‘Invisible’ and ‘Hidden’ Actors: A Gendered Discourse on Participation in Family-controlled Businesses in Zimbabwe

Langtone Maunganidze

Abstract

African women in general and Zimbabweans in particular, constitute a significant and growing proportion of owners and managers of small enterprises but studies have tended to ignore or downplay their powerful contributions. The purpose of this article is to examine the ways in which women’s participation in family controlled businesses have remained invisible or hidden. The article is influenced by Fairclough’s (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Bourdieu's (1994) theory of habitus. Applying a qualitative methodology, the findings are based on an exploratory case study of 10 family businesses selected by purposive availability sampling from the following sectors; transport, hairdressing, retail and general dealing, driving school, manufacturing and security. The article concludes that women particularly wives’ exclusion from both management and succession was not accidental but an instrumental calculation, systematic expression of power symmetries and reconfiguration of interests by actors during social interaction. Perhaps the particular invisibility or hiddenness of women’s role and influence in family businesses can also be explained by the gendered discourses which have produced an ideologically controlled male narrative on family business. Women represented a hidden and invisible resource that should be recognized to ensure sustainable family businesses.

Keywords: discourse, gender, habitus, invisible, hidden, family business.

Introduction and Background

In Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular, female-owned businesses are still fewer than those owned by males despite the fact that women have been involved in entrepreneurship for a relatively long time. The central argument of this article is that there is no lack of female entrepreneurship, but that it is hidden or rendered invisible through representations about entrepreneurship that tends to be pro-patriarchal. Boserup's (1970) and Rani's (1996) works on the contributions of women to economic development show that women have historically been equally productive but male dominated systems and practices have rendered them invisible or excluded. The lack of female entrepreneurship research is therefore part of a much wider problem which has resulted in the social sciences being structured in a manner which favours the male experience (Carter & Jones-Evans 2000). Women do contribute immensely to the success of family businesses, but are rendered invisible. Women represented a hidden resource and their participation often went unrecorded (Colli 2003). Family business success stories have been stories about men's achievements in which women barely feature. Studies (Dumas 1992; Ogbor 2000; Poza 2001; Carter & Jones-Evans 2000; Colli 2003; Mulholland 2003) demonstrate how the entrepreneurship and family business literature constantly reflects and reinforces the relative silence and invisibility of women in the ideological dialogue that creates entrepreneurial discourse. Embedded in that discourse is the assumption that the leadership involved in founding and running a business is most traditionally male. Perhaps that particular invisibility and hiddenness can be explained by the traditional discourses in entrepreneurship which are so often gender and ethnocentrically biased, and ideologically determined and controlled (Ogbor 2000; Hamilton & Smith 2003).

The main focus of this article is to examine the ways in which women's participation in family-controlled businesses have remained unrecognized and hidden. The article also attempts to demonstrate the ystematic marginalisation of wives and other female kin from business leadership at both founder and successor stages. Gender shapes the dynamics of the businesses in many subtle ways including the diversity of background of women in small businesses. For example, in Zimbabwe women tended to be more involved in personal service sectors; hairdressing, small commodity retail and cross-border trade (Wild 1997; Hebink & Bourdillon 2001;

Muzvidziwa 2001). Within a particular business, men tended to do more hiring and firing, sourcing new markets and mostly performing tasks connected with budgeting and planning. In her analysis of 'entrepreneurial masculinities', Mulholland (1996) argued that patriarchal forces shaped the role of women in businesses. Women's domestic labor and feminine ideologies play a fundamental part in the construction of particular masculinities supporting particular entrepreneurial activity. Renzulli, Aldrich and Moody (2000) add weight to this debate by stressing that there are also consistent differences between the social networks in which men and women are embedded and this tended to affect the differential family business start-up rates. Similar observations by Meer (1997) and Mitchell (2004) on South African entrepreneurs were that both men and women were primarily motivated by the need for independence, achievement and material incentives.

