dealt with and whether emotional dissonance will surface or not. These framing rules that families establish are specific to each family and are largely influenced by long-standing family values and norms. Some families may choose to publicly forbid the expression of conflict and emotions to avoid embarrassing situations (Tagiuri & Davis, 1996). Others try to create reciprocal relationships of trust where emotions are made discussable and people are not forced to adapt their emotions to certain standards (Labaki, 2013).

Most people have no particular problem adhering to these rules and hide their negative emotions at work to avoid conflicting situations. They know that there are different emotion rules at work and at home and in order to maintain their professionalism, suppressing particular emotions is needed (Ashforth & Tomiuk, 2000). When these people feel frustrated at work, they can get those frustrations of their chest at home and have a sincere discussion with their family. Family members active in family firms are not provided with this opportunity as the same values and norms that constitute the emotional climate at work are also the ones to be found at home (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2006). The absence of such a safety valve where emotions can be shared with non-relatives could cause family members to hide their emotions on a regular basis and increase their levels of emotional dissonance. Another aspect that makes it hard for family firms to display authentic emotions is the presence of genuine relations. Genuine relations in a family business refer to relations that are not exchangeable (Hall, 2003). The relationship between family members will continue to exist, whether it be more or less dense and intimate. This could entail situations where a family member is reluctant to show authentic emotions out of consideration for their relative or the firm. If they were to display their authentic feelings, the family relations might be damaged or it might even harm the firm as long-lasting periods of emotional dissonance could provoke stress or lead to other dysfunctional behavior (Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000).

Emotional dissonance is a challenge for family firms, but a question that has started to rise in recent years is whether emotional dissonance always has negative consequences for the firm involved. Rau (2013) found that expressing feelings that are not truly felt might help families to survive during hard times. She argues that lower levels of emotional dissonance are helpful to maintain sustainable relationships within the extended family. This, in turn, helps to reduce the probability of bankruptcy, sale and/or family disappearance, all of them being events a family firm wants to avoid at any cost (Rau, 2013). The downside of this finding is that the line between high and low levels remains a thin one which makes it even harder for management to correctly assess a situation. Besides, these levels almost never stay low and once a certain level of emotional dissonance is reached, negative outcomes are very likely. The constant modification of emotions eventually leads to higher levels of experienced emotional dissonance, causing a serious problem for both executives and employees as emotional dissonance might ultimately lead to emotional exhaustion or job dissatisfaction (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). This could provoke serious destructive effects for family firms with sale of the firm as potential outcome, often initiated by non-family members who want to protect the firm from detrimental influences of the family (Niedermeyer, Jaskiewicz, & Rau, 2010).

The potentially disastrous consequences of emotional dissonance in family firms make it clear that more research regarding this topic is essential. The studies that have been carried out all focused on non-family firms. For that reason, this article will further investigate the effects of emotional dissonance in family firms. The study will aim to examine the impact emotional dissonance might have on family members and firms. Furthermore, we will look at "when" the impact of emotional dissonance actually occurs. In particular, our attention will first be aimed at the amount of generations the family business has already gone through. Secondly, the presence of a family or non-family CEO will be examined.

Generational effect

Only one third of all family firms survives a generational transfer (Poza & Daugherty, 2014). As each generation wants to make his mark and bring its ideas into the firm, this might clash with beliefs of previous family members. The start-up of the company is characterized by founder-centricity in which the founding member will bring his values, norms and rules into the company making them the standard for other organizational actors (Kets de Vries, 1993). The founder's centricity results in transmission of his emotional standards to the other co-workers through emotional contagion (Chrisman, Chua, & Sharma, 2000). Consequently, founder-centricity will increase the negative effect(s) of emotional dissonance among the other family members as they are implied to comply with norms derived from the founder's characteristics (Labaki, 2013).

At the second stage, emotions become more diffuse as the firm exists out of more family members. This stage is considered to be a fertile ground for rivalries that infect family ties between the newcomers in the family firm (Casson, 1999). Emotional norms will not only stem from the founder but relate to both the family and the business to make sure relationships within the family are guided by personal caring rather than economic opportunism (Lansberg, 1988). Family harmony becomes more of a focal point with the danger of family members not displaying felt emotions in order to preserve the reputation of both the family and the business (Lansberg, 1988). Identifying one's self with the family business has always been a key component of family firms. With the second generation also increases the number of family members who start to focus more explicitly on harmony, with the implication that the negative consequences of emotional dissonance are expected to be strengthened (Labaki, 2013).

The third generation proves to be a difficult one. As the family business moves over from generation to generation the amount of family members involved in the company enlarges, providing the potential for conflicting relationships to increase even more (Gersick, 1997). This is mainly due to the emotions of different cousins' branches that form within the family business and potentially create a competitive atmosphere (Labaki, 2013). The evolution of emotional dissonance in the third generation is one that hasn't been thoroughly documented in the literature. Nonetheless, we expect two possible situations. A first possibility would be for the second generation to experience difficulties concerning emotions between family members which leads to a less pleasant work/life experience. It's common to see family members learn about previous mistakes and put a lot of effort into trying to prevent this from happening to their children. This will often lead to the creation of formal family and business governance structures, an example could be a family charter, that are believed to encourage more open, social interaction and communication among family members (Mustakallio, Autio, & Zahra, 2002). This would enhance a positive relationship between the different family members and is therefore expected to lower the consequences of emotional dissonance. Overall, we do expect the entrance of more generations, and with them more family members, into the family firm to cause some issues (Gersick, 1997). Most family businesses are not prepared for this extension of the family branch and don't have the right structures or procedures in place to successfully manage this multitude of emotions (Mustakallio et al., 2002). The more generations will become present in the organization, the bigger the possibility that conflicts will emerge. Accordingly, we predict the negative consequences of emotional dissonance to increase when more generations become an active part of the family business.

Non-family CEO

Within the family business setting, we maintain that there are emotional dissonance norms designed by family members to protect both family and business objectives. These norms become rooted in the family culture creating a standard of not expressing negative emotions that would put the family business under pressure (Labaki, 2013). When a family-CEO is at the top of the firm, he carries these rooted norms with him in his daily activities, potentially decreasing the rationality of his decisions. A non-family CEO would have a neutral point of view and looks at things differently with the main objective being outstanding business performance. The family aspect would be of less importance to him. The non-family CEO is often seen as an intermediator between the family and business system with the aim to increase objectivity throughout the organization (Lambrechts & Voordeckers, 2014). The non-family CEO can ameliorate the company by decentralizing control and decision-making power. However, the influence of the founder will often still be present in the family business. It is important for a non-family CEO to impose his authority towards the family members and employees to make sure employees won't turn to the founder with questions (Davis & Harveston, 1999). This would undermine his authority and ability to introduce an objective view into the company. It goes without saying that he may never lose sight of family values as these form the foundation of family firms and create a sense of identity among family members that often creates a competitive advantage (Prince, 2016). The non-family CEO's presence also leaves the firm with a more objective look on emotional conflicts, enabling him to make neutral and optimal decisions (Lambrechts & Voordeckers, 2014). His objectivity and ability to create relationships of trust might decrease the negative consequences that emotional dissonance evokes.

Research methodology

This article will adopt a case study research as developed by Eisenhardt (1989), to get a better insight into the studied phenomenon, emotional dissonance in family firms. A comprehensive theory related to this topic is still missing, therefore a case study research was the preferred method. According to Yin (2009) , case studies have the ability to recognize patterns of relationships across constructs both within and across cases. As the aim of this study is to develop a new theory concerning the consequences of emotional dissonance in the family firm setting, qualitative exploration is favored over quantitative analysis. Furthermore, a qualitative approach is preferred as the study addresses soft issues, which are hard to quantify (Nordqvist, Hall, & Melin, 2009). However, to be able to measure the emotional dissonance construct, a small quantitative part which will be explained later, was also incorporated in the study.

