

Legacy in a Family Business Context: An Intergenerational Curriculum to Foster Legacy and Assist in Navigating Transitions

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

in the
Educational Leadership Program
Faculty of Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Fall 2021

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Abstract

This study looks at the legacy between me and my father within a family business context through autoethnography and William Pinar's (1975) model of Currere.

My thesis is that legacy includes the results of connected and collective aspirations and shapes the journey to full personhood across generations. It encompasses intergenerational learning and struggles from one generation to the next and can include both elements that are good and bad which may either aid or hinder the next generation from living and growing towards full personhood.

I have chosen autoethnography because the cultural context of my story is important to its interpretation. I have written about my experiences growing up in a family business and consulting for family firms in the form of vignettes across different life phases (Regressive Movement). My story culminates in the disorienting dilemma of my father's death, my wife leaving me and needing to terminate my international consulting work to be with my children.

These three levels of trauma necessitated the need for a new understanding of myself. The Currere framework was chosen, acknowledging that my lived experiences, painful as they were, are a curriculum that if understood could assist in self-knowledge, cultivation and identity formation. As I looked to the past, I was also seeking a new vision for the father I wanted to be and the nature of my future livelihood (Progressive Movement). This was in the context of feeling stuck by constraints of divorce, a new parenting arrangement and not being able to travel for international work. At a deeper level, I was also held back by faulty assumptions I had, which in part were part of my father's legacy (Analysis). I wanted to redefine what family business, legacy and fatherhood meant to me (Synthesis).

I have also attempted to apply an educational lens to examine legacy as a learning opportunity and have provided guiding tenets and different learning experiences which might assist in intergenerational learning within a family business context.

Keywords: family business; legacy; autoethnography; currere; work-life permeation; father

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my late father, an immigrant from Hong Kong who lived in a perpetual winter yet maintained a selfless role as a provider and protector. As a case study of someone who chose not to take over his father's business, I also write this thesis with those currently in the midst of transitions, with a message of hope that family legacy is much broader than business succession.

I write to fathers who love their children and have nothing but the fullest aspirations for the next generation. My hope is that fathers would remember their own journeys as sons as they consider what they have to pass on, because in my opinion, it is only when fathers embrace their identities as sons that they can become good fathers.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors Dr. Milton McClaren and Dr. Charles Scott for their patience and guidance in helping me navigate the long journey to completing this thesis. This study went through many iterations and took much longer than anticipated as I wrestled with issues that were deeply personal.

My gratitude also goes to all the professors, administrative staff and my fellow classmates that made the Doctor of Education, Transformational Change program a reality. My life actually ended up mirroring many of the change processes that we studied. The interdisciplinary nature, diversity of student background and design of the learning experiences made it a wonderful program that I am proud to have been part of. I have also gained a network of friends that I will treasure forever. I am particularly thankful to Dr. Andrea McComb who was one of the first to finish and the one who would regularly call to encourage me and other classmates to march on.

I am also thankful to my family for their deep love and ongoing support. From the times I had help with my daughters so that I could have extra time to write, to the emotional support and counsel through a dark time in my life, I realize how blessed I am to part of my family of origin. I am particularly thankful to my sister, Eva, in her financial assistance and encouragement to persist through this long journey.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge and thank my father whom I feel more connected to through this study. My life would not have been possible without him. I realize now that we are all on a journey towards full personhood which should be the foundation of compassion for each other. Ultimately, I look forward to meeting my father again on the other side of life. Together, we shall meet face-to-face with the only perfect Abba in Heaven. 爸爸 I miss you...

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Glossary

Binary Outcomes	Where there are only two possible outcomes (e.g., with succession of a family business), the next generation either takes over the business or doesn't.
Business	A social enterprise in which people work together to achieve common purposes in the context of developing, producing, and marketing a product or service in a commercial environment.
Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)	Consulting practice that emerged from field of Information Technology and Transformational Change programs. BPR examines the people, technology and business processes of an organization. BPR identifies core processes and what might be changed to align with business strategy
Currere	Method developed by William Pinar, the verb form of curriculum that is focused on understanding our lived experiences in service of subject formation
Curriculum	I have used the term curriculum to refer generally to a program of study or planned educational experiences
Family business	Small to medium sized business that is owned by and operated by one or more family members who are related by blood or marriage
Full personhood	A conceptual idea of becoming fully who we are as unique human beings, encompassing the idea of our "best-self." Full personhood brings together ideas of formation of identity, the full expression of our gifts and life-long learning.
Good, bad, ugly	Reference to the full spectrum of desirable aspects to detrimental aspects of what might be passed on from one generation to the next; specifically, when I refer to "the ugly," I am referring to struggles and barriers to full personhood
Legacy	The life lessons and values that are transmitted and received between generations; I am referring to the intangibles that the next generation remembers about the previous generation and how these impact their life rather than a formal will, testament or physical property
Legacy processes	The activities, interactions and processes that may lead to the transmission and receiving of legacy intergenerationally
Transformational Learning	Process of deep and constructive learning that goes beyond knowledge acquisition and supports the learner in

Work

making meaning of their lives; through critical reflection and review, the learner can transform their understanding

Means by which a person makes a living (may include being employed by others or self-employed through a business)

Chapter 1.

Introduction and Relevance of the Thesis

Almost a decade ago as I began a program leading to a Doctorate in Education with a focus on Transformational Change, we were introduced to the concept of transformational learning and change at three levels: personal, organizational and social. At the time I was working at a large Crown Corporation and was responsible for corporate learning and organization development strategy. It had been 7 years since I had decided to join the Corporation instead of taking over a family business that provided consulting services to municipal governments.

When I enrolled in the doctoral program, I had set out to study change as manifest at an organizational level. I was focused on looking at organizational transformation with a focus on corporate learning. Ironically, shortly after I began the doctoral program, I was laid off at the Crown Corporation due to organizational changes that I had both planned and executed.

After leaving my role, through some planning but mostly happenstance, I started consulting for a few family businesses. However, after a few years of operations, the convergence of three events including the loss of my father, an unexpected and contentious divorce, and the sudden need to cease my international consulting business to be home with my young daughters led to a grinding halt to life.

And so, through the different evolutions of this thesis, I found that my study of transformation, which began at an organizational level, slowly began to shift downward and inward to the family business and to a personal level. I became increasingly interested in the inter-relationship between business, family and our identities as both fathers and sons and each entity's personal journey. I began asking the following questions:

- What would a healthy relationship look like between the business and a father and son within a family business context?
- Beyond the binary outcomes of succession of a business, what would a lasting legacy look like between father and son?
- What are some of the barriers that are unique to family businesses and what are the dynamics that make it difficult for a son to learn from a father and vice versa?

- How do the needs of each entity change throughout their life phases and personal journeys?

These questions eventually were synthesized into a broad question about legacy and legacy processes as understood through the lenses of a business, father and son. But it wasn't until 2016, where within a month my father passed away and my wife left me that the questions went from theoretical to acutely personal. The questions were too painful to answer directly as I was overwhelmed by a growing sense of desolation and regret.

During this period in life, I continued international consulting work for a variety of family businesses. Although on the surface, my clients would have seen me as a highly functional, analytical and insightful consultant, a type of "stuckness" and despair was continuing to set in underneath the façade. Pouring myself into work was a way that I distracted myself from what was bubbling up underneath. Yet I found myself forced to confront and reflect on my experiences as these clients shared with me their struggles, aspirations and insights from working and living within a family business.

It was comforting to see that my experiences with my father and the family business were not unique to me. At times, it was easier for me to see the same issue more clearly when I was observing it in a client from an external perspective. It was just like the Chinese expression 当局者迷局外者清, which translates that the person in the situation is often lost but the person looking in from the outside sees more clearly. However, at other times, I found myself wondering whether unresolved issues with my father and the family business got in the way of me being fully present in a consulting capacity. Was I really on the outside or still inside an unresolved past that I was trapped in?

My experiences led me to do a deeper dive into my past through an autoethnographic approach. From the outset, I realized that beyond narrative inquiry, it would be important to consider my Chinese cultural background because this had significant implications on how I saw family business, familial roles and expectations. I have selected autoethnography because it incorporates an "ethno" to the analysis, allowing me to explore how my cultural context may limit or enlarge my understanding of legacy and legacy processes. Through an autoethnographic approach, my goal was to understand what assumptions, implicit expectations and past hurts that might be holding me back from living freely. By documenting my past experiences and analyzing them to look for meaning and possible reinterpretation, I hoped to gain a new

understanding of myself including identifying relevant themes about what family business and being a father meant to me.

I also wanted to illuminate the often-unspoken hope of fathers who wanted to pass on more than wealth or even a family business, but rather their life lessons to their next generation. I explore this topic as legacy.

I have used the following working definition of legacy: legacy is comprised of the life lessons and values that are transmitted and received between generations. For the purposes of my study, when I refer to legacy I am not referring to a legal testament or will about financial or personal property left behind by one generation for the next. Rather I am considering the intangibles and memories that a generation recalls about a previous generation and how these recollections affect their lives. In particular, I am looking at the legacy between me and my father within a family business context.

My thesis is that legacy includes the results of connected and collective aspirations and shapes the journey to full personhood across generations. It encompasses intergenerational learnings from one generation to the next and can include both elements that are good and bad and may either aid or hinder the next generation from living and growing towards full personhood. In this thesis it is my intention to examine the processes of legacy and explore their significance to intergenerational learning especially in the context of family businesses.

At a personal level, in addition to a new understanding of myself looking at the past, I was also seeking a new vision for the father I wanted to be, how I wanted to redefine business and work in my life and the legacy I wanted to leave behind. I saw this renewed future picture as a critical element to moving towards freedom and a new beginning. For this reason, I chose William Pinar's (2011) model of Currere as a method to further explore and reflect on my next steps.

I have also attempted to apply an educational lens to examine legacy as a curriculum opportunity and guiding tenets which might assist in this intergenerational learning within a family business context.

This thesis is structured in the following:

Chapter 2 provides an overview of why I chose to conduct a qualitative study. It also presents the rationale for using an autoethnographic approach and applying the four

movements of the Currere concept as a method to extend the autoethnographic aspects of my study. I also write about the challenge of coming up with a standard for writing and some of the issues I wrestled with in applying Currere.

Chapter 3 is a collection of vignettes that describe growing up as the eldest son of my father who had developed a successful family business. This chapter is shaped in the form of the Regressive movement of the Currere process. In this chapter I recount embodied memories of the different life phases leading to the period when I start my own business, consult for other family businesses, and become a father myself, continuing to the death of my father and my wife leaving our marriage. I have written these events as brief autoethnographic accounts.

Chapter 4 is shaped within the Progressive movement of the Currere process as I offer fictional descriptions of the obituary and eulogies delivered at my funeral by my grown-up daughters. These accounts represent aspirations of whom I hope to be and the legacy that I hope to have left by the end of my life.

Chapter 5 presents a combination of the Analytical and Synthetical Movements of Currere process. By taking reviewing specific pictures of my past and possible future from Chapters 3 and 4, and analyzing where I am in the present, I come up with ten statements that are commitments by which that I want to live. These statements are the result of systematically analyzing my thoughts about family business, legacy and the father I want to be.

Chapter 6 provides an extended look at legacy through an education lens. I approach legacy as a curricular opportunity and propose the key tenets around which this learning experience could be built. I also present some areas for further research and potential development. The chapter presents ideas that could serve as a foundation for possibly developing a curriculum enabling intergenerational learning and the transmission of legacy.