Although women are beginning to constitute a significant and growing proportion of owners and managers of small enterprises, studies (Mulholland 1996; Meer 1997; Mbiba 1999; Mtika & Doctor 2001; Mtika 2003); have tended to ignore their important role. In particular the role that the female spouses play in the businesses has often been downplayed by both literature and practice and this article attempts to fill this gap by discussing these so-called 'invisibles' and 'hiddens', in the form of spouses, sisters and daughters. Apart from helping in raising capital and maximizing trust and loyalty their participation brings in a sense of 'familiness' which is an important stabilizing business resource (Carter & Jones-Evans 2000).

The importance of gender dynamics in family business survival, growth and continuity needs both scholarly and practical attention. The problem is that even though there is a notable increase in the participation of females including founding of businesses, research on this aspect particularly in Zimbabwe has been scarce. Where such research exists, it concentrates on experiences from stable economies of either Europe or Asia and studies specifically targeting the role of wives, daughters and sisters particularly in the Zimbabwean context have been limited.

Theoretical Orientation

This article applies Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Bourdieu's (1993; 1994) theory of habitus to examine the gendered exclusionary experiences of women in family-controlled businesses. CDA provides a framework for examining the oppressive constraints and contradictions that operate around ideas of femininity which have pushed women into positions of passivity and silence. Bourdieu proffers a socio-cultural explanation for the gendered nature of exclusions and inclusions. However, the same gendered *habitus* has provided women with a base from which to undermine the very system that constricts them (McNay 1994). Women are more than passive victims of domination as they have managed to reposition themselves through revaluation of their experiences as actors in the businesses.

The entrepreneurial identity of male and female emerges through participation and is constructed socially, culturally and in relation to others. Those identities can be legitimized and undermined at the same time (Foucault 2001). For example, the use of a particular business 'name' depicts gender or power discourses that project dominant practices and value systems of a society (Charsley 1996). Names, such as 'Mushi and Sons', 'MM and Sons' and 'G and M' Brothers project exclusionary gendered tendencies by founders. In line with CDA, these identities show how actors experience a variation of invisibility and hiddenness or their combination in line with changes in social interactions and experiences of participants. In line with social constructionism (Burr 1995), the identities are shifting, negotiated and relational showing the subtle deployments of power within both family and business (Kondo 1990). Primogeniture, gendered socialisation practices including male leadership 'apprenticeships' are also all together part of systematic exclusion that effectively deny ownership or control by women (Mulholland 2003).

The logic of such practice can also be explained by Bourdieu's notion of habitus when social actors draw on internalised values that stem from their interaction, mediation and interpretation of convention in making sense of the social world (Mulholland 2003). According to Bourdieu (1994), *habitus* is a set of durable, transposable dispositions which regulate and shape individual thoughts and actions. This *habitus* is gendered because 'men and women hold very different worldviews which lead to different social actions or practices' (Elam 2008: 35 cited in Scott 2009). Business ownership is viewed as a form of symbolic capital, which is tied to 'legitimacy', 'status', and 'power' and that entrepreneurship is conceptualised for women as, 'a practice, or habituated strategy of action that is legitimised and chosen according to social definitions of status appropriate behaviours and competencies' (Elam 2008: 47 cited in Scott 2009). Fields relate to a structured space of forces and struggles, consisting of an ordered system and an identifiable network of relationships that impact upon habitus of individuals. As certain individuals enter the field, they are more aware of the rules of the game and have greater capacity to manipulate these rules through established capital appropriation. Strategies by the players become meaningful when there is a general acceptance of the 'rules of the game'. Playing the game without questioning the rule, is an effect of symbolic violence (Bourdieu 1994).