The first step in Eisenhardt's process is to draw up a broad research question that builds on multiple constructs. The research question of this study reads *the consequences of emotional dissonance in family firms*. In this research question, emotional dissonance and family firms are the chosen constructs. Important to note is that ideally, theory-building research aims to start from scratch, without theory under consideration or hypotheses to test. Unfortunately, this approach is an impractical one as it is nearly impossible to achieve this theoretical clean slate. Nonetheless, it's crucial to attempt to try to reach this ideal situation as preordained theories might cause biases and limit the outcomes of the research (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Theoretical sampling

Selection of the right cases is a detrimental aspect of building theory from case studies. The most common approach when adopting a case study approach, also the one that will be applied in this article, is theoretical sampling. This implies that cases are chosen for theoretical motivations, not statistical reasons (Gibbert & Ruigrok, 2010). The sample of this study consists of 12 family firms situated in Limburg and Flemish Brabant, Belgium. An overview of the participants is shown in table 1. This is in line with Eisenhardt (1989), who claims that at least four cases are needed in order to allow for generation of theory. The author used his own connections and also got the help from a financial institution to find cases appropriate for this study. As the article also tries to examine the influence of a non-family CEO and the generational effect, these two criteria were also taken into account when putting together the sample size. All participants were active family members that operated as business manager/owner or were at least part of the management team. The twelve family firms vary in size and age from first-generation businesses to fifth-generation firms, with various industries represented in the sample. In order to guarantee confidentiality, the participating companies will remain anonymous.

Table 1

Participants

Participant 1 (Male, Age: 47) worked for the family business on a part-time basis during his higher education in Antwerp and always spent his holidays at his parents' company. He is part of the second generation, he also has a sister and a brother. Momentarily, he is the only member of the family still active in the business.

Participant 2 (Female, Age: 29) studied law at the University of Leuven and only started in the family business 1 year ago. She is part of the third generation and works together with her father, brother, husband and nephew. She is now getting to know the company and culture to explore in which department her future lies.

Participant 3 (Male, Age: 37) studied at the EHSAL management school in Brussels and has a management function within the family business. Both his father and older brother are active in the company. He has been working at the family business for 15 years but was already active during summer in his younger years. At the head of the company is a non-family CEO.

Participant 4 (Male, Age: 58) studied accountancy/computer sciences. He founded the family business in 2011 by taking over another company but had already owned another family business. Ownership has already been transferred to his two sons, who are also active within the company, but he still remains business manager.

Participant 5 (Female, Age: 44) studied applied economic sciences and graduated in SME-management. Her parents founded the company in 1983 and now she runs the company together with her husband. She has been active in the family business for over 14 years and became executive director 7 years ago.

Participant 6 (Female, Age: 51) studied industrial engineering, with chemistry as specialization. Her husband started the company about 18 years ago and 6 months after the foundation of the company, she decided to join the business. While her husband is the one who takes care of the technical part of the job, she runs the back-office.

Participant 7 (Male, Age: 47) has been active as managing director for 8 years when he bought out his younger brother. The company was founded by his father in 1987, so now the second generation is leading this family business. His passion is entrepreneurship and therefore he hired an external member to take over daily operations.

Participant 8 (Male, Age: 51) studied accountancy and founded the company in 1994 together with his two brothers. He is the executive director and meanwhile his two brothers are no longer active in the family business. His son has been active in the company for over three years which represented the introduction of the second generation into the family firm.

Participant 9 (Male, Age: 68) studied at the technical university of Eindhoven and founded the current company in 1992 by means of a management buyout. He has been leading the company ever since and both his son and daughter have already entered the family business.

Participant 10 (Female, Age: 61) got her degree in accountancy. The company was founded in 1988 by herself and her husband. 22 years ago, her son entered the family business as well as his wife which means both first and second generation are still present in the family business.

Participant 11 (Female, Age: 44) studied business administration before entering the company in 1996. She was active in different departments before being appointed as CEO in 2012. She is part of the third generation and leads the company together with her brother and father who nowadays only has an advisory role.

Participant 12 (Male, Age: 56) was active in social work before starting his entrepreneurial career together with his brother. While he still is managing director, his two sons have also entered the business. The company is over 30 years old and has already build up a regionwide empire.

Data collection and analysis

The main data collection method employed by the researchers was in-depth qualitative interviewing. The data were gathered during the three-month period between March 2018 and May 2018. In total, more than twenty companies were approached, to eventually end up with a sample size of twelve family businesses. The average length of these interviews was between 20 and 45 minutes. All participants also signed a confidentiality agreement, stating that the conversations would be recorded and that only those people working on the subject would get insight into these interviews. In order to be fully prepared and ensure a smooth running, an interview protocol was developed in advance. This protocol, see Exhibit A, was drafted according to the funneling technique where one starts with a broad and open question and further narrows it down to more specific questions. To complement these in-depth interviews, the participants were also asked to fill in a small survey that measured the construct of emotional dissonance. The survey, shown in Exhibit B, consists of 9 statements where participants had to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale how strongly they agreed with these statements. This questionnaire, developed by Brotheridge and Lee (2003) measures *deep acting* and *surface acting.* Statements 2,5 and 9 are related to deep acting. Surface acting is divided into two different categories, hiding emotions (statements 3,7 and 8) and faking emotions (statements 1,4 and 6). Adding these two subcategories together, provides us with a measure for emotional dissonance. The maximum score equals 15 for every category, leaving us with an emotional dissonance measure with a maximum achievable amount of 30.

After the interviews were conducted, they were all transcribed verbatim. This automatically led to the next step that is essential for theory-building from case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989), analyzing the retrieved data. At first, all the interviews were individually analyzed multiple times, a process better known as *within-case data analysis* (Ayres, Kavanaugh, & Knafl, 2003) to "become completely familiar with each case as a stand-alone entity" (Stake, 2000). Once familiarity with the individual cases was attained, *cross-case search for patterns* was carried out to look for both similarities and disparities until theoretical saturation was achieved (Eisenhardt, 1989). This process resulted in the emergence of different themes , which will be further described below.

Enfolding the literature

After analyzing the emergent concepts, the next essential feature of theory building is to compare these findings with the extant literature whereby both similarities and contradictions should be reviewed. Key to this process is to consider a very broad range of literature. The findings of our research rest on a limited number of cases, 12. To further enhance internal validity and generalizability, tying the emergent theory to the existing literature is essential (Eisenhardt, 1989). While Charmaz (2006) advocates to delay the literature review, an initial inspection of the very limited literature was necessary to get more acquainted with the topic. Emotional dissonance and its consequences have been abundantly studied by multiple researchers but the family firms setting has repeatedly been omitted in this research Therefore it was indispensable to first gain more insight into the uniqueness of family firms and how this could potentially influence the consequences of emotional dissonance. The next section will highlight our findings, directly derived from our research.

Findings

This study addresses the question : *what are the consequences of emotional dissonance in family firms?* The following sections will highlight our key findings.

Theme 1 : The unique character of family firms

We described family businesses as having a certain unique character, differentiating them from non-family firms. This could cause emotions to be treated differently and have differing consequences in these family organizations. The most obvious determinant that makes for a unique business setting is the simultaneous presence of both the family and business system, previously referred to as hybrid identities (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The participants claim to have difficulties separating private and professional lives and state that feelings that arise at the company also tend to influence their mood at home.

> *"Together with my husband I made an agreement to not talk about the company at home but we see that when there is a problem, we do tend to talk about in the evening and find it hard to not let this affect our sleep". (Participant 10)*
>
> *"When there would be a conflict between family members, that would definitely also influence the situation at home. This starts to take its toll as I have difficulties to sleep and would get more easily annoyed". (Participant 1)*

"I find it more difficult to make this separation than my children. Until last year we all lived together in one house and business talk was a regularity at home. I have more difficulties to let go of certain things that happen at work". (Participant 12)

A clear example that shows how the business and family system are intertwined are family dinners and assemblies (Brundin & Hartel, 2014). Most families try to set up rules that try to withhold them from discussing business issues at family gatherings. The fact that they have to set up these rules is an indication that they have troubles not talking about the company at home and often need these rules to not let things escalate. These actions are hardly ever successful as eventually business talk does enter the conversation.