Chapter 7 presents my concluding remarks and thoughts about the nature of legacy, as well as possible next steps for research and curriculum development. The chapter also suggests a new beginning for me as I embark on a journey toward a desired full personhood.

Chapter 2.

Methodology

2.1. The Decision to Use a Qualitative Approach

When I began my doctorate program, I had a goal of studying legacy within a family business context. Both my undergraduate and Master's studies were in science and business and I was sure I wanted to develop a quantitative study. The first iterations of my research proposals looked at studying the effectiveness of technology or tools that could be used between generations to aid in the transmission of legacy. At the time, my father had just been diagnosed with a degenerative disease and I began speaking to him about some of these tools that I had found. For example, I had found a video interview tool based on a life-review framework that would prompt participants to record responses and even messages that they could keep locked for future sharing with family members. To my surprise, he was very reluctant to participate and I remember feeling quite rejected and began to wonder whether other prospective father-son participant pairs would do the same. I also began to reflect and wonder whether I had turned to a tool to address deeper father-son issues that were more complex.

Was I looking for a magic bullet to a relational deficit? Also, how had I come to the implicit hypothesis that the transmission of information was at the core of legacy? Was it? What did I understand to be legacy anyways? Was my primary interest in studying the issue because I did not take over my father's business and felt a deficit in receiving my father's legacy?

My enthusiasm with the study as originally envisioned began to wane. I could not engage in a quantitative study because I was far from even developing a hypothesis around causality when it came to legacy. Unless I narrowed legacy to outcomes like business succession, relational satisfaction, or something like values transmission, it would be difficult to measure anything. This was also not what I was seeking to understand. Although there was a part of me that was seeking to understand issues around legacy and father-son dynamics that I had come across in consulting, at a deeper level, I wanted to understand the legacy and father-son dynamics between my father and me.

As I ruled out a quantitative approach and turned to considering a qualitative study, my first instinct was to turn to a Case method. Case studies were a genre with which I was familiar

with from my business school experience. However, I was reminded about an observation I had made during my business studies that in cases involving family businesses there always seemed to be something missing. Even in the rare cases where a researcher tried to include more about the relational and emotional dynamics between generations, the results were boiled down to whether the father-son relationship was a strength or a weakness for the business and what kind of dysfunctional behaviours might be needed to address as part of the recommendations made to enhance the business. The typical case studies that I reviewed had clearly defined boundaries between the business and personal life, possibly because the authors of these studies needed to limit the scope their interview or because the people being interviewed would only comfortably reveal so much about their inner lives.

At the time, I had begun reading biographical accounts about legendary family businesses like the Bronfman empire written by investigative journalists like Newman (1978) and Faith (2006). These involved many interviews and corroboration of different accounts and historical records to come up with a coherent story. The story as told by an observer had a veracity derived from a fuller picture of the events experienced but was also limited by the level of emotional depth as experienced by a someone who had lived through the experiences first-hand. What I appreciated about this method of inquiry was the ability to show how relationships and conflict had developed over time. There were often very different interpretations of the same events leaving the reader to discern for themselves what had actually happened.

I also read personal works like the collection of letters by G. Kingsley Ward (1990) wrote to his son. These were collected together and published in a book called *Letters of a Businessman to His Son*. These letters revealed the inner world of both father and son and provided insights into their relationship. It was a firsthand account of important transitions in the life of the son from the perspective of the father.

It was through these readings that I began to realize that my experiences both with my father against a family business backdrop and my consulting for family firms were fertile data from which to build a study. However, unlike case studies, which aim to be objective and focused on the business, I wanted a method that would honor the relational and emotional dynamics between generations. I also wanted to be able to explore the cultural dynamics that had an important impact on my family and work relationships. Unlike biographical accounts which integrated multiple perspectives as mitigated by the journalist, I wanted to delve deeper

into my internal life incorporating reflexivity about the complexity of how I came to see things in the way that I did.

I also began to realize that I was not looking for a researcher-participant study but something more personal that would also help me come to resolution of the father issues I was beginning to understand that I struggled with. It became clear that even in my original research proposals, I was seeking connection with my father.

The motivation behind my research questions about legacy and legacy processes were ultimately about my father and me and in turn, about the legacy I want to leave for my daughters as a person engaged in business.

2.2. Selecting Autoethnography as Method of Inquiry

My reading exposed me to autoethnography as a method of inquiry that would enable me to be both a participant and researcher in explicating my experiences and examining the concept of legacy, especially as it related to family business.

In the 1970s autoethnography originally referred to cultural-insiders conducting ethnographic study on their own cultural groups (T. E. Adams et al., 2017). There was a recognition that the “insider” status of a researcher gave the researcher both increased access and insight into interpreting observations about cultural groups. Autoethnographies were also sometimes referred to as self-ethnography. At this point in time, this methodology was not envisioned to include personal experience. It was through the 1980s as researchers began to question the limits of traditional research methods while exploring the validity of storytelling and narrative as legitimate research processes, that autoethnography began evolving to include personal experience.

By the 1990s, “autoethnography” became a method of choice for using personal experience and reflexivity to examine cultural experiences, especially within communication (T. E. Adams et al., 2017, p. 1). There was recognition that storytelling and narrative were important as a method of inquiry for cultural processes and that embedded in our stories is how we have made sense of culture.

Today, autoethnography shares aspects of autobiography and ethnography as an inquiry method in that it brings the self (auto) into the ethnography and the ethno (culture)

aspect into the autobiographical (T. E. Adams et al., 2014). So how does one go about doing autoethnography?

The autobiographical component includes writing about self. It may include calling on memory or writing hindsight about reflections. It might also involve examining texts, photographs, journals or recording (T. E. Adams et al., 2017). An autobiography includes selective experiences which are collected and presented in a way to the reader as a coherent narrative. Ellis et al. (2011) refer to the inclusion of “epiphanies” (p. 3), remembered moments, that have impacted the trajectory of a person’s life.

In the case of this study, I have chosen to select relevant personal narratives that relate to my experiences with my father and the family business through different life phases beginning from childhood. It wasn’t until I began to free write that I saw a connection between some of these early formative experiences and how I’ve come to understand family business, legacy and the father-child relationship.

Ellis et al. (2011) highlight personal narratives as one of a variety of different forms one might take in doing autoethnography. In this method, the author views themselves as the phenomenon and write evocative narratives specifically focused on their academic, research and personal lives (p. 7). The researcher is at the center of the investigation as a “subject” (Ngunjiri et al., 2010, p. 2).

Ellis (2004) writes,

Personal narratives propose to understand self or some aspect of life as it intersects with a cultural context, connect to other participants as co-researchers and invite readers to enter the author’s world and to use what they learn there to reflect on, understand and cope with their own lives. (p. 46)

In this study, I have chosen to excavate my own experiences growing up in the shadow of a successful father, against the backdrop of a family business that both sustained us financially but also rendered my father absent for significant transitions in my life. The aspect of life that intersects within a cultural context that I want to study is legacy and legacy processes that unfold between fathers and sons.

As Anderson (2006) points out, autoethnography is somewhat unique among research methods in that it is very likely to be warranted by a quest for self-understanding (p. 390). Part of this would be through an interrogation of self and other that may transform the researcher’s

own beliefs, actions and sense of self (Anderson, 2006, p. 383). This spoke to my motivation of understanding my relationship with my father and the business and the search to understand what legacy meant to me. Through my consulting experiences, I also came to understand that my struggles with my father growing up in a family business were not necessarily unique and that my story had potential relevance to others.

Autoethnographers have published extensively on topics that have been emotionally wrenching like illness, death, victimization and divorce (Anderson, 2006, p. 377). I saw autoethnography as a way to honour the relational and emotional dynamics, which are so often discounted in studies of business succession. For example Gersick et al. (1999) looked at stages of transitions within family businesses, basing their research on the well-established three-circle model of family business which includes the family, ownership and business. They provided four case studies to show that transitions are often driven by developmental pressures and triggers but focused primarily on changes in structure, market conditions or family member health. There was very little mention of intergenerational relationships and the deeper emotional dynamics which from my experience are often prevalent in family businesses.

Increasingly I also came to realize that the suppressed emotional intensity that I felt towards not having taken over the family business and the distant relationship I had with my father were a source of deep emotional trauma. Since one of the aims of an autoethnographic account is to evoke an emotional response or resonance from the reader, I realized this method would allow me to be authentic as I came to terms with my own experiences. This coming to terms would involve deeply examining the underlying relational, emotional and spiritual dynamics that led to my emotional responses.

Even as I continued to research and formulate my method for the study, I began to set out time to begin writing down key memories about my father and noting how family business intersected these experiences. These would later become collected into what is Chapter 3 of this thesis.

During my writing, I often found that there was a lot of sadness, pain and anger that I didn't know I had. I would often be left with an overwhelming sense of solitude and would even begin crying for reasons I could not yet fully comprehend. It was during these times that I would find comfort in the fact that I was not alone. In my reading, I came across others who shared the

emotional turbulence of writing about their fathers. Jago (2006) provided the following reflection about the process of writing about her absent father:

Unfortunately, the truth is that writing about father absence is very frustrating. Some days I feel sad and lonely, overwhelmed by a sense of loss, isolation, and abandonment. On these days, I desperately want my father to come home, his absence feeling fully present in my life. (Jago, 2006, p. 405)

Autoethnography acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist (Ellis et al., 2011). I believe that it is only in becoming aware of our subjectivity and emotionality, that we are able to be better researchers and, in my case, a consultant for family businesses. This begins with the ability to write about, reflect on and share what may be uncomfortable emotions about past experiences.

Jago (2006) summarized Stephen Crites' (1986) idea of our personal narratives being dwelling places. She writes that we live within the stories we create. Of course, because we author our life stories, we also possess the capacity to re-author them (Jago, 2006, p. 401).

The potential for autoethnography as a process for re-authoring or coming to a renewed understanding of our life stories is an important reason I have chosen this method. In a review of the literature, Ellis et al. (2011) have pointed out that writing autoethnography can be both therapeutic for participants and readers in that it offers the potential for improved and better understanding of relationships, encourage personal responsibility and agency, and raise consciousness and promote cultural change amongst other benefits (pp. 7–8).

In this study, I seek to better understand the relationship I had with my father. Despite the fact that he has passed away, my desire is for this understanding to improve my recollection of him and the relationship we had. I seek to reflect on how culture influenced expectations about the role of fatherhood, particularly in light of the demands of operating a family business. As a boat leaves a wake in its passing, my father's legacy has had a visible impact on me. As I reflect on this legacy, I am in turn better able to be more intentional about the legacy I want to leave. Through the process, I am able to come to a deeper understanding of myself and in the words of Schubert (1986) be free to choose who I aspire to be – how I wish my life story to be read (p. 134).

My hope, as well, is that my autoethnography might provide an opportunity for readers to witness or observe my experiences and in so doing, feel validated in their own struggles and circumstances in their relationship with their fathers.