Methodology

This article is based on findings from an exploratory case study of ten Harare-based family-controlled businesses selected by use of a purposive availability sampling design. The selected businesses were indigenously owned, managed or controlled by either founders or their subsequent successors. Data analysis is based on the findings of a field work design that was initially conducted between 2004 and 2006. Since then some changes have occurred which could impact negatively on the current findings. In dealing with this limitation, recent follow-up visits to some of the businesses together with the documentary research and content analysis of literature that have been carried out since then, show relative consistency with the initial observations though. The research design primarily utilized qualitative description and analysis focusing on participants' constructions of their world (Jorgenson 1991; von Glasersfield 1991; Steier 1995; Grant & Perren 2002). Yin (1994) made earlier observations that this research design allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events.

Qualitative tools used included interviews, observations, informants' historical experiences and author's lived experiences in Zimbabwe. Data was analysed using a thematic or domain technique of case study reporting which captures the content in descriptive and exploratory way. The findings are an outcome of an ethically informed research. Access to family business actors required careful staging and negotiation. Case profiles particularly names of people are presented in pseudo or anonymous identities in order to protect their rights, interests, sensitivities, and privacy (Finnegan 2003). This is because researchers must not only take into consideration the short term consequence of their work (Mosse 2005; Sridhar & Stirrat 2005) but also be prepared for any possible questions that may be raised in future.

Case Background

G & M BROS Panel Beaters

G & M Panel Beaters was established by two brothers, Gody and Meck. Located in one of the busiest commercial industrial parks of the city the business deals with vehicle spray painting and panel beating. The founders had a combined working experience of 14 years as mechanics and panel beaters. Gody is the Managing Director and also in charge of finance and administrative issues, while Meck deputizes him and responsible for operations. There are 4 managers; their younger brother, Meck's wife and two non-family members. Gody's wife is not actively involved in the business as she is already working as a full-time nurse in Government. None of their children are involved in the business as they are still in college pursuing various career paths. There is a board of directors comprising three non-family members in a non-executive capacity operating as 'advisors' particularly in legal and financial matters. It has a staff complement of more than sixty permanent members but occasionally engage casuals operating on a shift basis. Although both directors considered succession planning as integral to business continuity, there is no explicit succession plan as it was feared that would cause conflict. They believe that the use of professional management systems would facilitate organizational sustainability beyond their time.

T & M Appreciative Pottery

Located about 1 km East of Harare City Centre, the company is co-owned by two brothers, Ken and Tau and their nephew Tom and his wife, Jesca. The two brothers have majority shares while Tom and his wife own the rest. No one except Tau had background in the business operations. They are all members of the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) a Christian sect with strong entrepreneurial orientation. The systems are highly informal. They operate what they call ‘running orders’ with exclusive city shops in Harare and with some products being exported to South Africa. Contracts are earned through political and religious networking. From an initial staff complement of only 4 it has grown to 15. Ken is the executive director and is supported by Tom as the sales manager. There are operational teams led by Jessica and responsible for specific processes for example the cutting, glazing and polishing. No other family members are involved either as employees in the management or operations. There was no succession plan at the company although Tom acknowledged that any one of the three founders could lead in the absence of others.

K-C Guard Sec

K-C Guard Security was established as an equal shareholding partnership in 1993 and co-directed by Kama and Chaka bringing their experiences as private and state security operatives respectively. It has branches in major cities with an administrative support staff in excess of twenty and more than 200 security guards with business contracts with very large public and private corporations. Their wives are non-executive directors. It has six departments; Operations, Administration, Finance, Loss Control, Human Resources and Public Relations that are managed by proper structures but without a formally constituted Board of Directors. There were a few relatives from either director’s kinship lines and employed in various capacities with no explicit or tacit intention to transfer the organization to any of them. Political networks in both public and private sector guaranteed the company new business contracts and retention of old clients. There were no explicit succession plans although spouses’ non-executive directorship roles could easily be translated into an active directorship in the event of any leadership vacuum.