"Together with my two brothers, we would gather every Sunday for a family dinner at our parents' house. Discussions we had at the company would also start to dominate those conversations and we even tended to speak more freely". (Participant 8)

"At family gatherings, we do tend to also discuss business issues. My wife plays an important role in this, she withholds us from entering a severe discussion. We now agreed that business talk is allowed for 5 or 10 minutes but once alcohol is being consumed, this conversation ends". (Participant 9)

"Our family also spends their holiday together. When we are on vacation, it is normal to also talk about business. This has become such a habitude that it is now seen as normal". (Participant 3)

The most prominent argument that was mentioned when asked what makes family firms unique is their close relationship with clients and suppliers. These stakeholders consider family businesses to be trustworthy business partners which enables for long-term cooperative relationships. We can clearly link this to the resource-based view, which describes social capital as a unique attribute of family firms that influences the construction of effective partnerships with stakeholders (Rau, 2014). This is mainly due to their shorter communication channels, which allows for an easier dialogue and negotiation.

"Specific for family firms is their customer service. We try to establish long-term collaborations with clients and suppliers which is facilitated through our shorter communication channels. This creates mutual trust which I think is a unique selling point towards our partners". (Participant 5)

"This proximity is what makes family firms particularly interesting. It is less difficult to get into contact with management what makes for an easier negotiation". (Participant 11)

"We invest a lot in customer and family relations which is less emphasized in non-family firms. An example is that we are more inclined to award payment extension to our clients. We try to help our clients in every way possible". (Participant 2)

"This well-oiled cooperation is even more of an advantage when communicating with other family firms. The fact that the two companies are both family firms creates a bond and they will more quickly perceive each other as colleagues and not competitors". (Participant 7)

A third, distinctive element that distinguishes family businesses from non-family firms is the way money is dealt with. Consistent with the socioemotional wealth theory (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007), the reference point for decisions is different in family firms. Family control and identification with the firm turn out to be decisive factors as a lot of decisions are influenced by these elements. Multiple participants also think of family businesses as more cost-conscious, prompted by the fact that it's their own cash they are deciding about. The cash flow they generate is most often reinvested into the firm in order to maintain sustainable growth.

"*In family firms you have to decide about your own money. In big, non-family firms this is not the case. They have certain targets they have to meet in order to gain a pay rise which often causes them to take more risky decisions". (Participant 6)*

"We always reinvested our cash flow back into the company in order to sustain our growth". (Participant 1)

"I think that when you work with your own money you will be more cost-conscious. All the money we earned, we reinvested in the company. I could have already been at the Bahamas for a long time, but that's not what interests me most". (Participant 9)

A last differential characteristic is the approach towards employees. Family firms emphasize involvement and togetherness and try to create a familial atmosphere. Staying close to employees is obviously easier in smaller firms but throughout the interviews it became clear that taking into account the human aspect is a necessity. This shows in how they deal with employees' personal issues such as diseases within the family. As they work together with family members on a day-to-day basis, they know how valuable this part of life is.

"*Family of our employees is very important, we do everything possible to help these people as well". (Participant 2)*

"A while ago, a relative of one of our employees died and they couldn't afford to pay for a funeral. We took the responsibility to organize and pay for this. We won't brag about this but we just want our employees to know that they can count on us". (Participant 7)

The interviews revealed some interesting insights. We found evidence for the systems theory as the boundaries of these systems often tend to fade and multiple participant claim to have difficulties separating between these different subsystems. They mention that the state of the company influences their personal life and vice versa. A clear example are family dinners and gatherings where business talk often dictates the conversation. The importance of social capital also became clear.

Family firms put a lot of time and effort into creating an exceptional customer service and want to profile themselves as trustworthy partners. We also learned that when it comes to investments, family firms lean towards more cost-conscious decisions. Socioemotional motivations like family control might influence their decision-making as they want to ensure longevity across generations and are more cautious because its their own cash that is on the line. Lastly, they don't only try to maintain good relationships with their own relatives. Family of their employees is also essential which shows in their enormous support when diseases occur within the family or when employees find themselves in hard times.

Theme 2 : Emotions in family firms

Emotions in the family business are expected to have a substantial influence on daily operations. The first domain where this emotionality has an impact is the decision-making process. Where non-family firms prioritize rationality in their business choices, some family firms still rely on their gut when making decisions. This emotional influence can unfavorably impact the decision quality as heated and time-consuming emotional disputes might distract families from making the right decisions to make the company grow. This emotionality also causes them to be more tolerant towards employees. Lay-offs don't happen as quickly as family members often have close connections with their personnel and get emotionally attached to them.

> *"Family firms are indeed different. A lot of decisions are still based on gut-feeling and emotions whilst other companies decide more rationally. We also try to create a familial bond with our employees as the human aspect is very strong and important. If we were to think rationally, we should have fired certain people as the world changes very quickly but that's not how we operate". (Participant 12)*

> *"In bigger, non-family firms things are more structured and rules are clear. This is something we still have to improve as we still tend to let intuition, emotions and gut-feeling influence our decisions". (Participant 2)*

> *"During certain meetings, we would end up discussing our emotions and the business was not addressed. This further enhanced the frustrations that were already present. This really didn't help the company to move forward". (Participant 8)*

Family firms are characterized by a unique culture based on familial relationships. This culture is mainly determined by the customs of previous generations (Bowen, 1978). Family members inherit certain values and norms that they implicitly carry with them. As they grow up with these habits, it becomes part of their character as well. Examples include working hard and being open towards other family members. However, this works both ways. The interviews do show that this generational transfer of customs can also have negative repercussions. When previous relatives were emotionally unstable, closed-off or had a bad temper, new generations are likely to possess these traits as well.

"My father and I are both very emotional, that is something I inherited from him. This doesn't mean that we cry a lot but that we can be very open towards each other and have sincere talks". (Participant 2)

"*My father was very emotional, one week I was his favorite child and the next week he favored my sister. My sister shows somewhat the same characteristics, she is emotionally unstable and she would constantly display different emotions, depending on what she needed and who she needed it from". (Participant 1)*

"It's the nature of our family that emotions don't play a visible role. Both my father and myself try not to openly show all of our emotions at work. We are motivated entrepreneurs and work very hard for the family business. We prefer not to spend too much time talking with our employees about their emotions as that's not our strongest point, I think that is a family trait". (Participant 7)

Working together with family members on a daily basis makes it hard to have a clear separation between work-related emotions and personal emotions. The overlap of both the family and business system might evoke some conflicts with the risk that disagreements at work could cause displeased family relations (McCollom, 2004). To prevent these confrontations and power struggles, most families try to have clear job descriptions to minimize the amount of work-related interactions. This is an area that still needs improvement in most family firms as clear structures are often missing or not fully developed. This causes confusion amongst employees, not knowing who is the right person to ask for help and they eventually end up consulting multiple family members. This often results in conflicting advice, which further increases frustrations between family members. In one case this even led to brothers not talking to each other anymore and power play at work.

"At the beginning we had a lot of conflicts. Now, my husband and I both have different functions within the company which also reduces our interactions. We know what our responsibilities are and this way we can limit the amount of conflicts". (Participant 6)

"Me and my husband function like a tandem. We have separate territories within the company and don't see each other that often. This way we appreciate the role the other one plays and we still have stories to tell at night. This separation is important in order to complement each other. As I always like to say : You can't have two captains on the same ship". (Participant 5)

"Having clear job descriptions and making the right agreements avoids a lot of discussions and emotions. That is why we pay a lot of attention to making sure everyone knows his or her function". (Participant 4)

"*Our personnel felt and even fed our conflicts. They would come to me to ask a question and then go to my brother, ask the same question and tell my brother the advice I gave him. The advice my brother gave was typically different and this reinforced our conflicts. We would* *never have had these problems if we had appropriate separation of functions. If that had been the case, the employees perfectly knew which question they had to ask to which brother". (Participant 8)*

The overlap of personal and professional emotions also further reinforces feelings of identification with the firm as the emotional well-being of family members becomes intrinsically linked to the state of the family firm. This attachment to and identification with the family business, previously described as emotional ownership, was a frequent talking point throughout the interviews (Björnberg & Nicholson, 2012).