2.2.1. Evocative Genre of Autoethnography

As a method of inquiry, autoethnography can be divided into two genres, evocative and analytic. Méndez (2013) summarized it in this way

Analytic autoethnography is directed towards objective writing and analysis of a particular group, whereas evocative autoethnography aims toward researchers' introspection on a particular topic to allow readers to make a connection with the researchers' feelings and experiences. (p. 281)

This study falls in the category of evocative autoethnography in that it is an excavation of my experiences. My aim is not to provide objective writing and analysis of a particular group but in the words of Ellis (2004), my hope is to provide "an evocative telling" (p. 50) of my world such that my experiences come alive. This includes being transparent about my thoughts and feelings in the moment. It amazed me that in the process of writing, emotions that I had forgotten were unearthed and the truth of my emotional world was as true for me as they were as if they were happening in the moment.

Anderson (2006) suggests that analytic ethnography is an extension of analytic ethnographic practice:

Analytic autoethnography refers to ethnographic work in which the researcher is (1) a full member in the research group or setting, (2) visible as such as a member in the researcher's published texts, and (3) committed to an analytic research agenda focused on improving theoretical understandings of broader social phenomena. (p. 375)

Although I am interested in improving the theoretical understandings of legacy and legacy processes within a family business setting, I realize that before I engage in this work through an analytic ethnography approach, I would need to better understand my own experiences. After all, I often found myself triggered unconsciously in my consulting with family business clients. Pinar (1975) aptly described my situation when he wrote "the present then becomes acting out of the past, the superimposition of past issues and situations and persons onto the present" (p. 7).

My hope is that based on the self-discovery that will arise from this study, I will be able to identify themes and develop an intimate analysis of my experiences, legacy, and subjective and intersubjective dynamics of past, present, along with future possibilities. This analysis would in turn open up the possibility of continuing to study family businesses through an analytic ethnography approach with my family business clients.

2.2.2. Wrestling with “Ethno” part of Autoethnography and Situating Self

A distinguishing feature of autoethnography from autobiography is that it allows for a deep dive into culture. As Chang (2008) notes, “Mere self-exposure without profound cultural analysis and interpretation leaves this writing at the level of descriptive autobiography or memoir” (p. 51). So how does one begin to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation?

From the outset of the study, I recognized that culture had a large part in shaping my understanding of gender roles, primogeniture responsibilities, parental relationships and the value of business as a means of livelihood. These ideas would in turn have a significant impact on how I would come to understand legacy and my experiences of family business.

However, can I attribute these influences predominantly to my ethnicity and nationality? How do I even begin to define culture and what cultural context or contexts I belong to? Chang (2008) suggested that there is a work-in-progress concept of culture (p. 21) in which culture is a product of interactions between self and others. She further points out that individuals may become members of multiple social organizations concurrently and that each membership can contribute to the cultural makeup of an individual.

This is certainly true in my case. I was born and raised in Canada but grew up speaking Cantonese. My parents emigrated from Hong Kong when they were in their mid-teens. Chinese is actually my first language, yet I grew up in a place where there were very few Chinese other than my immediate family. Due to discrimination, I grew up quite isolated from the local community and was constantly reminded that I did not belong. I was different. One might argue that family of origin influences were much stronger than peer influence.

When it came to my family of origin, my parents were also not fully Hong Kong Chinese as they had been acculturated as first-generation immigrants into Canadian society in their late teens. As immigrants, they had a strong work ethic and drive to succeed. Further, I come from a

line of enterprising businessmen. My father owned a family business and his father before him also had a family business. Our family culture was one that valued hard work and enterprise.

To begin situating ourselves in the complex multicultural web, Chang (2008) proposes a useful exercise of developing a culturegram showing both our primary influences as well as other important influences that branch off by category. I have attempted to fill out a culturegram below to provide some context to how I see my cultural makeup.

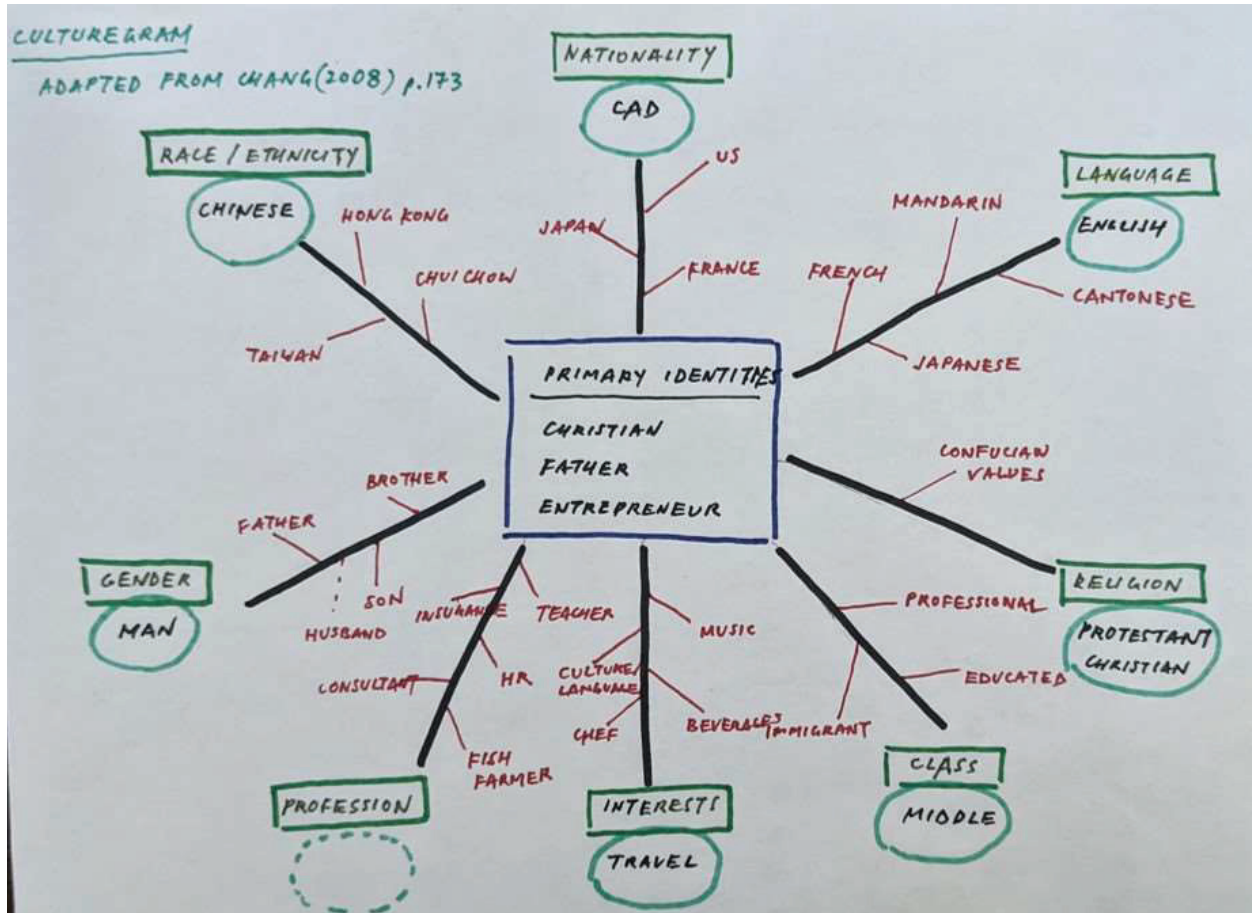


Figure 2.1. Culturegram – adapted from Autoethnography as Method (Chang, 2008, p.173).

My Chinese heritage has a crucial influence on my perspectives of being a son, being a man and being a father. However, even within Chinese culture, there are significant regional differences in customs, norms and expectations. Liu et al. (2003) provide a warning about homogenizing a culture.

It is a pervasive human tendency to sort other people into categories on the basis of attributes such as age, race or gender. This can lead to stereotyping, an inflated

belief that members of a given category share common traits. Recent research has shown that rather than a single broad stereotype of a group, individuals can often hold several subtypes of an overall stereotype. (p. 150)

So even though he comments that Chinese culture has quite different cultural theories regarding appropriate intergenerational behaviour compared to Western societies (Liu et al., 2003, p. 149), there is also recognition of regional differences and evolution over time.

To further illustrate, even though there is value in bringing up the Confucian idea of filial piety, xiao (孝), in a discussion about Chinese father-son relationships, there is also a broad spectrum of cultural norms around how this might be expressed even within the Chinese community. These norms may also change over time.

This is why I appreciate that Chang (2008) points out that an individual's culture is still "formed, shared, retained, altered and sometimes shed" (p. 17). I resonate with this statement because it recognizes the dynamic nature of culture and how it may be received or shed by different communities. As a Canadian born Chinese, I am in a constant process of working out sometimes conflicting values and norms from my cultural heritage. As Deng and Walker (2007) point out, as a Canadian born Chinese, I am on a continuum of acculturation. Particularly pertinent to this study are the different cultural models of parenting, attitudes towards work, gender roles and communication between generations.

Culture and cultural expectations tend to evolve over time. In a provocative historical study Knapp (2012) conducts a study on how sympathy and severity in father-son relationships have evolved through medieval Chinese history. Reading his work on this specific dimension of culture, I was surprised that the idea of Chinese fathers as stoic and distant providers is not necessarily true. In fact, during medieval China, fathers often had care-taker roles. Knapp goes on to show how ideas like care-debt, filial duty and the parent-child relationship have been memorialized in collections of stories and artwork. Many of these would seem quite foreign to a modern Chinese audience.

Rather than delve deeply into what one might term Chinese culture, I have chosen in this study to use language and the nuance of language to investigate cultural interpretations of phenomenon. As Berger and Luckmann (1991) point out, an understanding of language is essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life (p. 51).

In its written form, Chinese has changed very little over its 3,400 years of recorded existence (Xigui, 2000). Chinese characters are composed of ideographs, a symbol representing an idea or concept, without providing an indication of pronunciation. These ideographs are put together to form compound words. Throughout this study I will provide the Chinese characters for key concepts that may hint at cultural understanding that has been frozen in time.

I have also referenced culture generally as an influence in my thinking that may be a culmination of the different communities I belong to including second generation immigrant, Hong Kong Chinese, entrepreneurial business person and also protestant Christian.

When researchers do autoethnography, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible by being part of a culture and/or by possessing a particular cultural identity (Ellis et al., 2011). My intent in presenting a complex multi-cultural identity is not an attempt to obfuscate interpretation but to show how my understanding is influenced by a multiplicity of different social groups I belong to. It is my hope that this enriches the complicated conversation (Pinar, 2011) I have attempted to embark on. This conversation brings together the complexity of the personal, interpersonal and cultural dynamics of my relationship with my father. The decision to select autoethnography as a method of inquiry is a recognition that processes, including legacy processes, do not occur in a vacuum and that cultural expectations shape discourse across generations. The “ethno” aspect allows me to explore how legacy and legacy processes are enlarged or limited by my cultural context.

2.2.3. How to evaluate?

Given the highly personal nature of autoethnography, particularly evocative autoethnography, a common question is how one should evaluate it? Critics of the methodology like Atkinson (1997) or Coffey (1999) claim that autoethnographies are self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective and individualistic.

Through my consulting I came to see that my family business clients experienced a lot of intergenerational struggles that I too had experienced with my father. In fact when my clients found out that I was doing a study looking at legacy and relational challenges between father and sons, they became very interested and regularly asked about when they could read the finished product. So, although my study may be introspective and personal, I believe that my

reflective insights may also inspire insights for readers and at the very least provide courage to look at their own experiences.