K-G Driving School

This company was established in 1987 by Ked and his late brother, Gin. After Gin’s death in 2000, Ked sold some shares to one of the founding lady instructors, Mrs Gasa who was already solely managing the Marondera branch by 2006. It began operating with 2 cars and by 2006 it had a total fleet of 12 and instructor complement of 10. Ked's wife was engaged on full-time basis as a director. Of the three sons, only one who is an accountant was interested in the business and has been subtly receiving leadership 'apprentice-ship' for some time. He appeared the most preferred and potential successor and occasionally assisted his mother in managing the finance side of the business. The eldest daughter is a pharmacist and not involved. Her husband was partially involved in the business advising on marketing issues but already out of the succession running because culturally he would not inherit any family assets as an in-law. The youngest daughter aged 21 was studying computing science at a local university and not involved in the business.

'His' Rib Hair Saloon

The hairdressing shop is owned by 35-year old, Mrs. Nkosi and located at one of Harare's high density suburb's shopping malls. She said she was motivated by the need for self-sustenance after her husband had left to work in Botswana in early 2000. She had two years of experience in similar environment. By 2005 she had seven permanent workers that included three male and four female hair dressers. The daily operations were fully managed by her younger sister with the assistance of one of the founding hairdressers. She put in place this management arrangement to fill the gap when she would be out of the country either on orders or visiting her husband. According to Mrs Nkosi, planning in this type of environment was rendered useless as they were always at the mercy of highly unpredictable circumstances. No other family member was involved in the business. The husband who was based in Botswana though physically absent was still very influential in decision making. Her sons aged five and seven were still too young to be involved. There was no succession plan but the close association she had with her sister effectively placed her sister in strategic position. However, she said that succession needed to always respect the 'rules' of inheritance to avoid conflict. In her case the business still belonged to the family and their children would also automatically succeed.

Mushi and Sons Bus Service

Mushi and Sons Bus Service was formed by Mr George Mushi in 1950s but was now owned by one of his sons, James. According to James, his father had been raised up in a polygamous family of three wives with many children. No wife or daughter had been involved in the business. At one time in the early 1980s the fleet had risen to forty eight buses but had declined to four in 2005 after his father's death in 2002. The elder brothers, motivated by greed wanted to exclude younger ones in the running of the business despite their lack of expertise and skill. To resolve the dispute the business shares were divided among the sons and James, who was a bank teller got the bus company in 2006 and continued to operate it under the old name. No other family members are directly involved in the operations. Drawing from guidance from the history of Mushi, James indicated that sons and wives could fully contribute to the continuity of business if properly inducted and supported by systems. There was no nominated or selected successor because that would create conflict among family members. However when time comes one should be appointed on merit not by birth rank as has already been painfully experienced in this business.

Freepace Transport

Freepace Transport was founded by Mr Mate in 1983. It started operating with one bus primarily providing passenger transport services to commuters between the city, Harare and Wedza a rural service centre less than 100 km away. When Mate died in 1992, the fleet had grown to nine. His wife was not involved in either management or operations of the business and also died three years later. They had five children, three boys and two girls. Since the founder's death there has been notable decline with the fleet having been reduced to three. There had been no clear successor except that the eldest son, Kennedy started performing leadership roles when he was only 21 years old, ahead of his two elder sisters who were working as finance persons. The two sisters got married and left. Kennedy also got married but his wife was not participating in the running of the business. According to him there were no plans to involve her in the business as she was pursuing a teaching career at that time.

Pen Family Bazaars

Pen Family Bazaars is a supermarket located in one of Harare‘s high density suburbs and under a family directorship of 3 brothers and 2 sisters. It was founded by their late mother in 1990 using her late husband's pension benefits and her own savings from informal trading. Since all the brothers were in full employment the elder of the two sisters, Mrs Chiwa was appointed overall supervisor in 2000. She was also the only one who had received sufficient orientation from the late mother and as such had more intimate knowledge on the enterprise than any other. There was an emotional relationship between the business and their family making it mandatory for all family members to respect legacy of unity and cooperation left by their mother. The business belonged more to the family than individuals. The family and business visions were quite in tandem with each other and mutually supportive. Family and business life was perceived as intertwined. Neither children nor spouses were involved in the business.