"I do feel that I often identify myself with the firm. I don't have children so for me the company kind of fills that gap". (Participant 5)

"I have a daughter and when she was 5 years old she blamed me for loving the family business more than I loved my own daughter". (Participant 10)

Another distinctive characteristic of family firms is the openness between family members. As we already mentioned, this can have both positive and negative consequences but at least it gives every member the possibility to express him or herself and gives them the feeling they will be heard. What is remarkable and became clear during the interviews, is that this openness that is emphasized by family relatives is not yet embedded among the employees. Family executives try to create a collegial atmosphere and wish to spread this transparent culture across the entire company. However, they are often so busy that keeping up with employees becomes less feasible. Executives sometimes wrongly assume that when they don't hear about problems, everything is going well. They stress that employees are more than welcome to stop by and discuss their problems but the final responsibility often lies with their personnel.

"As a leader, I want to take care of others' problems but of course I can't always solve them or know about their existence. Everyone also has their own responsibility to come to me when they have a problem". (Participant 5)

"We try to be open towards employees as well but that remains more difficult. That relationship is different of course which makes it more difficult to achieve full transparency". (Participant 11)

"I try to make everything discussable with employees and give them the feeling that they will be heard, which is very important! That is not an easy task, those with whom you're closer and have a good bond will also be more open than those with whom your understanding is not that great. The latter group will not speak about their problems and emotions as quickly which also makes it harder for me to stimulate honest conversations". (Participant 3)

This remains a huge barrier for employees to openly discuss their problems with supervisors and family members as the natural tendency of people is still to remain silent and keep their problems to themselves. Some people are simply less confident taking the initiative to go up to their superiors and openly talk about their feelings. The interviews definitely demonstrated the substantial influence emotions have in family firms. As hard as they try to be rational in their decision-making, emotions still tend to be an important and influential factor. How much of an impact these emotions will have is also dependent on the character of the family members and values and norms within the family. These are likely to be passed on to next generations creating a long-standing company culture. For most family firms, this implies an open culture where strong and close relationships are maintained. This is a perfect scenario that unfortunately does not hold true for every organization. To prevent conflicts and disagreement between family members, they are often active in separate domains where their interactions are limited. Also, employees are not always incorporated in this open culture they try to attain. Family members find themselves working very hard, leaving little time to have honest and open conversations with their staff. Possibly the best illustration of the role that emotions play in family firms is the way family members talk about the family business. The dual presence of both family and business system often causes emotions to flow from one system to another, creating a certain connection. Some will relate to the company to such an extent that they will start to see the company as part of their family.

Theme 3 : Emotional dissonance

After the interviews were conducted, each participant was asked to fill in a small survey. Three different items were measured; deep acting, surface acting (hiding emotions) and surface acting (faking emotions). The maximum amount achievable on every subcategory was 15. The emotional dissonance construct was computed by adding the two surface acting scores together and therefore had a maximum attainable score of 30. Table 2 shows the averages for the different categories. Before analyzing these data, we will shortly address why the interviewees argued to engage in emotional dissonance. The first reason stems from a selfish motivation. Emotions are sometimes manipulated in order to accomplish personal goals, as was also found in the literature review. To get the support of a superior or relative, some people align their emotions with others' expectations to achieve satisfaction (Lawrence et al., 2011). This is particularly the case when multiple family members, experiencing mutual tension, try to win over their parents.

> "*When me and my brother would have a disagreement, our third brother would start to act as a mediator. Looking back, he was no mediator. He just took that role in order to strengthen his position within the company". (Participant 8)*

> *"My sister would start crying and act like she was the victim but she would never tell what she did. She would use her emotions to win over my dad and misuse his trust". (Participant 1)*

A second reason is the fear for "loss of face". Too many employees still feel uncomfortable openly showing their emotions and feelings, especially towards employers who are often also part of the family (Lawrence et al., 2011). They worry that this might undermine their credibility or that they will be silenced as their executives have other priorities. This is most likely the wrong assumption as most managers are concerned with the emotions of their employees and are willing to help in case problems might arise. Managers are more than happy to help their staff with their problems, but they consider it the employees' responsibility to go up to their bosses and ask for help. This could prove to be an impediment for those that are less extrovert and don't feel comfortable discussing personal issues with their employers.

> "*After a while, people got scared to show their real emotions and opinions. The family was divided and the employees were afraid to be shut down by one of the family members and the way we would react". (Participant 1)*

> *"I think it is very important for managers to be accessible but it's still also the responsibility of the employees to come and talk to me if something is bothering them. I can't spend all my time talking about problems with employees as I still have a business to run". (Participant 5)*

> *"Those that are not good at expressing themselves will more quickly hide their emotions, stay at home and hit rock bottom instead of seeking help". (Participant 8)*

Most interviewees are part of the management team at their family business. They consider this function to demand a certain degree of diplomacy. As a result they often disguise their real feelings and emotions. They feel that their job requires them to stay professional at all times and emotions have no place in this story . They try to exude stability towards their employees and business partners what usually requires them to suppress their authentic emotions in order to preserve their integrity.

> *"There have certainly been times I wanted to curse but that's when I have to contain myself. My position also requires me to remain diplomatic and not blindly say what is on my mind". (Participant 9)*

> *"I have to stay professional. Regardless of how I really feel, I always have to be positive. This does entail the risk that employees will realize I am hiding my emotions and feel obliged to do the same. However, this risk does not outweigh the negative repercussions of a CEO who walks through the corridor with emotional fluctuations, that is simply not done". (Participant 11)*

In the next part, the obtained data will be profoundly examined.

Table 2

	While interacting with employees		While interacting with top management team	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Deep Acting	7,00	8,40	7,33	8,67
Surface Acting - Hiding Emotions	6,57	9,80	5,50	7,67
Surface Acting - Faking Emotions	5,14	5,40	5,50	5,33
Emotional Dissonance	11,71	15,20	11,00	13,00

A first remarkable finding is that the average level of emotional dissonance is considerably higher for women than it is for men. Female participants state that emotionality is simply part of their nature and is a personality trait. They emphasize emotions more than men do and have more difficulties not letting their emotions influence their daily lives. As they are more emotional, they have to make bigger efforts to hide their emotions and not let this affect their work and status, which also explains their higher score on the emotional dissonance scale. Men confirm this and admit that they will resort more quickly to women to discuss their emotions. Conversely, it is also more difficult for male managers to be available for female colleagues with problems.

> *"I can imagine that when more women are active in a company, there is also more room for emotionality. I think women will emphasize emotions more as this is part of their nature". (Participant 7)*

> *"I think as a female boss, the accessibility for employees is higher". (Participant 5)*

> *"I do feel that when employees have problems they will come to me, not my husband. With my husband, you can't discuss emotions. He doesn't have them or at least he does not show them". (Participant 10)*

> *"For men, it is difficult when women have problems. They won't show their emotions or discuss them with men as quickly which makes it hard for me to help them". (Participant 3)*

A second significant finding relates to the division of the emotional dissonance construct. On average, the participants are more likely to hide, not fake, their emotions. They put on a mask to hide their feelings and this eventually becomes an automatic reflex when they feel a bit down. As family members are closely watched by the employees and seen as role models, they try to set an example and spread a positive vibe within the company. A possible explanation here could be the leading position of the interviewees. Nearly all participants have an executive role within the family firm and consider hiding negative emotions part of their job. They are expected to behave professionally as emotions should not influence their day-to-day operations. It's remarkable how many participants assume emotions and professional behavior to be incompatible.

> *"At work, people expect you to behave professionally. As I am part of the family, people will closely observe my behavior. Therefore, I will try to look happy even when I don't feel that*

way. I will not show my real emotions to some people, because I think that is a bit inappropriate". (Participant 2)

"Whenever I feel pressure to perform well and work hard, I have a tendency to be less friendly and quickly annoyed. I then put on a mask to hide these emotions but I will not pretend to be someone I'm not". (Participant 3)

The slightly higher levels of emotional dissonance when interacting with employees in comparison with the top management team also relate to this argument. The management team is most likely dominated by family members, creating a more comfortable environment where openness is self-evident and it is natural to show emotions. This shows that family members have distinctive relationships with employees and relatives. Even though they try to create a familial atmosphere, the openness towards their fellow family members is not always translated to non-family staff.