Richardson (2000) proposes that autoethnography be evaluated against five criteria: substantive contribution, aesthetic merit, reflexivity, the impact the narrative causes to the reader, and how much the narrative expresses a reality. These were helpful guidelines and a mirror to review my writing. Of the five criteria, the hardest criteria for me to assess was whether my writing provided substantive contribution. It was however helpful to use this as a standard for the inclusion or occlusion of certain narratives. That is, did the vignettes I had written lead to substantial self-revelation or a renewed understanding of legacy, the relationship with my father or family business?

Ellis (2004) offers that an autoethnography can be judged in terms of whether it helps readers communicate with others different from themselves or offer a way to improve the lives of participants and readers or the author's own life (p. 124). For autoethnographers, validity means that work seeks verisimilitude; it evokes in readers a feeling that the experience described is lifelike, believable, and possible, a feeling that what has been represented could be true. The story is coherent. It connects readers to writers and provides continuity in their lives (Ellis et al., 2011).

Unlike some other traditional research methods, generalizability of results is not the aim. As Anderson (2006) points out, no ethnographic work—not even autoethnography—is a warrant to generalize from an “N of one” (p. 386).

My goal in this evocative autoethnographic study was not generalizability but self-knowledge and the identification of themes that my readers may also resonate with. These themes could inform a future research agenda that could include a wider participant group—be it as an analytic autoethnographic study or a more quantitative study.

On the issue of generalizability, Ellis et al. (2011) says that the focus moves from respondents to readers. The narrative or description is always being tested by readers as they determine if a story speaks to them about their experiences or about the lives of others they know. Ultimately, generalizability is left to the reader.

Taking an altogether different track Medford (2006) suggests that perhaps we should not be concerned about how the autoethnographic work is evaluated as much as how we evaluate

ourselves as we write. This was an area that I was particularly concerned with at the outset of my writing. Although I am convinced that in any narrative account, it is not possible to present objective truth, I began to wonder about my accountability to others involved in my shared experiences. I had doubts about how my father, my ex or my clients might see my accounts. Was I missing important details, or did I emphasize certain events more than others merely by the fact that I chose to write about them? How would I respond to a potentially different recollection or interpretation of events?

This is where I found Medford's (2006) proposal about 'an ethic of accountability' very helpful. Medford proposed that the writer should write their autoethnography as his or her truth as if all people involved in those events were listening to him or her. Although the "subjects" may not agree with the representation of shared experiences or even the fact that the experiences should be written about, the author should be willing to address the issues while not being hindered from publishing (Medford, 2006, p. 859). In this study, I have engaged the help of the Research Ethics Board at Simon Fraser University, which has provided an exemption for an ethics review based on the fact that autoethnography is considered a creative practice activity. In the process of writing, I have also shared my writing with family members welcoming feedback. To my surprise, they often didn't recall the experiences I wrote about, as it was not salient to them. They were however very interested in how I had interpreted or given meaning to the events and experiences. An interesting realization from sharing my writing, was that my accounts could potentially be the first step to opening the door for possible dialogue. In my writing, I have tried to authentically recount my experiences as my truth, which I have made clear does not preclude an alternate truth for someone else.

So in answer to my question about how I would respond to a different recollection by someone with a shared experience that I have written about, I would be curious and encourage the person to share their account as I have. I would neither minimize their truth nor discount my own.

Medford (2006) goes on to posit, "We must hold ourselves to a high ethical standard so that we are fully accountable, not just responsible, for our writing" (p. 862), which I interpret to mean that although others may agree or disagree with my version of the events, I am able to say with conviction that my account was my best recollection of what I believed had happened at the time described.

Finally Richardson (2000) proposed the following criterion for Creative Analytic Practice (CAP), which I believe is relevant in evaluating an autoethnography study: Does it contribute to understanding social life in a substantive way; holds “aesthetic merit” (p. 937); invites the reader; demonstrates “reflexive” (p. 937) self-awareness; has “impact” (p. 937) both intellectually and emotionally; and finally, does it “expression of reality” (p. 937) that embodies an authenticity of lived experience?

Keeping these criteria in mind, I would regularly pause in my writing to consider the authenticity of my writing. Authenticity both by being true to my recollection of events and the emotional reality I felt at the time. In the decision about what to include or exclude in my writing, I came back to the reader experience and whether someone looking from the outside in would understand what I was writing. My hope was that through an honest account and analysis of my story I might, in the words of Méndez (2013), contribute to the lives of others by making them reflect on and empathize with the narratives presented (p. 282).

2.2.4. The Decision to Incorporate Currere

Although an autoethnographic approach is a great way to understand and interpret lived experiences, its focus is primarily on the past and present. I was also looking for the synthesis of a future vision and insight about how I might move forward from the present. As a result, I decided to extend the study and deepen the autoethnographic approach by using Pinar’s (1975) educational practice of Currere as a way to come to an understanding that could bridge across all three tenses of my experiences. I saw Currere as an extension to the “graphy” or study aspect of Autoethnography.

Both Autoethnography and Currere honors the idea that we are at all times in a biographic situation and that reflection on these lived experiences has the power to lead to insight that can allow us to live better. That being said, Pinar (2004) made an observation that resonates with the goal of evocative autoethnography when he wrote that “self-knowledge and the idea of collective witnessing are complementary projects of self-mobilization for social reconstruction” (p. 37). Although Currere foregrounds the importance of individual reflection and self-knowledge, Pinar (2004) acknowledges Boler’s (1999) assertion that self-knowledge in and of itself may not lead to self-transformation, rather it is through collective witnessing where people with different cultural histories can enrich each other’s perspectives and lead to action. This was S. R. Adams and Buffington-Adams’s (2020) call to action in their provocative paper

“On/Beyond Currere,” where they raised that there is a “need to create spaces in which members feel both safe and challenged and in which the work is both personal and collective” (p. 69).

It is my goal that through this study, using autoethnography and extending the study using Currere, the reader would collectively witness my experience and from their diverse backgrounds and perspectives, learn with me transformatively. This requires a commitment to what Boler (1999) terms a “pedagogy of discomfort” (p. 176), in which a pre-requisite of collective witness is an agreement to live in discomfort and a willingness to see things differently. In particular, by delving into my embodied memories of trauma from the death of my father, my divorce and the sudden resignation from my career, the Regressive movement of Currere, I am able to examine and surface some of the emotions, which I have buried.

The Currere method also helps bring a deeper analytic agenda to the autoethnography inquiry by applying an interpretative system. Through the four movements, I am able to analyze my past, future and present and synthesize what this means for my present (Pinar, 1975).

2.3. Extending and Deepening My Study Using Currere

In his seminal paper presented at the 1975 Annual Meeting of the American Research Association, Pinar began to reconceptualize the meaning of curriculum, shifting the field of curriculum studies’ emphasis from making curriculum to understanding it (Pinar, 1975). Traditional curriculum studies at the time were focused heavily on school reform. Vocal advocates of the need for reconceptualizing the field like Jackson claimed that the school system had lost sight of the humanistic goals of education; that in heavy focus on learning objectives and outcomes by technologists, test makers, textbook publishers and school administrators, the system was losing sight of the whole person (Pinar, 2014).

Currere is the lived experience of curriculum wherein the curriculum is experienced, enacted and reconstructed (Pinar, 2011, p. 1). Envisioned as a response to Tylerian curriculum and school systems which privileged objectivity and discounted experience, Pinar (1994) declared that “curriculum is not comprised of subjects, but of Subjects, of subjectivity” (p. 220). The stream of curriculum thought was diverted away from the technical formation of curriculum and toward explorations of the lived-experiences of students and teachers (Halvorson, 2015).

This perspective of curriculum allows me to see all of my lived experience as an opportunity to learn. Building from Husserl's concept of the lived world, *Lebenswelt*, Curren suggest that I can learn from my pain and trauma. *Lebenswelt* is the common sense lifeworld of everyday immediate experience. This lifeworld is subjectively experienced and intersubjectively constructed. (Allen-Collinson & Evans, 2019). Curren takes one's existential experience as a data source from which we can build a multidimensional biography (Pinar, 1975). When I can see myself more clearly through such a multidimensional biography, I can also make better choices for who I want to be. The goal of Curren process is self-knowledge towards the journey of self-cultivation. This idea is summed up in the German word *Bildung*, which translates as formation (Pinar, 2014). I like how Yang (2021) summarizes the work of Siljander and Sutinen (2012) on *Bildung*: "Bildung comprises at least two meanings: (1) 'a creative process in which a person, through his or her own actions, shapes and "develops" himself or herself'; and (2) 'a person's "improvement"' (p. 6).

Curren is one of the creative processes in which I can develop myself with while focusing on my personal development. It enables subject formation where we are constantly being formed and reformed through our experiences, our dreams, and how we interpret these in light of our present circumstances. Michael Uljens (as cited in Pinar, 2011) states, "For learning to be possible there must not only be a somebody whose reflection is stimulated but also a somebody whom the individual becomes" (p. 2). It is this process of "becoming" that I am referring to when I use the term "journey to full personhood" in this thesis.

The idea of becoming and the journey to personhood is also a Chinese concept. Yang (2021) draws on the Confucius idea of *xiushen* (修身), which translates as self-cultivation, and does a comparison with *Bildung*. Although she points out that *xiushen* and *bildung* may have divergent philosophical underpinnings, there is the possibility of a complementary interpretation: "Thus a possible combination of the ideas of *xiushen* and *Bildung* is a complementary that takes into account both agency and environment in individual formation and recognises human beings' equal potential, and diverse individuality to be developed" (Yang, 2021, p. 13).

"Becoming" is also an idea that is embedded into the Christian idea of being transformed into the image of God (*Imago Dei*). When the Psalmist declares in Psalms 139:13-16,

For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;

your works are wonderful,
I know that full well.
My frame was not hidden from you
when I was made in the secret place,
when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
Your eyes saw my unformed body;
all the days ordained for me were written in your book
before one of them came to be.

The Psalmists asserts that as humans we were created uniquely and wonderfully and that there is an ordained journey towards whom we were created to be. Coupled with what St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:18, “And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit,” there is an idea that each person has a unique journey in transformation into the image of God. In short, full personhood to me, and how I refer to it in this thesis, the conceptual idea of becoming fully who we are as unique human beings, encompassing the idea of our “best-self.”

An important reason that I have chosen Currere as part of my method is because I recognize that I am on the journey of becoming. This journey is in line with my Christian heritage of spiritual formation but on a broader application, there is also a journey of who I am becoming as a father and as a man.

Pinar (2014) suggests that the pull of the present necessitates ongoing reconstruction: “In such reconstruction—simultaneously subjective and social—one activates agency, as one commits to the ongoing study of the past, a ‘regression’ that enables one’s entry into the future” (p. 39). Pinar (2011) describes currere as the verb form of curriculum. Derived from the Latin word meaning running the course, currere emphasizes the everyday experience of the individual and his or her capacity to learn from that experience and to reconstruct experience through thought and dialogue to enable understanding (Pinar, 2011, p. 2).

My choice to deepen the autoethnographic study by using Currere was based on Pinar’s (1975) promise.

I do know that as I travel inward, I tend to be freed from it, and hence more sensitive and receptive to what is external. It is as if because I can see more of myself in its multi-dimensional manifestations, I am also able to see more of others. (p. 14)

In addition to the following:

I find that by entering the past and the future, by describing them and interpreting them, I can more closely differentiate the three from each other, and so I am better able to look at the present with less chance of superimposition of past and future. (Pinar, 1975, p. 14)

For me, Currere was a method in which I could loosen the hold that the past held on me. I realized that this past included my understanding of relationships, how I saw myself and unresolved hurts which were still a source of emotional trauma for me in the present. I sought freedom in reframing my understanding and what Pinar (1975) termed biographic movement. According to Pinar (2011), the objective of the Currere process is to create an intensified engagement with daily life by using conceptualization to enable freer choice of both the present and future (p. 37).