Warren Moonlight Bar

The bar was formed in 1995 by 35 year-old, Charles who had a strong retail and general dealing background. He was the youngest brother of the three brothers. His father owned supermarkets and bottle stores both in the city and rural home area a few kilometres outside Harare and this became a springboard for his future entrepreneurial ventures. Upon the death of his father, his estate became a centre of conflict between his brothers. Their mother who was never involved in the businesses moved to stay at one of the rural shops after the businesses were sold and proceeds shared among all the children. Charles started his own beer outlet/bar using his previous experience in the family business but still assisted in the running of one of the remaining family shops in the rural area where his mother stayed. His participation was more of a social obligation than for economic benefits. His own business was doing well and has been transformed into a popular sports bar. His wife who worked for a local commercial bank was not involved in the business. Furthermore, his two sons were still too young and in school to be involved.

MM Hardware

The hardware was established by Mr. Munake in 1993 through bank loans and savings. After about 5 years he became too preoccupied with his full-time job and transferred operational management to his wife, Hilda as the Managing Director and two sons, Munake and Runyararo as alternate supervisors. All the employees were non-family members. Management style was relatively non-formalized. Meetings were held as and when issues arose. There was no written down succession plan but the sons' active involvement in the management of the business could provide sufficient preparation for the possible takeover in the event that the founder did not return. According to Hilda the involvement of the children was part of 'apprenticeship' in preparation for possible management take over. It was not clear what would happen if the founder finally retired from his full-time job and return to the business.

Discussion

The 'Invisible' and 'Hidden' Participants

Actors experience a variation of invisibility and hiddenness or their combination in line with changes in social interactions and experiences of participants (Maunganidze 2008). 'Invisibles' do a lot but are not recognized (Poza & Messer 2001) and often put more effort to improve their chances of possible 'inclusion'. For example, the varied participation of wives at K-G Driving, T & M Appreciative and G & M Panel Beaters show women's direct contributions to the businesses. Invisible participation includes wives 'invisible contributions' through tasks that maintain the family and household. The fact that wives, as illustrated by K-C Guard Sec, Mushi and Sons and Warren Moonlight Bar, were pursuing other careers and not directly involved in the businesses did not necessarily reflect no contribution at all. Their participation could be 'invisible' but hidden. The 'hidden' are passive actors who feel not recognized but conscious of the possibility of being marginalized and exploited. They may express resistance by doing the opposite such as taking up a full-time job outside family business. For example, at G&M Bros Panel Beaters, one of the Directors' (Gody's) wife decided to 'remain a full-time nurse'.

'Invisibles' like spouses may be neither employees nor owners but part of the personal contact network of owners although effectively excluded from succession on the basis of primogeniture. The same personal contact network has been regarded as a business resource. Networks assist small firms in their acquisition of information and advice (Shaw 1997). Networks have assisted women successfully start and manage their own businesses outside the male dominated structures. Mrs Gasa of the K-G Brothers' Driving School and Mrs Nkosi of 'His Rib' Hair saloon are good cases in point.

The Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion

Different gender stereotypes continue to exist across all sectors and family firms are not immune. In fact women who work in family firms face more gender related issues than those in the corporate world (Martinez-Jimenez 2009). Unlike in the corporate world, women are not just subordinated employees by virtue of gender but are subordinated to men as wives or daughters. Relations between parents and children and between lovers are all power relations. In line with CDA (Van Dijk 1993), various institutions exert their power on groups and individuals and the latter affirm their identity and resistance to the effects of power. Incorporating women into family business governance structures is an instrumental calculation or craft by husbands and fathers to pacify them into loyalty and deflate resistance. As a response women retreat into 'hidden' postures in order to affirm their identity and resistance. Kennedy's wife (Freepace Transport) and Charles' (Warren Moonlight bar) have decided to pursue different careers. Non-participation works as defence or rebellious mechanism against male dominance. Power can be contested and subject to negotiation. Power relations must be permanently renewed and reaffirmed (Foucault 1980; 1989).