"It is much easier to work with family members. You can be completely honest with them and be straight to the point. You know they will interpret your opinion in the best way possible". (Participant 2)

"*My husband will definitely criticize me more than a normal employee would as we are very open towards each other. We discuss our emotions, also at home, but this does not happen within our staff. They don't tell us everything and rarely talk about their personal lives even though we do try to make them talk". (Participant 6)*

"I think if my dad was still active in the company, the family relations would also become clear in our meetings. I would criticize his ideas more rapidly and enter a discussion than I would with a non-family employee". (Participant 7)

Our study also found evidence for the argument made by Wharton (1993), which reads that people active in service-oriented firms are more likely to engage in emotion regulation. The interviews show that participants who come into contact with clients more often, scored higher on the emotional dissonance scale. Clients are not interested in the emotions of workers, they want their needs to be fulfilled and expect employees to serve them with a smile. This leaves no space for negative emotions to be shown and forces these service providers to hide their real emotions or even distort them.

"*Every day, different people walk into our store and sometimes they can indeed be very irritating. They say that people have become more vocal but that's not true, they have become more rude and selfish. This makes it difficult to always stay calm and serve them with a smile which is what the client expects". (Participant 10)*

"These family conflicts really took their toll on me, I slept badly and was constantly thinking about them. But I had to go visit clients on a daily basis and I had to hide my emotions from them as well which didn't make life much easier for me". (Participant 1)

This study learned us that women are more emotional than men as this is part of their nature. They don't want these emotions to impact their performance at work and engage in emotional dissonance more quickly. When we take a closer look at the emotional dissonance construct, it becomes clear that the participants lean towards hiding their emotions and not faking them. This is partly due to their leading positions where emotions are often hidden as the participants want to come across professionally. Between family members, true emotions are shown more quickly due to their greater bond of trust. A next conclusion learns us that people who interact with clients more often will automatically hide their emotions as their goal is to keep customers satisfied.

Theme 4 : The consequences of emotional dissonance in family firms

Emotions are still not top priority in most family firms and the majority of managers don't pay that much attention to emotional dissonance. This negligence could prove to be a dangerous attitude as the consequences of emotional dissonance are not to be underestimated, illustrated by the following paragraph. When asked about the possible consequences of emotional dissonance, the interviewees almost immediately made the link to diseases such as depressions and burnouts. They recognize that continuously hiding or faking authentic emotions takes its toll on people. When they never speak up and can discuss their emotions with others, they will start to feel frustrated and not feel comfortable with themselves anymore.

> "*I think that in the long term such a situation is unsustainable and will eventually lead to a burnout or depression". (Participant 5)*

> *"I think you should be careful with emotional dissonance. It will start to influence the lives of those people and even affect their quality of life. They will get tired, maybe even depressed and they will end up at home to rest". (Participant 9)*

> *"If you lie to yourself and act like you are someone else, these people will end up in a very dark place and get depressed, unhappy with themselves". (Participant 2)*

Most executives pay insufficient attention trying to prevent these situations from happening. They envision work as an opportunity to clear one's mind and escape from one's problems. However, when these feelings are deeply rooted, it becomes nearly impossible to not let this impact your work life as well. Family firms are aware that emotional dissonance is becoming more prominent. However, it remains a difficult topic for companies as they look for answers on how to prevent these things from happening.

> "*At this point in time, we are severely doubting if we are dealing with emotions and emotional dissonance in the correct way. We know that our employees are not always completely open but it's difficult for us to change that mindset". (Participant 6)*

"My father knows the importance of emotions and creating an open culture where everyone feels comfortable to speak freely. What he does not know is how to implement such a culture and how the firm will benefit from this". (Participant 2)

The aim of this study is to take a closer look at the internal relations between family members and see what role emotional dissonance might play within the family business. Emotional conflicts between family members might be detrimental for their underlying relationships. This is where the openness that is attributed to family firms might actually have negative repercussions. At first, relatives will be able to openly discuss their problems and emotions which could already lead to heated debates and contradictory opinions. Typically, emotions will start to dominate even the smallest discussion what undoubtedly creates frustrations among family members. These dialogues are nearly always based on the same arguments, causing these people to lose their patience, eventually suppress their emotions and avoid their relatives.

"In certain discussions I really felt the same emotions coming up and thought here we go again. No new arguments were made, it were always the same arguments based on the same old emotions that started to dominate the conversation. In the end, we rarely spoke to each other anymore". (Participant 8)

"Every meeting led to disagreement. We started fighting about the littlest of things. These conflicts dragged on and became bigger and bigger all because some family members needed things to go their way". (Participant 1)

Such a situation where family members don't get along anymore and even the smallest disagreement leads to a large discussion soon becomes unmanageable. They realize that their conflicting ideas and visions make further cooperation impossible and in the interest of the company, they often decide to split ways by means of a buyout. This certainly is an extreme outcome but not as unlikely as one might imagine it to be. A buyout does not only end the collaboration of these family members at work. Their numerous encounters and clashes often leave deep wounds that have devastating effects on their family relations as well. Some family firms realize the potential danger of working together with family members and want to avoid family conflicts. They don't want emotions and disagreements to affect their relationships and choose to buy out their relatives even before they start working together.

"Having gone through all those conflicts and having bought out my brothers, I learned from the past. I don't want to go back to a situation with two, three or more bosses. That is why I have decided to only allow my son to become active in the family business". (Participant 8)

"Familywise we sacrificed a lot for our business. I had to buy out both my sister and brother-in-law for me to find peace and for the company to really start growing again. With that money, my sister started a competing company and even started lawsuits against myself and my brother who is not even involved in the company. Once you find yourself in a negative spiral, it's nearly impossible to get out of it". (Participant 1)

"I am really happy that I can lead this company on my own. I also have a sister with whom I have a very good understanding but I would never be able to work together with her. I decided to buy her stake in the family business and she started her own company which I think was very important for us to maintain our excellent relationship". (Participant 5)

These family members often feel relieved when their relatives finally leave the company. They can finally implement their own vision and start to think about the future. In the past, these periods of continuous disagreement and internal problems tended to shift the focus from establishing a healthy, growing business to solving these struggles. These familial issues occupy a lot of time and effort, time the company could have used to improve the company and achieve higher growth. It is not even necessary for the family members to be personally involved in these disputes. Most participants are also executive director at their company. When there are conflicts within the company, it's their responsibility to address these problems and try to solve them. As these conflicts start to pile up and become more numerous, the time needed to deal with them increases and distracts managers from leading their company to new heights.

"*When my sister was no longer active in the company, we finally started making plans to grow and further develop the company. We created a management team and hired a coach to help us with our plans". (Participant 1)*

"Whenever there is a conflict, I try to speak to everyone involved and listen to their story. It's important to do this and make time for this. You should be careful not to make a conclusion too fast when you haven't yet heard everyone's side of the story". (Participant 9)

"My only job as manager is to make sure that everyone is happy and conflicts are immediately dealt with and solved, which could take some time". (Participant 8)

When family members don't talk to each other anymore, this does not only affect their underlying relationship but if could also affect the employees. If family members regularly hide their emotions they unwillingly create a closed culture where employees are afraid to openly speak their mind. These employees will start to think that emotions are not discussable and accepted within the company and hide their emotions as well. Eventually, they will start to feel uncomfortable with the situation they are involved in, decide to continue their career elsewhere and leave the company. Those people that do decide to stay are presumably followers who like to have someone steering their actions and critical voices will disappear within the company.