Pinar and Grumet (1976) speak about people being in a “biographic situation” (p. 51) where lived meaning follows from past situations, but which contains, perhaps unarticulated, contradictions of past and present as well as anticipation of possible futures (Pinar, 2004). I realized that prior to my study, rather than reflect on past experiences with my father and the family business, I had buried them while suppressing the emotional hurt of these narratives. These unexamined experiences had slowly calcified into a wall relationally and become a subconscious pattern of how I saw being a father.

Currere addresses the temporal dimensions of lived experiences. For me, this explained why I was feeling stuck even after completing my autoethnographic accounts. The convergence of loss made living in my present reality seem disconnected from everything I had known. I found it hard to imagine a new future and felt hopeless. Even as I continued seeking counselling, it felt like I was living another person’s life, as if I was experiencing life in third person. Merely interpreting the past would not create fruitful learning that could carry me forward.

There are four movements in the Currere process.

The Regressive looks to past “lived” or existential experience as a “data source” (Pinar, 2004, p. 36). This step involves revisiting memories, and an attempt to capture the past as it was. “To ascertain where one is, when one is, one must locate the past” (Pinar, 1975, p. 7). This is what I have attempted to do coming up with embodied narrative accounts that I’ve organized according to my timeline. For me, beginning to write these vignettes was an intuitive attempt to look to the past because I was having trouble seeing freedom in the present and I was grasping

at a future that had crumbled due to unexpected events. My struggles resonated with Pinar's (1975) assertion that "the biographic past exists presently, complexly contributive to the biographic present" (p. 7).

Pinar (2004) draws a connection to the Regressive movement to psychoanalytic theories of autobiography and free association. "For as in psychoanalysis, bringing to light what was held in obscurity represents in part, the therapeutic potential and consequence of self-reflective study" (Pinar, 2004, p. 55).

He goes on to say that there is type of truth-telling or confession to self through this movement through the practice of

Autobiographies of self-shattering, revelation, confession and reconfiguration. Self-excitation precedes the self-understanding, which precedes self-mobilization, although any rigidly linear conceptions of self-reflexivity necessarily reify subjectivity. (Pinar, 2004, p. 55)

The goal of the Regressive and psychoanalysis is about uncovering the self and coming to a new understanding of self through what might be an uncomfortable process. During the period that I began writing what would be the Regressive Movement now contained in Chapter 3, I was also engaged in counselling. What I found interesting is that this process began to overlap with my thesis work. What was brought up in counselling often triggered memories that I began to record. Similarly, I ended up bringing these memories into some of my counselling sessions.

This often made the writing more complex because there would be long periods in which I would be stuck reflecting on topics like the following:

- Did my father really love me?
- Had I been too judgmental of my father?
- When did the distance that I felt with my father begin and when had I given up reaching out?
- In what ways was I caught in a repeating cycle in how I was parenting?

I think this is the value of the Currene movements in separating the analysis movement from the regressive movement. My questions were probably better saved for analysis while I tried to write embodied accounts about love, memories of father-son interactions and my

parenting without judgement. Pinar (1975) envisioned the goal for this movement to observe oneself functioning in the past without interpreting it (p. 8).

There was a constant question about how deep and how far back should I go with this process for the purposes of this thesis? My answer was to record whatever important memories that surfaced in my train of thought about my father, legacy and family business. Surprisingly this brought me all the way back to childhood experiences.

The next movement is the Progressive where one looks at potential futures. This step is envisioned as a meditative process where one free-associates possible futures. It is a systematic exploration of what could be. Pinar (1975) suggests a type of zooming out from the near future to more distant future without judgment about whether something is possible. He suggests meditatively allowing the mind to consider interests, career and how these might be intersecting with the private life in an iterative process without straining because straining can distort the data (Pinar, 1975, p. 10).

Due to where I was in the grief process of losing my father, coping with my divorce and adjusting to new parenting responsibilities, I found this step to be particularly difficult. Envisioning possible futures in the near future was made difficult by the inability to fully distance myself from ongoing struggles with the pain of the past and present. Despite multiple sessions trying to quiet myself meditatively, it was difficult to see beyond failure, constraints and shackles. Pinar's (1975) instruction to engage in this process for as long as it was comfortable while not forcing the process or straining (p. 10) was comforting through multiple failed attempts.

It was when I accepted that perhaps I would just need to accept my limitations at this point in my life, that I came to an epiphany in engaging in this movement. I zoomed out to a more distant future and began writing from a different point of view. I zoomed out to my death and wrote fictional eulogies delivered at my funeral by my daughters. The idea came through Pinar's (2011) suggestion that "death provides focus for the living" (p. 5). I also used a meditative reflection walking through the forest and thinking about my name and trees to come up with aspirations of my future. My progressive movement is presented in Chapter 4. Since Currere is an iterative process, I am sure that revisiting this movement in even 6-months' time, I may be able to envision new futures that are closer to the present.

The Analytical examines both the Regressive and Progressive while "bracketing" both to create a subjective space of freedom in the present (Pinar, 2004). By bracketing, Pinar (1975)

refers to detachment from what is, what was, and what can be in order to more freely choose (p. 11). He proposes that coming out of these three stages, one creates different photographs which are complex, multi-dimensional and inter-related (Pinar, 1975). The point of this movement is not to choose one photograph over another but to begin to describe one's response to the photos including how one is seeing the future present in the past, the past in the future and the present in both (Pinar, 1975, p. 12). This is a very important step in Currere because it moves one towards agency, providing insight about the choices one can make towards a holistic picture of oneself.

In the last stage, the Synthetical movement, one both puts the photos aside and also places them in juxtaposition to understand the "I" in which each picture manifests. It becomes a sense-making of how one's story can be understood by past, present and future. It is also a synthesis between what is exterior of what can be seen by others as the interiority of what is happening within. It is the means by which I am placed together (Pinar, 1975).

I have chosen to structure this study around my methodology, which is presented in the following three chapters. Chapter 3 will present my Regressive Movement in the form of autoethnographic accounts across different life phases. Chapter 4 will present the Progressive Movement in the form of an obituary and fictional eulogies delivered by family at my funeral. It also presents my meditative reflections in nature and my dreams. Chapter 5 will provide combined Analytical and Synthetical Movements looking at what family business, legacy and being a father means to me.

Chapter 3.

My Story (the Regressive Movement)

This chapter is a collection of autoethnographic accounts of my past experiences with my father and the family business. They are free associative remembrances of my past which represent the first movement of Pinar's (1975) Currere educational practice.

3.1. Background

I am the eldest son of a Chinese immigrant family that came to Canada with nothing and built a family business as a means for livelihood. Like his father before him, my father did not actively choose the family business path. However, it was the path that was most readily available through the culmination of experiencing the challenges of being employed by others, the need to provide for family, the opportunities of the time and the most financially rewarding path for hard work.

When I was growing up, the family business was like a favored sibling that occupied all my father's time. In fact, it was in the same year that my youngest sister, my father's favorite child, was born that he also birthed the business. The business only lasted through my father's lifetime. Despite a final attempt to transfer the business to me in the latter part of its 26-year lifespan, I failed to take over the business in order to give it new life in my generation. Little did I know that my father had also had the same experience with his father's business.

This thesis incorporates the story of our family business, and perhaps more important, the story of my relationship with my father, including collective aspirations, missed opportunities and moments of connection. Despite initially wanting to delimit my story to a specific period of 5 or 10 years, I realized that my personal identity, relationships with my father and with family businesses have been heavily influenced by my experiences in the formative years of childhood through adulthood. For a fairly long time I did not want to go back to reflect on how these past experiences led to my current realities. The tragedies of losing my father and of my wife leaving me a month later, caused me to slow down and begin working through my experiences in order to create meaning so that there could be a new beginning. As a consultant, mostly to family businesses, I was also finding similarities between my past struggles and my clients'

experiences. The accounts that are included in this thesis have been stimuli for deeper reflections. They are all based on real situations that have been fictionalized only to protect the identities of my clients.

I have chosen to tell my story as a series of short vignettes grouped into the phases listed below, with some reflections following the vignettes where appropriate.

- Childhood Reflections (3.2)
- Growing Up (3.3)
- Formative Years (3.4)
- Becoming a Man (3.5)
- Disorientation - Tragedy Strikes (3.6)
- Consulting Experiences (3.7)



Figure 3.1. A timeline listing the significant personal events that are the basis for the vignettes included in the thesis.

My father's timeline

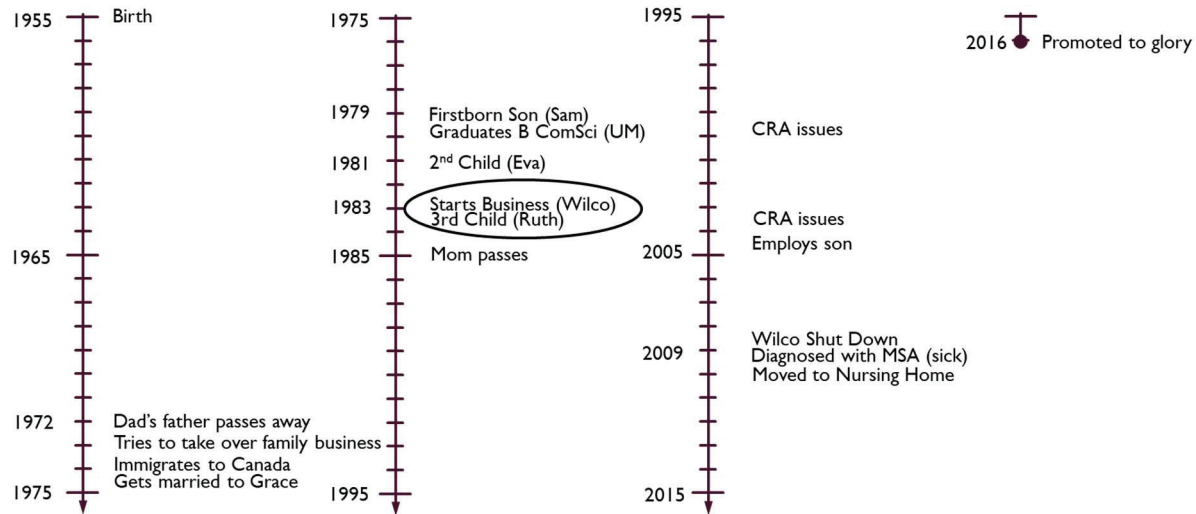


Figure 3.2. A timeline listing significant events in my father's life that are incorporated in some of the vignettes included in the thesis.

3.2. My Childhood – Seeking Connection with my Busy Father

3.2.1. Playing Ball

One of my earliest childhood memories was being alone on a playground on a Saturday morning. There was a ball practice and every little boy seemed to have a father who was practicing throwing and catching with his son. My mom was dropping me off with my little sisters in tow.

I remember turning to ask my mom, where is dad? How come dad wasn't here to play with me like the other dads? My mom was quick to answer that my father was working hard to make money to feed us.

"What is dad doing?"

"He is at the office working on his computer."