The inclusionary and exclusionary mechanisms are reconstructed conveniently for purposes of mobilizing and controlling women's labor (Mulholland 2003). They are sites of strategic and instrumental calculation as well as sites of exploitative exchanges of services, labour, cash, coercion and violence. 'Family label' was double-edged. It was used as a stabilizing mechanism in the event of potential resistance to any suggested changes to either strategy or structure of the business. The involvement of spouses, daughters and sisters and family business ownership and management was not genuinely collective (Johannison 2000; 2002) but was a myth that serves to mobilize members for continuity and loyalty. Even though participation was not always genuine enough regular conversations created perceptions of shared beliefs which could be an important stimulant of collective family activity. Family cohesion like all other forms of social group dynamics does not occur by accident. The philosophy of 'familiness' (Chrisman, Chua & Zahra 2005) which was maintained through the persistent continuity of family names was partly blamed for the marginalization of female participants. 'Familiness' was considered a myth and intended to mask inequalities across levels in the organization. It acts as a technique or 'strategem' (Bailey 1980) of sustaining the power and domination of a 'monolithic' knowledge (Ogbor 2000). It is just a social label and related ideology that masked the unequal nature of actor relationship in the family business.

'Familiness' as a form of entrepreneurial identity might be better understood from the concept of self as relational, multiple and contradictory. 'It is not a fixed "thing", it is negotiated, open, shifting, ambiguous, the result of culturally available, power-laden enactments of these meanings in everyday situations' (Kondo 1990: 24). It is not easy to assess the level of 'familiness' in a business by way of the number of family members participating or not participating. Using the social constructionist orientation, one discerns some fuzziness or plasticity of family boundaries; since 'family' as a gradient term, is applicable to various individuals in varying degrees (Jorgenson 1991). Most family business leaders preferred brothers and sons to daughters to take over their businesses for continuity of family name. Some male founders were even reluctant to pass on the 'relay' baton to spouses but rather to their sisters particularly unmarried ones who were believed to be loyal and committed to the family vision and without any risk of losing the family assets to her husband. Sisters are often considered 'honorary men' and brothers have tended to co-partner them. For example, Mrs Chiwa of Pen Family Bazaars is co-directing the company with her brothers. This was because a young widow could remarry and have all the assets transferred to another man's family name. Actors are redefining their positions consistent with new demands of the environment.

Women's Entrepreneurial Orientations

Some elements of entrepreneurial behaviour may be weak and others strong. Bourdieu's *habitus* explains why people of different genders are located in particular 'social positions'. Women approach business start-up from very different social positions, characterized by different sets of resources and different rates of returns. Therefore, factors such as age, gender, experience and education, as well as 'social positions, worldviews and dispositions', could predict whether someone becomes an entrepreneur or not. The gender interaction model actually reduced women's prospects of starting a business. The 'national gender culture' (i.e. the role of women and men) and the *habitus* worldview then influence women's entrepreneurial orientation (Scott 2009). For example, of the 10 businesses selected for this study only two are first generation or founded by females. The only females who were both owners and managers were found at 'His Rib' hair saloon, a traditionally female oriented career and the other one, a supermarket, Pen Family Bazaars.

The 'invisibility' of women (Cole 1997) in family businesses is not only due to the continuing stereotyping and discrimination that are the result of prejudices in society but partly due to women's own limiting attitudes toward their own potential and attitudes derived largely from the way they have been socialized which Dumas (1992) termed the 'glass ceiling' syndrome. Mrs Chiwa tended to believe her role in the business was to provide stability for the benefit of her brothers who were the natural successors. In fact, the case of 'HIS RIB' saloon and Mrs Gasa's sole management of a driving school in which women in their own right have started and managed their own businesses, do not render support to this 'glass ceiling' (Dumas 1992). Women particularly wives and daughters do not advance as quickly as men and remain in lower level positions and tended to see themselves as not successful successors. Women remain 'hidden' and feel not recognized and appearing quite content with this absence (Poza & Messer 2001). For those who would have died, their contributions would remain 'hidden heritage' and systematically obliterated from records.