"*If you don't involve your employees in your life and emotions, you can't expect them to be open themselves. Their commitment and involvement could decline and they will not feel comfortable in the company anymore. They will quickly leave and that way you can lose valuable employees". (Participant 12)*

"When emotions are not being expressed and this escalates, this creates an unsustainable situation for employees and often leads to a resignation". (Participant 6)

"Some really good employees have left the company due to the situation of the family and they even came back after six or seven years when peace returned to the company". (Participant 1)

"You can't let such a situation endlessly continue. They will start to efface themselves and when that happens, they realize they have no more added value and are better off leaving the company". (Participant 8)

"I think that those people that choose to stay in a company with a closed culture are the ones that like to be able to follow someone and are more timid. This can also be frustrating for the employers as critical voices could get lost". (Participant 7)

The opposite is also a plausible outcome. When employees observe that their bosses are closed-off, they will be tempted to follow their example and also keep their emotions private. If this becomes a habit, this could severely impact their quality of life. These workers will become less productive, might even end up in a depression or see their performance deteriorate. Employers incorrectly assume that they are "bad" employees and neglect the possibility they just don't feel that well. Managers don't see why they should keep them on board and could decide to fire them.

"*The performance of those that keep their emotions private will decline and they often get fired. The real reason why they performed poorly often only becomes clear after their dismissal which is a shame". (Participant 2)*

"The productivity of those that engage in emotional dissonance will definitely drop". (Participant 3)

"*Everyone must dare to say his opinion, we have to move forward as a company. What is the added value of yes man? Nothing!" (Participant 9)*

What managers can learn from this study is that the consequences of emotional dissonance go far beyond burnouts or depressions. What they tend to overlook is that it can also have serious consequences for the company. Managers still play an exemplary role and their behavior largely determines the attitude of employees. When they are closed-off and keep emotions to themselves, employees will be inclined to follow their example. Not everyone will feel comfortable in such a culture. Some will automatically drop out, others will see their performance suffer and risk being fired. In family businesses, the relationships between the family members are often much closer. When disagreements emerge, they will give their sincere opinion much quicker, which can lead to frustrations and enhance conflicts. They don't only put their business at stake, the family relations are also likely to suffer when they can't find a way to solve these disagreements. These conflicts occupy a lot of time that cannot be put into the company to make progress. Companies that did experience these conflicts indicated that this made collaboration much more difficult and ultimately decided to split up by means of a buyout. This story proves that emotions are a delicate subject and they should be addressed correctly.

Theme 5 : The generational effect

Earlier, we mentioned that only one third of all family firms survives a generational transfer (Poza & Daugherty, 2014). The transition from one generation to the next one is seen as one of the most challenging events a family firm will face as this proves to be an emotional step for the transferor and implies new leadership to take over. In the first generation we typically find founder-centricity, where the values and norms of the founder(s) are also the ones that become rooted in the company culture. The second generation tries to bring its own vision into firm which might clash with previous beliefs. Overall, conflicts do arise but are usually not destructive in nature. The third generation is where fundamental problems normally occur. Previous generations have build up a particular reputation for the company and the new family members are under a lot of pressure to live up to the expectations. They need to simultaneously run the business and make sure family harmony remains, a difficult task that many fail to succeed in. This has always been the dominant view on generational transfers, nonetheless the findings of this study do reveal some new insights.

There seems to be somewhat of a consensus that when more generations become active in the family business, more branches of the family will make their introduction into the firm and conflicts are more likely. Contradictory opinions and potential conflicts become more of a possibility and increase the likelihood of familial problems. We previously described that this might lead to family members not talking to each other and higher levels of emotional dissonance. Preceding paragraphs explained why this could cause such harm to family firms. With possible results including a higher staff turnover, lower growth rate and irreparable family relationships, correctly dealing with this diffusion of multiple relatives in the firm is crucial.

> "*The more family members become active in the family business, the higher the chance that your beliefs might clash of course, what could lead to conflicts. That is what we avoided by buying out my brother. If this hadn't happened, that would have meant that the next generation would have existed out of 6 family members. I would not like to be in their shoes". (Participant 7)*

> *"I think that if my children and my brother's children all become active in the company, that would be too much. Those children are raised differently what could lead to different ways of working what could create tensions. It will be hard for them to change their customs and find conformity". (Participant 12)*

> *"I don't believe in the concept of a branched family business, that won't work. With your brother and sister you can be more honest and open than with your cousins. You have a closer relationship with them also because you are raised together". (Participant 2)*

To prevent these emotional conflicts from ruining both family and business, creation of structures and clear agreements is called for. An interesting observation was that those firms that pay particular attention to modifying the relationship between family members are more successful in avoiding tensions and family feuds. It is self-evident that if the number of active family members represented in the family firm starts to increase, it becomes more of a challenge to get everyone to adhere to these agreements.

> "*I have already made agreements with my family to avoid misunderstandings. Everyone knows what they can and can not do when I'm gone. I hope that if more generations get involved they are smart enough to do the same thing and lay down some ground-rules". (Participant 9)*

> *"If the next generation wants to join the family business it will be very important to correctly guide and help them. We would try to solve those problems by creating a family charter and make clear agreements". (Participant 11)*

> *"The more children, the more important it becomes to have a clear separation between them. We have to watch over them and help them. I really think it is important that family stays family and we make agreements to avoid problems. We already have a family charter for example. If all 6 children want a role within the family firm, we will also have to create some requirements for those that want to be active in the management team". (Participant 3)*

Multiple participants argued to find it more difficult to work together with nephews and nieces than it is to collaborate with sisters or brothers. Surprisingly, most companies where we did find emotional dissonance to influence daily operations were run by brothers and sisters. They have a tendency to be more open against one another but they also spend most of their childhood together. If they never got along well, there is a big probability things won't work out either in the family business. The close relationship between brothers and sisters entails more numerous encounters, which might not be opportune when this relationship is already diluted. Whether the cooperation between family members will be productive or not could be largely influenced by these past conflicts and frustrations. Eventually, these former frictions will surface again and impact their relations at work. Once again, these disputes are usually based on underlying emotions and increase the likelihood that negative consequences will be the final outcome. Those companies that have experienced family feuds do seem to learn from this. They claim that they will actively guide the next generation to prevent them from making the same mistakes and ensure that emotional conflicts do not appear within the company.

> "*Within our family, we have no history of conflicts. I have always had a good understanding with my dad, brother, sister, uncle and cousins. I think that such previous feuds could have a lot of influence, especially if they have left lasting scars". (Participant 2)*

> *"I always had a good bond with my brother but I quickly recognized that he was not the type that likes to work hard. That did bother me and I always thought we were never going to be able to work together. This turned out to be true as he is no longer active in the company". (Participant 7)*

"The collaboration with my brothers has not always been great. Now, I'm the only one still active and I have learned from previous mistakes. That is also what I want to make clear to my son to prevent him from making the same mistakes as we did". (Participant 8)

"We have definitely learned a lot and had to do it the hard way. I would spend years preparing my daughters for the tough job that awaits them. Today I clearly see the mistakes my dad made and I can put things into perspective". (Participant 1)

Which generation is active in the family business might not be the main concern for families. The interviews showed that frustrations and emotional dissonance occurred in all generational stages. At some point, emotional conflicts and disagreements between family members are unavoidable. It's a matter of having the right institutions installed and agreements made to deal with such a situation. This becomes even more crucial when the amount of generations active in the family business increases and disagreements will undoubtedly occur. Most importantly, they should learn from their mistakes and draw lessons to make sure history does not repeat itself.

Theme 6 : Non-family CEO

The main motivation for family firms to hire a non-family CEO is to introduce objectivity into leadership (Lambrechts & Voordeckers, 2014). This might hold true concerning investments and strategy as they will prioritize the business system and less consider the family side. In case that a family conflict would break out, this external CEO might function as a mediator and give his objective opinion to calm down those involved. This might help in the beginning but eventually he will also become emotionally attached to the family and his help will be of less use. Perhaps the biggest downside of hiring a non-family CEO is that his relationship with the employees will be less collegial. The distance between leadership and staff will increase and create an extra hurdle for employees to remain close with their managers. What typifies family businesses is the closeness between all different members and feelings of trust.