"Mommy needs to bring your sisters to go grocery shopping and we'll be back before lunch to pick you up."

As a 5-year-old, knowing that my dad was hunched over a computer in a room alone to put food on our table was not comforting. I understood dad was working hard on something and this did not change the fact that I had no father to play ball with. My mother's explanation was

also one of the first times I really started thinking about money. I thought that making money must be very hard work and we don't have enough of it. That's why dad had to spend so much time at work. I had many experiences similar to seeking my father to play "throw and catch." Each day after school, I was hopeful that my father would come home to play ball with me, maybe after I finished my piano practice, or after my homework. Yet my father never came home before it was dark.

My mother must have said something because one day my father came home late one evening and just before I went to bed, he gave me a used baseball glove as a gift. I still remember the scent of that old glove and how the nubuck leather had developed a dark patina from use by a previous owner. Despite the glove not actually fitting, it became a prized possession. Getting the glove only made me want more to play ball with my father. Unfortunately, he never got a glove for himself and we never did end up playing together. I never got good at baseball. In fact, I began to develop a fear of baseballs: they come at you at such speed that they could really hurt even if you did successfully catch the ball in the glove. I wonder now how much of my fear was the result of having continually being let down for practice. In my memory of the year I received the baseball glove, I don't believe I played baseball again.

I remember my father being absent for a large part of my childhood. He would only come home after I was put to bed and he travelled on a lot of weekends. As a child, I remember equating time spent as an indication of love and I felt my father must love his business much more than me. Looking back now my childhood was full of attempts to connect with my father through shared interests as ways to try to wrestle him from the ever-stronger gravitational pull of his business as it also grew.

3.2.2. Reflections - Throw and catch as an analogy for the legacy process.

A few weeks ago, I had an opportunity to play throw and catch with my 8-year-old daughter: the very activity that I had so wanted to share with my father; however, in this case it was with a basketball and not baseball. At first, it was immensely boring. I started to realize why it was difficult for my father to take time away from the many things he was working on to play ball with his son.

Much of the time in our game was spent running after a ball that my daughter could not catch. Yet something surprising happened. Because I was bored I began naturally wanting to teach my daughter some of the mechanics of how to catch and pass the ball. We began to speak about how she seemed to close her eyes every time the ball came close to her. She explained that she was afraid of the ball hitting her. I explained that it would not be possible to keep her eye on the ball and that she would always shrink back if she did not keep her eyes open. I told her how I too had that fear and did not have a chance to play ball with my father as a child because he was working. Since both my daughter and I were afraid, perhaps we could work on it together. I then began teaching her the mechanics of a bounce pass versus a chest pass. It was amazing to see her increase in confidence within a short half hour. As we started playing, she started telling me about what she had learned at school and asked me whether I knew that Google was actually a number and not just the name of a search engine. She seemed happy and immediately asked her little sister whether she wanted to play throw and catch too.

I began to realize that throw and catch is an analogy for the legacy process. The activity itself creates an opportunity for two parties to interact and through the interaction there is an opportunity to teach and learn. In this experience of play I also realized that it was not unidirectional. I was learning about my daughter, reflecting about my father and my own childhood and teaching her at the same time.

3.2.3. Table Tennis

Perhaps one of the fondest memories I have of my father was when I was age 14 years. I joined a table tennis league with him at a local gym where we got together every Wednesday evening. I remember that we joined the club because my mom had said this was something he was very good at when he was a teenager and had suggested that it might be a fun father-son activity.

A year earlier, we had bought a tennis table which sat in the basement. My hope was that my father would teach me on it and that we could regularly play. However, my father's schedule made that difficult and the table collected dust. On one occasion when I asked my father to teach me his technique for rapid lobbying, he showed me the basic technique, and told me how he had practiced it when he was younger but then asked me to practice by myself. Though I practiced and started developing the skill by myself, he and I seldom played.

Suffice it to say, I was very excited with the opportunity to join a league and to be able to play with my father every Wednesday evening. Sometimes we would play against each other, or at other times we'd play individually against people who were more at our age group and sometimes we'd play as doubles against other pairs. I remember feeling most nervous when we played as doubles because I was afraid of letting my father down each time I missed the ball or drove one into the net by accident. I was obviously not as good as my father and although my father never said a word when I failed to score a point, I always felt so bad when I lost. I would also feel infinitely more nervous when I scored and my father looked approvingly because I did not know whether my point was just made by chance and whether I would be able to keep up the performance.

The top player in the league was Roger, a tall Scandinavian man who came across as being very arrogant. He took each game very seriously and had an amazing skill to smash at long distances and put confusing spins on the ball. There weren't many people at his level in the club and you would often hear him putting other players down. On the occasion that he missed a ball, he would criticize himself aloud and get quite angry. Everyone who played with this man entered and came out of the game very tense. He had a strange habit of challenging my father every week towards the end of the evening. I distinctly remember my father not wanting play with him. He once told me that the man had great skill but because he was such a sore loser, he didn't want to play with him. In fact, my dad claimed that he deliberately lost to Roger every evening because he didn't want to deal with the great frustration and repeated challenge if he were to win. At the time I didn't really believe my father.

The practices eventually led to an end of season tournament. Not surprisingly the round robin tournament left my father and Roger at the semi-finals. The final match began in much the same way that I saw my father play against the Roger on most evenings in which he sent powerful lobbies at my dad with different spins. The smashes became faster and faster until it was hard to follow the ball. The spectators were on the edges of their seats as lightning lobbies and smashes went back and forth. However, my father would return the volleys with matching speed and power but would then break the pattern with a short ball. Roger would go scrambling from distance play to trying to deal with the light volley. This seemed to go on forever but eventually my father won the game, becoming the champion. I was surprised and so proud that my father had beaten the arrogant Scandinavian who was shocked and frustrated at the same time. I remember Roger's parting words to my father. "Looks like you had a great game today—I'll have to challenge you again next time to make sure it wasn't just luck."

On the ride home with my father, I asked him how he beat a man with superior skill. He told me it was because he went after the man's weakness. Roger was a great long distance and power player but struggled to deal with short distance balls. Consequently, my father had decided to use a strategy of switching between long and short distance. Additionally, because he had always let Roger win, he had under-estimated my Dad from the get-go. For the first time as my father shared his strategy with me, I felt like I had been let into his mind. I was also in deep admiration of my father's wisdom and began to wonder how he translated this in running his business. I wondered if he had any ideas about how I could make more money and pursue a career as an entrepreneur.

3.2.4. Provincial Piano Competitions

Later that summer, I won a regional piano competition and was awarded a scholarship to participate in the provincial competitions in Vernon, BC. The piano competition would also offer Master Classes given for the competitors by renowned pianists from North America. The competition was one week in length and I was unsure whether I would be able to attend because my mother needed to take care of my little sisters and my father was always busy with the business.

I was surprised that my father volunteered to take me to Vernon for the week and that he would find a way to do most of his work from the hotel room. Remember, this was before the days of wi-fi. I was always curious about what he was working on while I was at the all-day workshops, master classes and performances. I wanted to help my father in his business and was also jealous about the time he was spending with the business. I think it was around this time throughout my childhood and adolescence years that I started personifying his business as a favored sibling and I felt my father loved his business more than me. Despite my ambivalence about the business, this was one of the most memorable trips I took with my father and the only one where I travelled with just him. We had pizza in the hotel room every night and my father would share more fragments of his thinking with me.

I remember that it was on this trip that I asked him many questions that I had never before had a chance to ask. For example, I asked him why he had chosen to move to the Island¹ after graduating and why he hadn't chosen a larger city with more Chinese people and

¹ Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

more opportunities. I told him about the racial discrimination I often experienced at school—mostly being ostracized and made fun of. My father quickly dismissed this and said that harsh words and insults never killed a man. He explained to me that he had chosen Computing Sciences because it was an emerging field at the time and because he realized that he would be on even footing with other students despite not being as proficient in English as they were. That's because to learn computing, everyone had to learn a new language from scratch. He told me he did not choose the Island deliberately but had followed the first post-graduation opportunity in a place where there were other relatives. The decision to move from Victoria to Duncan² was one he had made because he foresaw the trend for municipal governments to move towards desktop computing. I retorted wouldn't there be even more opportunities for these emerging systems in larger cities. My father surprised me when he answered, "yes." But he asked me whether I would choose to be a Gulliver in Lilliput or Gulliver in the land of giants? He explained that he had chosen the former because he realized although he was a competent programmer, there were many programmers that were better than he and that competition would be much fiercer in a large city. He had an opportunity to be the giant in Duncan. I will always remember that conversation because my father had found that Lilliput was much bigger than just Duncan as he grew his business.

3.2.5. Reflections about Piano

Between the age of five and twenty-one, I took piano lessons and was enrolled in the examination system of the Royal Conservatory of Music. I often competed in many festivals and performed publicly. My father had never taken music lessons and I learned later that it was on his behest that my younger sisters and I were put into piano. My father was the youngest child of eight and all but he and his brother were accomplished musicians. My father and his brother were born only one year apart, and at that time the family was struggling financially because the family business had fallen on hard times so they had no excess funds to put them into piano lessons.

I later learned from my mother that my father, who had never expressed this to me nor to my sisters directly, had hoped that his children would be able to play piano when he had never had the opportunity. This explained why, when I wanted to learn about business or help him in the business, he would divert me towards piano camp or to enroll in some other course. For

² Duncan—a small city located in the southern central coast of Vancouver Island.

him, it was an unfulfilled hope that he lived through us. Ironically, I hated performing when my father was in the audience because I felt immense pressure. My father would regularly yell at my mother if I messed up in any way. In his mind, it was her job to discipline us and make sure that we had practiced sufficiently. My father never provided feedback directly to me. I don't remember him ever praising me for a good performance and I always knew that an argument would ensue between my parents should I mess up. My mother would often be driven to tears by my father's unreasonable expectations. I felt such shame and guilt whenever I missed notes, or worse yet, forgot sections midway through my performance. Many of these performances coincided with Christmas gatherings and it was also around this time that my father was more present as an audience member. I think that's why to this day I really dread Christmas.

3.2.6. Trouble at School for Conducting Business

Starting at about Grade 3 I was continuously engaged in trading, buying, and selling whatever was popular with kids at the time. In fact, it was a common occurrence on a monthly basis for my mother to be called into the principal's office to reiterate that the school playground was not a place of business for little Sam. Sometimes it would be a student who experienced buyer's remorse and reported me. At other times it was just a teacher seeing what was happening on the playground and in the worst case, it was a parent who reported that their child's entire allowance or prized possession had been traded away. I didn't watch any sports but I began collecting and selling hockey and baseball cards. Stationery supplies were other favorite items—everything from mechanical pencils to sliding rulers or even branded pens from tradeshow. Then there was a phase where sticky-hands became popular and I started buying these in bulk and selling them at Markups between 100–500%. (You might provide a footnote to explain sticky-hands).

It was always my mom who went in to see the principal. I don't remember my father ever going. I also don't remember being reprimanded in any serious way by either parent when I got in trouble for conducting business. Looking back, I wonder if my parents actually approved secretly of my enterprising nature. At least they did not discourage it. They also sometimes spoke to their friends about my strange inclination towards business in a façade of not knowing what to do with me. But I could also sense an undertone of pride in my early understanding of the value of money and being smart. The only time I remember my father speaking to me about it was a reminder not to let any of my schemes get between my studies. I also don't remember what happened to all the money I collected as most of it was used to buy other things for more

trading. Every time we travelled as a family or when there was a local clearance sale, we would see it as an opportunity to accumulate inventory. On hindsight, I think my little hobby also fulfilled my mom's thrill of buying and stocking up.