Governance

All the family businesses in this study were directed and controlled by family members. Given the connection between the family and business, family relationships have to be managed in addition to business issues (Cadbury 2000; Pieper 2003). Families can exercise influence through leading and or controlling the business by means of such management and or governance participation.

In this study there is no evidence of genuine or effective Boards of company directors. Often lists of company directors included spouses, children, parents and other relatives but most of them were unaware of such arrangements. All the 10 businesses selected for this study were officially registered and had lists of 'company directors' whose invisibility was even most pronounced at succession stage. In 5 of the 8 male-owned businesses, wives were officially registered company directors but very inactive and benefits associated with such positions only accruing to them indirectly. They neither attended business meetings nor played any advisory roles. As a discursive construct, the Directors were appointed to act as either symbols of modernity or professionalism and rhetoric of inclusion that provided images and character to 'familism' (Shawver, 2004). There were only three businesses where an attempt to introduce 'genuine' board members was evident. Examples of such boards are found at K-C Guard Sec, G & M Bros Panel Beaters and T &M Appreciative Pottery. These were unique and relatively uncharacteristic of most indigenous family influenced businesses. They operated on partnership basis and in such cases the role of the Board, which is composed of family and non-family members, would ensure equitable distribution of power and control. They were all in first generation and founded by people who had recently retired from full-time employment and with relatively previous contact with concepts of strategic planning and corporate governance.

Participation of family members particularly spouses is both an ideological and political. The name of the business was one of existing discourses or representations that rendered women invisible. For example out of the ten selected only two, Warren Moonlight Bar and Freepace Transport were not explicitly masculinist. By involving their spouses, the founder or owner-manager creates a sense of 'collective entrepreneurship' or 'involvement' (Johannisson 2000; 2002) that engenders a sense of cooperation and shared vision necessary for business continuity. This is a kind of impression management. Such machinations by husbands to construct their spouses' visibility are numerous. KG Driving School, K-C Guard Sec Security and G & M Panel Beaters are cases in point. All these are partnerships and in each of them the spouse of the other core-owner manager was not actively involved in the management of the business. Presumably the spouses can be visible as long as they do not challenge the power of the 'CEO' (Poza & Messer 2001). Even where they started their own businesses, due to patrifocal influence women 'owners' would seek authority from spouses regarding key business decisions like relocation, expansion, diversification or disposing of the business. These are the experiences and perspectives of the situation in which wives find themselves. Mrs Nkosi's own illustration is a good example; '*My husband may be physically out of the country but involved in the key decisions of this small business. It's as if I report to him about my own business!*'

Succession

This research supports previous literature (Cole 1997; Keating & Little 1997; Stavrou 1999; Vera & Dean 2005; Martinez-Jimenez 2009) that shows women not being chosen as successors into ownership or management positions in the family business. Most successions are based on primogeniture which dictate one gaining access to the helm of a firm based on birth order. Knowledge of family history, birth order and gender were identified as the key successor attributes. Gerontocratic and patriarchal values that are deeply entrenched in the family (Birley 1986; Cheater 1986; Wild 1997) impacted on the character of succession. Institutional constraints in the form of cultural and environmental considerations were identified as a key family business survival variables (Manolova & Yan 2002; Ukaegbu 2003; Mtika 2003). Succession is culturally influenced in that the business was part of the family property and assets and would be owned by everyone and the eldest son would be expected to hold the assets in trust for the benefit of all. In some cases like Pen Family Bazaars, business premises naturally became family residential property rendering any succession plans irrelevant.