"*At a certain point, our non-family manager became too emotionally attached to our family which caused us to look elsewhere for objective input". (Participant 1)*

"*The distance will indeed be different. This is my company, these are my people and I won't quickly fire someone unless some serious things have happened". (Participant 9)*

"*I think I would have more difficulties with a non-family CEO. Someone who completely separates work and private lives and is not open would also never be accepted within the company". (Participant 2)*

"*I find it hard to have a non-family CEO at the top of the company. He does things differently than we would. I don't have the same bond with him as I have with my dad and I feel there is a larger distance between us". (Participant 3)*

"I think a non-family CEO would not tolerate such an open culture. He will want everyone to work hard and distractions to be minimized". (Participant 10)

"The distance between leadership and staff would be bigger. If people come and talk to us it is because they feel comfortable to do so and appreciate the involvement we have with our personnel. If a non-family CEO would lead the company, the employees might start to think it's not his company and not his money so I think that involvement would decline". (Participant 5)

The majority of participants that took part in this study are the managing director of their family business. They all envisage an important role for the CEO to set a good example. The way the CEO deals with his or her emotions and problems will also impact the mindset of the employees to a large extent. They know that employees will observe them closely and copy their behavior, hence why they feel more inclined to distort their negative emotions as they don't want these emotions to adversely impact employees' performance.

"*Regardless of how I really feel, I must always feel good and behave accordingly". (Participant 11)*

"I do think you have to set an example. You can't expect people to do certain things you don't do yourself". (Participant 7)

"The CEO certainly plays an exemplary role. I do try to show my real emotions and create an open culture. I do see that those people that still work here are those that fit into that culture, the others have already left". (Participant 4)

Noteworthy is that leading the business was not mentioned as the main job by most CEO's. Making sure that all noses point in the same direction and being an accessible leader is more important to them. They all realize that the welfare of employees is just as crucial to their firm's performance. That is why most managers try to create an open culture where everyone feels comfortable to speak freely. The way they treat their employees is symbolic for family firms. They may be the leader of the firm but don't try to let this influence their relationship with their staff. To them, the firm is an extension of the family and they try to position themselves amongst the employees to stimulate the feeling of collegiality. The main fear wen hiring a non-family CEO is that this person will put him or herself above the rest meaning that this familiarity will perish.

"*My only job as CEO is to make sure that the people here are as happy as possible and make sure that if problems occur, they are immediately addressed". (Participant 8)*

"*Me and my brother are responsible for the business and will fulfil our job as leaders but you can often find us among our employees. I think that a non-family CEO will position himself above the employees. We fear that this will damage the familiarity within the company". (Participant 12)*

A non-family CEO will have to get accustomed to the company culture and it will take time to fit in. Even when the external CEO becomes accepted within the company, there is still the danger that employees will continue to turn towards family members with their problems. They feel loyal towards the family and the mutual trust they build up over the years appears to be an important factor when it comes to openly discussing their issues.

> "*The employees really feel loyal towards the family. This loyalty and commitment creates a unique bond between leadership and employees". (Participant 7)*

> *"I think that we have a much closer connection with our employees than a non-family CEO would have. I'm afraid that if we were to hire such a non-family CEO, the employees would still come to us with their questions". (Participant 12)*

Employees and family members generally feel less comfortable opening up to external leaders and the larger distance between the two prevents them from approaching their bosses with emotional problems which could cause the levels of emotional dissonance to rise. The possible consequences of emotional dissonance were already outlined in this article. They explicitly show why such a situation where people don't feel comfortable talking about their emotions could cause a lot of damage to the company and should be avoided at all costs.

Conclusions

To this day, the existing literature on emotional dissonance has mostly ignored the family firm setting. Given the simultaneous presence of both the family and business system and the multitude of family firms that can be found across the world, they make for an interesting research setting. The influence of emotions in family firms is often higher than in their non-family owned counterparts where rationality is the basis for most decisions. No matter how hard these family businesses try to have an objective look on things and not let familial considerations affect their business, only few successfully achieve such separation. We found that in some way, emotions almost always interfere with rationality and play a significant role in the family business. To demonstrate why emotions have a larger impact in family firms, several different theories were used. Firstly, the systems theory linked with hybrid identities illustrated the danger for blurred boundaries between the family and business system which could cause emotions to flow from one system to another an increase their intensity (McCollom, 2004). Bowen's family systems theory identifies some emotional patterns that can be found in family business (Bowen, 1978). Additionally, he argued that these patterns will be transferred through generations and stay present in the company. The next perspective that was used to describe the family business as an emotional arena was the emotional ownership theory. In their theory, Björnberg and Nicholson (2012) claim that feelings of emotional and psychological ownership give rise to feelings of attachment to and identification with the family firm. Family members become one with the firm and their well-being becomes inseparable from the state of the company. Lastly, the socioemotional wealth theory was also shortly addressed (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). These non-financial aspects of the firm that meet the family's needs further demonstrate the unique impact emotions can have in family corporations.

An extensive literature review to become fully informed on the uniqueness of family firms related to emotions learned us that these emotions are indeed deeply embedded in the company culture. To prevent negative emotions from influencing their daily operations, a lot of family firms constitute emotion rules that stipulate how emotions should be expressed. They urge family members to hide negative emotions in order to avoid internal conflicts and maintain family harmony which increases the risk of emotional dissonance to emerge. The findings of this study revealed that women are more inclined to engage in such emotional dissonance than men as they scored higher on the emotional labor scale. Women are more emotional in nature and it takes a bigger effort from them to not always show their real emotions. Secondly, those interviewees that indicated to experience emotional dissonance were more likely to hide their emotions, not fake them. Most participants were managing director at their firm and find it natural to hide their real emotions as part of their job. They can't afford to let their emotions influence the way they manage the company as they claim this might lead to irrational decisions. At last, we also found proof for the argument made by Wharton (1993), as the participants got more into contact with clients**,** indicated to hide or distort their emotions more frequently.

When studying emotional dissonance, most researchers tend to focus on the individual consequences it could provoke. The most commonly found outcomes are mental diseases such as burnouts and depressions. Our research supports these findings as the first thing most participants mentioned when asked about the consequences of emotional dissonance were indeed burnouts and depressions. This study also revealed some new interesting findings that focus more on the impact of emotional dissonance on the internal family relationships and firm performance. Generally, relatives are more open towards each other and share their feelings but when frustrations start to emerge, this openness could backfire. Negative emotions and feelings will also be part of the conversation and tensions might start to arise. At a certain point, most family members will get frustrated with their relative(s), hide their authentic emotions and avoid these people. The outcome is an endless discussion that removes the family's focus from trying to make the company grow to solving these family troubles. These conflicts create an unpleasant work environment and makes family members feel uncomfortable working together anymore. A frequent decision these families make is to buy out the other family members to try and bring back harmony within the company. These broken relationships within the family affect not only the family itself but also non-family employees. They usually get dragged into these conflicts which distracts them from their actual work. Fearing that this unsustainable situation might hold back their career, they leave the firm in search for better opportunities. Another possible outcome is that the emotional conflicts at the top of the company create a culture based on fear where employees are afraid to show their real emotions. This could drastically impact their performance and well-being which eventually even leads to a lay-off. Both situations are plausible but the outcome remains the same, an increase in staff turnover.

The introduction of new generations has always been difficult for family firms. The amount of family members active in the company expands and they all have different views on how the firm should be run. This increases the likelihood for opinions to clash and emotional conflicts to emerge. These conflicts could eventually turn into family feuds where relatives will deliberately avoid each other. When their relationships are broken, they will also keep their emotions to themselves and increase their levels of emotional dissonance. The amount of generations that have already survived this transfer and are still active in the company might however not be the prime concern for family firms. When working together with family members, it is very likely that at some point opinions will not coincide which will result in altercations. It's a matter of having the right institutions installed to correctly assess and deal with such a situation. Clear agreements between family members are essential to avoid miscommunications and further arguing. However, as these institutions and agreements are still absent in most family firms, wo do expect the addition of more generations to increase the negative effects of emotional dissonance.

One way to have an objective look on family disputes is by hiring a non-family CEO. He might prevent family members from starting useless discussions and maintain family harmony. This external CEO could be the one that relatives could go talk to without having to fear their opinion might be wrongly received by their family. This way he could enhance open communication and reduce emotional dissonance. The interviews learned us that an external CEO can indeed be helpful in case that there are internal struggles but overall his impact is not really convincing. Too often, the non-family CEO becomes emotionally attached to both family and firm which eliminates his unbiased judgment. Furthermore, they will emphasize feelings of familiarity less and emotions are not top priority for them. This enlarges the distance between family members and employees on the one hand and the non-family CEO on the other. This distance often withholds others from discussing their problems with the CEO. Feelings and emotions will be kept private more often which creates a breeding ground for emotional dissonance and its consequences to negatively impact the family firm. These conclusions lead us to the following research model which can be used and tested in further research.