From Grade 3, I was a living economics textbook example of buying low and selling high. Sometimes I wonder whether this was an inborn trait or whether it was a subconscious expression of wanting to earn more so that my father wouldn't have to worry about money so he could spend more time with me. Or was it an attempt to obtain my father's approval since business was so important to him that if I showed talent in it he would acknowledge me. It is impossible to precisely pinpoint what motivated my young mind but I would guess it was probably a combination of all of the above. One time, I remember asking my mom whether my father's business was the same as what I was doing on the playground. She told me that it was very different because unlike trading where I had to buy something to sell something, my father was able to generate money at a cost of nothing other than his mind. I would later learn that this was called a service business. When looking at some of the obsolete branded pens from my father's company, pens that bore the full name of my father's business: Wilco Computer Services Inc. I was reminded that I could trade these items. This inspired me to start an Origami club where I started charging kids membership fees to learn how to fold complex shapes out of paper. After collecting an initial fee from a few members, my fee for membership fizzled out because non-paying students would sneak peeks at what we were doing in the public places where we would gather to show my members how to make different objects. Members would also start showing off by teaching others how to fold the objects. My search for business would continue in small ways throughout my education but it never brought me closer to my father.

3.2.7. The Rise of Father's Business

In 1983, my father started his own business doing computer consulting for municipal governments. This was before the days of enterprise resource planning (ERP)³ systems and just at the beginning of the popularity of personal computing. The early years of his business were marked by long hours. It was not unusual that my father would be working 6 days a week, averaging 12 to 14 hours a day. He would sometimes even need to go back into the office after dinner to continue working. In a little over 10 years from when he started his business, my

³ Software that includes finance system and extension modules for different departments. It is the backbone of an organization's IT infrastructure

father's clientele would include 16 municipalities, spread from the south to the northern tip of Vancouver Island. His business had very few expenses because his main office was located in one of his client's buildings and the only expenses were his staff who were all resources chargeable to his clients. I would later learn that my father could have retired before he was 40 years old. Yet it perplexed me why he continued working so hard for many years afterwards.

I remember having a great curiosity about my dad's office, which was located in two adjacent rooms in the back in the municipal government office of his biggest client. On nights he would return to the office to work, while the lights of the entire building were off. He would have to disarm the building's alarm while we stood very still in the lobby of the municipal office. The lights would all be turned off and my sisters and I would wander around the office curiously looking at all the stacks of paper, uninhabited desks and go to our favorite place, the supply room where there would be boxes of sugar cubes for the coffee in the staff room. My dad would be clicking away at the computer that had black screens with green text. He would enter command prompts as a dot matrix printer would make strange noises as it furiously printed out reams of paper.

The Number 1 question I had during the first 5 years of my dad's birthing of his business was, "Where is my father?" I wondered why this business was taking my father away from me. By the early 1990s, even some of the big accounting and consulting firms had taken notice of the ERP system that my father had built for municipal clients. This was the time some of the large ERP players began expanding into mid-tier clients and smaller competitors had appeared and offered end-to-end solutions for smaller and mid-tier clients. On multiple occasions in the mid-1990s, my father was approached by software development companies to sell his business.

3.2.8. An Opportunity to Sell the Family Business

I remember eagerly waiting to hear at the dinner table how a lunch with a potential buyer of my father's business had gone. My father had always met these prospective buyers but quickly dismissed the opportunity to sell because each of the buyers, as part of their offers, made a requirement that my father stay on for a minimum of 5 years and run the business after the acquisition. My father always explained that it didn't make sense to sell and continue working under a new owner and getting paid as an employee. This defeated the point of his path as an entrepreneur and ultimately he saw himself making less in this type of arrangement. The conversations never moved forward as my father chose to continue working as he saw fit. I

remember when I got a bit older, asking my father if there wouldn't be an opportunity to access the buyer's resources to expand his offering and grow the business. But my father often said, what was the point? He already had as many clients as he could handle and was financially in a good place.

I would argue with him that perhaps he could work fewer crazy days in this kind of arrangement, something my father did not acknowledge was even part of the consideration, since he never allowed himself time to take a break. At the peak of my father's business and career, he was still very energized and did not see the limits of his own energy. This would change towards the latter part of the life of the business. My father had no life outside of the business. He didn't seem to have any interests outside of working. Being on the (Vancouver) Island, there were also not a lot of places to spend money. The only times we would dine out were Sunday lunches or dinners. Most of the time, these would be at a fast food place like a *Wendy's* or *Subway* with an occasional outing for the lunch special at the restaurant in the Cowichan Valley Inn. My father amassed a lot of wealth but took few opportunities to spend it.

3.2.9. The 5 Professions to Which to Aspire

When I was growing up my father would get together twice a year with his university friends from Winnipeg. Like my father, they were all immigrants from Hong Kong and had met at a Chinese church during their studies. The meeting was fondly called the gathering of the "Winnipeggers." Our family would travel from the Island for these gatherings. We were the only ones who didn't live in Vancouver at the time.

All of the Winnipeggers would come together with their spouses and children and we would usually gather at one of the wealthy orthodontist friend's homes. It was always a lot of eating followed by an evening of dreaded piano performances by each of the children on the Steinway grand piano in the living room. It was like a bi-annual check-in to see how each child's practice progressed against each other. Parents would gleam in pride if the performance was good but if someone made a mistake, I remember the other parents immediately jumping in to say it was OK. As children, we all knew that we would be reprimanded privately at home if we screwed up.

In my case, I don't remember ever seeing my father approve of my performances because even if it went well, he would suggest something could be better or I could try

something harder next year. When I screwed up, I remember that as soon as we got in the car to leave, my dad would begin angrily telling my mother that we had not practiced hard enough, implicitly saying she had failed at her job to supervise our practice. On these occasions, all I could do was look down in shame as I realize that I had not only disappointed my father but also gotten my mother in trouble.

Also at these gatherings, my father always seemed to be a bit uncomfortable as if he felt out of place. I wondered if this was because of the difference in his professional background from those of his friends. Despite this, one thing that I noticed was that people always asked my father computer questions at the gatherings. He was the only entrepreneur and IT person among his friends. Everyone else were doctors, surgeons, dentists or engineers.

After one winter gathering I asked him why he was the only one not in healthcare in some form. My dad said he wasn't very good at school and decided to study computing sciences. He then asked me what I wanted to do when I grew up. I told him I wanted to go into business, maybe join his business. I remember him looking sternly at me and said:

Son, don't join the business, study and become a doctor or a professional. Business is a tough life with lots of uncertainty and long hours. If you cannot get into medicine, then study to become a dentist, lawyer, engineer or in the worst case scenario, at least an accountant.

3.2.10. What I Wanted to be While Growing Up

At these gatherings I was a bit confused because my father's friends, despite their outward affluence and degrees, still needed him to explain basic computer things to them. On one occasion my father also confided to me that he actually made more money than most of them. None of his friends knew this and he liked it that way. He did not have any of the outward trappings of prestige. Our family didn't have a fancy car or memberships to exclusive clubs like most of the "Winnipeggers," but my father was confident in himself. He did not need validation from anyone else. Yet I was confused as to why he was so against his own profession and being in business. I realized that deep down I had a yearning to understand what my father was working on and beyond this, to perhaps contribute and be part of the family livelihood. Looking back at my journal entries, I realize that in my early childhood, I had a strong desire to follow in my father's footsteps, a desire illustrated by the intro I wrote about myself in my book of poems in Grade 5.

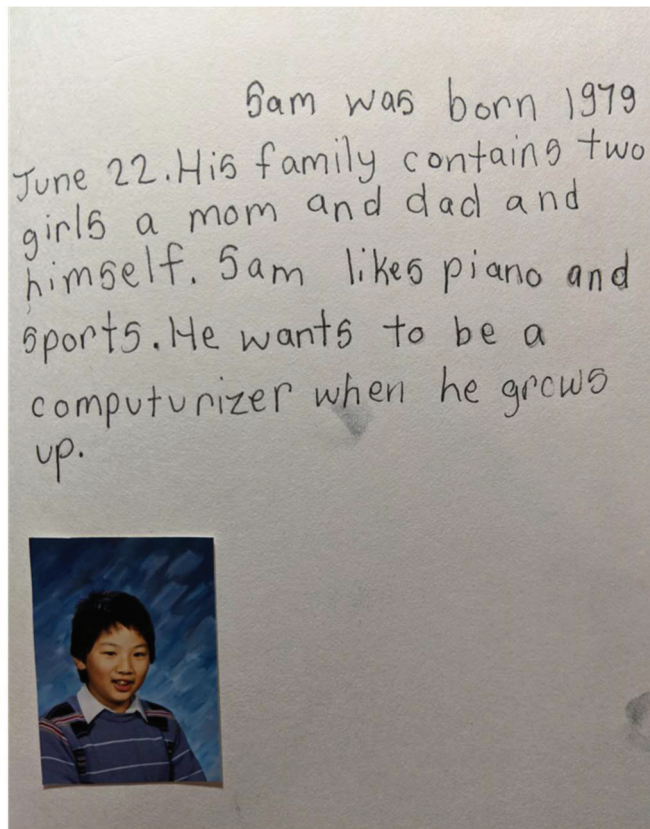


Figure 3.2. The About Author section of a book of poems I wrote as a student in Grade 5, 1990.

My dad's business grew from having a single municipal client to eventually having three staff and 11 clients on the island. Later I would realize that he ran an entire outsourced IT function for most of his clients on this small team. As a small business owner, he was "boots on the ground" with everything from the purchase and installation of new hardware to running reports, writing programs and troubleshooting people's desktops. My father would often proudly tell me that he was able to do what would be the equivalent to five people's work and his staff would be able to do three. Unionized laborers cost municipalities a lot because people would get lazy and have narrowly defined job responsibilities. On hindsight I realize it was as if my father saw his life as a trade-off for billable hours. He discounted the emotional and psychological toll of needing to be there to fix everyone's problems. Strangely this seemed to both invigorate and drain him at the same time.

3.3. Growing up in the Shadow of the Family Business

3.3.1. Asking for a Computer

The *Commodore 64* computer was released at around the time my father was starting his business. Apple™ was also growing in popularity, particularly in education settings. My father worked with IBM™ and I remember first becoming interested in programming and computing when I was about ten. One of my fellow Grade 5 classmates had become quite adept at programming and I remember asking my father for a computer. He brought home a used IBM computer from the office and asked me to learn how command prompts work and to learn how to use *Lotus 1-2-3*. I remember feeling quite annoyed at this example of the story of the proverbial shoe-makers children. My dad's instructions for learning computing were also different from the development in the education field with graphical user interfaces and Apple's introduction of the Mouse. My father provided me a copy of *DOS for Dummies*® (Gookin, 1991). At first I was excited because I thought it would be a way for me to start getting involved in the business. I remember feeling quite deflated when I asked my father whether studying *DOS* and *Lotus 1-2-3* would be useful for his business and he said "no," but he thought it would be useful for me over the long run.