Historical patriarchal rules of inheritance and property rights in Zimbabwe have had a significant bearing on the nature and extent of the succession process (Mbiba 1999). Although most business leaders appreciated the need to appoint successors on the basis of knowledge of business and related experience, they still argued that the family name was built by the business and everyone was expected to endeavour to protect that 'identity' as an obligation. Sisters and daughters could be married and that would create an additional problem as their spouses and siblings would also expect to benefit from any succession arrangement. Passing on the business to a female would sound the death knell of the family name! Succession would equally follow the same principle. It is a relational and even protracted process. Successors, regardless of gender, were expected to be images of founders and with a moral obligation to ensure business continuity. Given the founder's position, his or her values can be continued by the rest of the family, whether or not the founder remains actively involved in the business.

This type of family and business culture and values were characteristic of the company's founder (Gallo 2004), which he practised and succeeded in passing on to the next generations. Therefore, it is not only the characteristic of the founder and incumbent leader which significantly influenced the character of the firm in the next generation but 'gendered habitus'. Very few females would have received the 'basic leadership apprenticeships' (Mulholland 2003) needed to prepare them for succession. Succession alters the processes and outcomes of entrepreneurial development and orientation (Haverman & Khaire 2003). Female successors among indigenous businesses are generally scarce. In this study, all the successors of the businesses in both second and later generations were males; mostly sons and brothers. This was not accidental. Children, particularly sons have rights to their father's wealth under patriliny to the extent that at the death of the father, the eldest takes charge of the father's wealth (Stafford 2000) and even succeeds as head of the family with decision making powers. Property ownership and management transfer would normally follow the Shona (one of the Zimbabwean dominant ethnic groups) cultural rules of inheritance and succession, where successor or heir apparent are 'fixed' by 'gender' or 'birth order' practice of succession. The oldest surviving son, provided he was of age, succeeds to his father's name and assumes control of the estate of his deceased father for the benefit of its members. The situation at Freepace is a case in point where the late founder's eldest son, Kennedy was only twenty-one years old when he assumed leadership functions following the death of his father ahead of his elder sisters.

Conclusions

This article has shown that participation in family businesses is continuously reconstructed as actors negotiate for social space and identity in the light of the permeating power dynamics of gender. The unequal ownership and management practices are bound by a convention of habitus of cultural practices that have influenced the entrepreneurial orientations. Due to women's social positions, world views, experience and previous orientation most women have engaged in personal service sectors that include hairdressing, small commodity retail, cross-border trade which have traditionally been feminist-oriented. They have also participated in family businesses as either secretarial assistants or 'emotional' caretakers or managers (Mulholland 2003). Such practices have rendered women either invisible or hidden.

One of the key conclusions to emerge from this study was that; not all the 'family' businesses were genuinely collective. Various machinations and taken-for-granted practices have become one of the existing discourses or representations rendering women invisible or hidden in ownership, governance and succession practices. Family involvement as reflected by the composition of Boards of Directors was a rhetoric, myth and ideology meant to ensure sustainable cohesion and cooperation from all actors (Hamilton 2004). 'Familism' was an instrument of social capital accumulation (Jenssen & Kristiansen 2004) often working as a labour mobilization and control strategy. As a result, the immense contribution of women in founding and running businesses has been 'invisible' or 'hidden' (Ogbor 2000; Poza & Messer 2001). The 'collective' nature of participation was a social construction arising out of the interactions whose outcome was influenced by the dominant actors.

Women's invisibility or hiddenness is not accidental but a systematic expression of power symmetries and reconfiguration of interests by actors during social interaction (Mulholland 2003). The invisibility may not necessarily reflect systematic exclusion but women's acts of redefining their identity and restoring their independence albeit the traditionally marginalising and exploitative relations of production. It may be a form of resistance to male dominance (Foucault 2001). The article reflects that women's contribution is still either ignored or presented in stereotypical feminized forms both in literature and practice. It provides new insights into the understanding of the nature and extent of women's invisibility and hiddenness in family-controlled family businesses.

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Langtone Maunganidze (PhD)
Faculty of Social Sciences
University of Botswana
langtone.maunganidze@mopipi.ub.bw
lmaunganidze@gmail.com