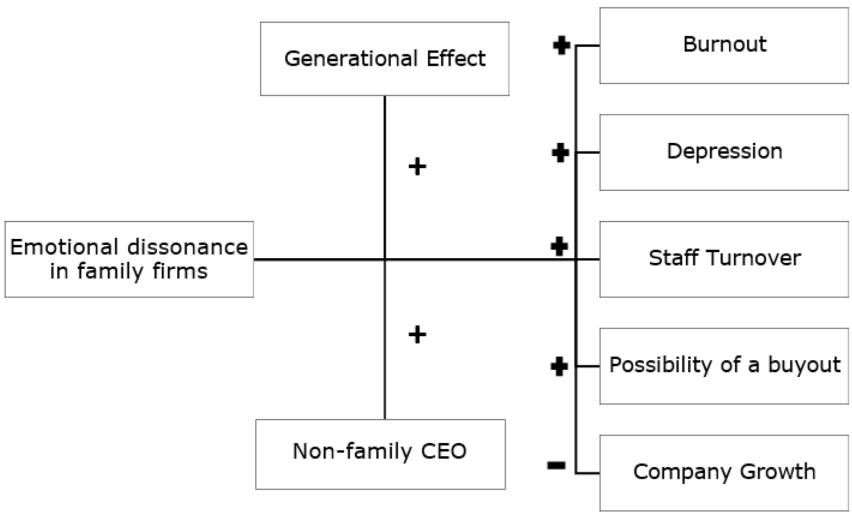

Figure 1. Research model

Limitations and avenues for further research

The findings of this study did reveal some new, interesting insights with regards to emotional dissonance and its consequences for family firms. However, our study had several limitations that might restrict the generalizability of our findings. Firstly, the research was carried out in a small region in Belgium. The twelve companies that agreed to participate were all located in the provinces of Limburg or Flemish Brabant. The geographical scope was rather limited which calls for new research that expands this range. Besides, the number of participants was sufficient to explore and get a first look on the consequences of emotional dissonance in family firms as we did find some interesting results. If we were to generalize these findings on a larger scale, new quantitative research is needed to figure out whether these findings also hold true on a larger scale. A second limitation that might harm the generalizability of this study is the number of companies that claimed to have experienced emotional dissonance and family feuds. Only two out of the twelve companies have really been confronted with emotional conflicts. Those were explicitly used to establish our results, the others applied a more hypothetical reasoning when asked about the potential consequences of emotional dissonance in family businesses. Remarkably, the answers of both parties were very much aligned, meaning that those companies that are yet to experience emotional dissonance are capable of envisioning the possible repercussions. Also, the average score on emotional dissonance was between 11 and 15 out of 30, whether this is high or low remains unknown as we don't have much data to compare with. This should not reduce the usefulness of our data as we did not focus on the scores themselves but rather on the differences between multiple participants.. Lastly, emotions are still a sensitive topic that not everyone feels comfortable to discuss. Although most interviewees were very open, we still have to consider the possibility that not all participants have been completely honest or withheld some information. Overall, we expect this not to influence the results too heavily. If the participants were not eager to discuss emotions, they probably also would not have agreed to have a conversation and take part in this study.

Something that could also have had an impact on our findings is the fact that the vast majority of interviewees were the managing director at their firms. They regularly mentioned that this leading position requires them to be emotionally stable and not let emotions influence their work. In order to meet the criteria of a good leader, they claim to hide their negative emotions and try to spread positivity across the company. This automatic reflex could introduce a bias into our study and lead to higher levels of emotional dissonance as they feel required to hide negative emotions because of their status. Therefore we recommend the next study to also include family members that are not active in the management team. This also leads us to the next and final recommendation, the inclusion of non-active family members or non-family employees. This study only included active family members but it would be interesting to see how non-family employees experience emotions in family firms. The participants all claimed to try and establish a familial atmosphere, whether employees feel the same way about this and how this affects their display of emotions would be an interesting experiment. Non-active family members could be included as well to find out if their non-activity is due to emotional reasons or a career-based decision. We can conclude that there are several limitations that keep us from generalizing our findings but that also has never been the main purpose of this study. Family firms were mostly ignored when researchers investigated the consequences of emotional dissonance in the business setting. This study tried to fill that gap and introduce the family firm as an interesting area. This exploratory study did reveal some new insights that could stimulate the debate concerning emotional dissonance in family firms and provide a framework for further research.

Exhibit A

Emotional Dissonance in family firms interview protocol

Institution : UHasselt

Interviewee (Title and Name) :

Date :

Interviewer : Brent Claus

Subject : The consequences of emotional dissonance in family firms.

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate my note-taking, I would like to audio tape our conversations today. For your information, only researchers on the project will be privy to the tapes which will eventually be destroyed after they are transcribed. Please be aware that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) I do not intend to inflict any harm. If you feel comfortable with these requirements please sign this document as a seal of approval. Thank you for your agreeing to participate.

Signature interviewee:

Introduction

You were invited to this interview today because you have been identified as someone who has a lot of experience in the field of family firms. My research project as a whole focuses on the consequences of emotional dissonance, in particular in family firms as they have proven to be fertile grounds for emotional conflicts. Emotional dissonance can be described as the difference between expressed and experienced emotions. Family firms are yet to be examined with regards to emotional dissonance, hence why I chose this topic. My study does not aim to evaluate your techniques or experiences. Rather, I am trying to learn more about emotional dissonance, and hopefully get a better understanding of the uniqueness of family firms with regards to managing emotional conflicts.

Interviewee background

How long have you been …

_______ in your present position?

_______ at this institution?

What did you study?

How did you end up at this company?

What is your role in the family business?

Questions :

1. Can you tell me what it's like working in a family business and what makes these enterprises so unique?

   Probes : Conflicts – emotions – family relations

2. How would you describe the role of emotions in family businesses?

   Probes : Always negative consequences? Can they be constructive?

3. How are emotional conflicts dealt with in this company?

   Probes : Conflicts not always bad (task vs relational) – certain policy in the company?

4. Literature states that family members often engage in emotional labor in family firms. What is your vision on this?

   Probes : Own experience – consequences?

5. How do you see the role of the CEO in dealing with emotions/emotional labor in family firms?

   Probes : Family vs non-family - objectivity – no understanding of family code

6. In your opinion, do you think that the number of generations involved in the family business will influence the way emotions/emotional labor are dealt with?

   Probes : Which way? - diversity between family branches – diversity in vision

7. Is there something you would still like to add concerning this topic that wasn't specifically mentioned in this interview

8. Do you have any questions yourself?

To end :

All that's left for me right now is to thank you for your cooperation and your interesting insights on this topic. If I were to have any more questions or uncertainties, I will contact you by e-mail. If you would like, I can always send you a copy of the final product if you'd be interested to see the outcome.

Exhibit B

Emotional Dissonance : Questionnaire

In the table below, please indicate with a number how often you, on an average working day, display the following behaviors when interacting with the groups of people listed in the columns. Please use the following scale:

Scale : 1 ---------- 2 ---------- 3 ---------- 4 ---------- 5
Never Rarely Sometimes Often Always

Behavior	While interacting with employees	While interacting with the top management team
1. I display emotions that I don’t feel.		
2. I make an effort to feel the emotions that I am supposed to show to others.		
3. I hide my true feelings.		
4. I fake emotions.		
5. I try to feel the emotions I’m supposed to feel as part of my job.		
6. I display the emotions that are expected of me instead of the emotions that I feel.		
7. I prevent myself from displaying the emotions that I feel.		
8. I hide what I feel.		
9. I try to experience the emotions that I have to show.		

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De gevolgen van emotionele dissonantie in familiebedrijven

Richting: **master in de toegepaste economische wetenschappen-innovatie en ondernemerschap**
Jaar: **2018**

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