Throughout High School I got good grades and began to take an interest in the Sciences, particularly in biology and human physiology. My career interests turned towards medicine, something that my father approved of. It was almost as if he was glad that I would not take further interest in computing sciences. Beyond the *DOS for Dummies* book that he gave me, I do not remember my father trying to foster my interest in his business or his work. He seldom spoke of his work except for occasional bursts of frustrations he would have at the dinner table about some of the personalities at his client's offices. My father travelled all over the Island providing IT services to municipalities from the South of the Island up to Ucluelet, roughly a 300-km distance. This meant that he was away on overnight business trips for many nights throughout the week.

3.3.2. Asking for Summer Work in Business

In a bid to learn more about my father's business, I remember asking him for a summer job. After all, many of my classmates had summer jobs working next to their fathers at the pulp and paper mill. Each time I would ask him for a job, he would say that I did not have the skills

and that I would be better off focusing on school. He suggested summer school or summer camps for piano over allowing me to work with him. I believe that my father had determined that life as an entrepreneur, consultant and small business owner was not a good life. According to him, business was not something to be pursued but something you came to as a last resort. Yet I found it amusing that he had named his business *Wilco Computer Services* after his father's business, that he had failed to take over at age sixteen.

3.3.3. Moving to Vancouver

When I was 16 years old, I had to move to Vancouver for a series of complicated surgeries. I was surprised that our decision to move to Vancouver had little impact on how my father worked. My mother and sisters relocated with me while my father stayed on the Island Monday to Thursdays and travelled to Vancouver by ferry on the weekends. I was so excited to move to Vancouver because I realized there would be less racial discrimination and also because I found "Lilliput" boring. The town of Duncan, my father's Lilliput, seemed so small and limited. I wanted to move to a city because I believed there would be more opportunity there.

I remember arguments between my parents also escalated during this period. One heated argument was about where in Vancouver we would live. My father wanted to buy a house in the West End where most of his "Winnipegger" friends lived. My mother vehemently rejected the idea because even though we had sufficient money, my mom argued that my dad would be unwilling to spend the money to live congruently in the affluent neighborhood. She argued that we would be ostracized because my father would refuse to purchase membership in the exclusive clubs that other families were part of. We had just purchased our first Mercedes-Benz®, which in Chinese culture was a mark of success. However, my mother was asked to drive it in secret because my father did not want people to know that we were well off. His rationale was that his clients would be jealous and wake up to how much they were actually paying his company. I was perplexed at how my father was so anxious about showing his success in business publicly while also wanting to live in the West End, which I think he saw as a marker of success. In the end, we moved to East Vancouver. My father continued his weekly travel schedule for about two decades. It wasn't until almost a decade later that I would work for my father and come to understand how lonely this must have been for him. My father had no real close friendships and all there was for him was the business.

3.3.4. The Toll the Move Took on My Father

A few years into this travel schedule, I started to notice that my father had bad dreams when he came out to Vancouver for the weekends. Although there didn't seem to be any outward signs of stress that any of us could observe, we all suspected that he was dealing with a lot at work or that he was too lonely. In our house in East Vancouver, I slept in a room next to him and in the middle of the night, it would sound like he was having an angry argument with someone. When we asked him whether he remembered his dreams the next morning, he would say "No." The only thing that he could recall was that he dreamt that he was at the office. By this time in my father's life, I sensed that he was experiencing some fatigue and that there was a part of him that wanted to retire. When we broached the topic, he would often say he needed to exit at the right moment but now was not the time. He too wanted to take a break although his clients were dependent on him. This pattern carried on for ten more years before he finally shut down the business.

3.3.5. Seeking Father Figure – Mentors

By the time I had reached adolescence, I began to distance myself from my father and his business. The move to Vancouver also physically separated us. Although the actual pattern of life was the same, as I would seldom see my father for dinner during the weekday, the physical distance also became a relational distance. Both my father and his business seemed unknowable and my interests were bringing me away from computers. I also began to evaluate whether I wanted to live my father's life of long hours at work with no other interests. I was no longer committed to unravelling the mystery of the family business nor trying to obtain the approval of my father.

It was during this period that I began to seek out other father figures in the form of mentors. I had mentors in all different aspects of my life including teachers with whom I shared a deeper connection, pastors who were open to helping me explore spiritual formation or people in business that I admired. At a subconscious level, I became more judgmental of my father. I wondered whether he was living a good life and concluded that it was not the life I wanted to live. His business seemed to be about trading time for money and I wondered how much money was enough. I began to focus on discovering my own interests. My father had actively discouraged me from knowing more about his business. It may have been a form of shielding me from the stress of being in business for himself, or maybe my father just believed I could do

more as a professional. I began to branch off and leave him—almost rejecting everything that was him. I began to see my father's risk aversion, his unwillingness to address important conflicts in his life and the ennui of doing something for a living that he didn't seem passionate about.

The beginning of this journey of self-discovery started with an inventory profile that I did with a psychologist as part of an extended career preparation opportunity. The test revealed possible careers but also helped me identify different interests. As part of my exploration of these interests I was also encouraged to find experts in these fields to interview. This was interesting because I remember the inventory revealed that my top careers would have been in medicine, sales, teaching or an entrepreneurial endeavor. My father actively dissuaded me from the latter two and suggested I pursue medicine. I was interested in biology and physiology, so I agreed.

I went into my first year of university in sciences with the full intent of becoming a doctor or surgeon. I had grades that would have allowed me to pursue this kind of career. Midway through my year, I came to a sudden realization that other than interest in biology, my primary motivation for pursuing a career in medicine was actually money. I didn't want to worry about money like my father and wanted a better work-life-balance. This was when I switched my studies to the Faculty of Business Administration.

An important mentor in business during my last years of my undergraduate studies once asked me why I wanted to go into business. He told me that it was important to answer this question honestly without judging myself. He said people sometimes go into business for power. They love having the ability to control their own destiny. Others just do not like working for others. They may have a personality that prevents them from taking orders from a boss so they opt to become their own bosses. Others were in it because they were motivated by wealth and the ability to make more money through business. Still others might be interested in business for the chance of prestige and recognition. Success in business could be a form of validation.

I did not have an immediate answer to his question and I also started thinking about my father and why he entered business for himself. It was a question that I tossed and turned around for many weeks. I concluded that I was motivated towards business because of the chance of freedom. Freedom to do what I wanted, make sufficient money, and to also pursue my other passions and interests. Ultimately, I wanted freedom from being in a perpetual Winter;

a state where we are constantly stockpiling and fending against scarcity. I'm not sure why I never asked my father about his thoughts about my mentor's question despite wrestling with it internally. It would be about a decade later when he was in his final years at the nursing home that I did ask him.

3.3.6. My Attitude Towards Money

Growing up, although we never had a lack of anything, I was always under the impression that we didn't have enough. Part of this was because my mother had explained to me that my father was always working long hours to put food on our table. It was as if money could only be earned through the trading of time away from family. Another part was because we were always only buying and stocking up on things when they were on sale. This made me hyper aware of money. My parents were very frugal. We were never allowed to buy anything that wasn't on sale. We seldom went out to eat and when we did, we weren't allowed to order beverages. It was common for my parents to tell me privately that we couldn't afford it. I now know that this was not true but as immigrants, my parents had an ingrained mindset that it was important to save because you never knew what would hit you in life.

That being said, with his higher earning potential, my father also attracted a lot of people who would scam him on shady investments. My father invested in land deals in which he would somehow lose everything. He would invest into mining projects with others and be the only person in the group to somehow lose money. I would often get quite angry because both my mother and I had a sense about people and would tell my dad that this person wasn't trustworthy. My father would ignore us and move forward with the deal to lose money. This even happened with his extended family.

Once, when we confronted him about losing money to poor investments, he made a comment that it was his money to lose and we shouldn't get involved. As I was growing up it became a taboo topic within our family. However, I was amazed at how hard my dad worked to save money only to have it run through his hands like water. I often wondered beyond my father's ability to sell his services to municipal clients, on whether there were other ways of having money flow in. Money as held by my father seemed so fleeting. Although my father was extremely frugal, he was very generous with causes he believed in. He was a large giver to the church and a big donor to overseas ministries. He even funded one of his workers, who had decided to become a Pastor, to finish seminary and also provided living expenses for this

person's first few years of life as a Pastor. For many years my father was also a large donor to his distant brother-in-law's radio broadcast program. I believe that my father's practice of regular giving was a key reason that money never had a full grip on his life. He valued a large bank account but was never too devastated by losing money or seeing it disappear. He was also never hesitant to spend money on our education. It allowed us to take piano lessons, pursue our interests and even travel. It was common for us to take an annual trip somewhere. By the time I finished high school, I had travelled to Asia multiple times and was also able to go on a European trip with my high school band.

I was very proud that my father made a lot of money. For me I think it became an objective measure of a man's competence and of how he was able to recognize and exploit available opportunities. The fact that my father was selling his services and intellect to create wealth out of nothing made it even more an indicator of his competence.

3.4. My Formative Years – Missed Opportunity to Connect through Work and Family Business

3.4.1. Encouraged to Go the Corporate Route (Intrapreneurship vs. Entrepreneurship)

I remember during the celebratory dinner held after graduating from my international MBA, my father asked me what I wanted to do now. I told him I wanted to continue seeing the world and that I wanted to explore an entrepreneurial career, where I wasn't bound to the office and a 9-to-5 routine. I told him that I had a few potential jobs for which I was interviewing that might be a steppingstone towards this and that, and that I was also seriously considering starting a consulting practice with two of my fellow MBA classmates.

My father was quick to proffer that I should consider an intrapreneurial rather than an entrepreneurial route. Between the appetizer and main course, he extolled the values of safety nets and job security and that this was something that entrepreneurs didn't have. He said that although he didn't pay much attention to the industry and financial markets, it seemed that the CEOs of many of the Fortune 500 were like entrepreneurs who used other people's money that was raised in the stock market. They did not bear any risk since they continued to pay a salary with benefits but they had significant upsides if they were able to drive business performance.

As the main course arrived, I began to share that although a CEO or senior executive position sounded great, it would take many years of being an office worker and climbing up the corporate ladder to reach such a position. My dad was quick to dismiss this as “paying your dues” and having someone to pay for the next stage of an education. He also dissuaded my ideas about pursuing a consulting practice with my classmates, questioning who would ever pay for consulting from people without deep experience. He also pointed out that if I went down this line, I would have to pay exorbitant premiums for health and dental insurance. This was something that hadn’t even crossed my mind. My father quickly followed up with the thought that no matter how much money I could charge initially, there would be no pension or safety net at the end, meaning that there wasn’t real retirement unless I had made good investments that would provide a good annual income in perpetuity. Although I appreciated my father’s thought-provoking questions, many which I had never thought of, I remembered being slightly irritated by the line of questioning and thinking which at the time made me feel quite boxed in.

When my father heard that I was also applying for jobs at Motorola in Beijing and L’Oréal in New York and that I had interviews lined up, he stopped his questioning. It was strange, I remember at the end of the evening my father paying for the bill. Despite the celebratory nature of the dinner, I don’t remember him congratulating me on the fact that I had graduated. I guess I should have known that he was happy for me and approved of my being honored as the top student of the class and program by the fact that he had taken time off work to fly to Philadelphia to attend my convocation and have dinner with me.

3.4.2. Working for my Father (2004–2005)

After I graduated from my international MBA, I was set on moving to New York to find work. This was hindered by a severe wrist fracture that required three surgeries. At the time my father was dealing with two major business issues. For the first time in a decade of his business in operation three of his clients were going to bid for IT services. The second issue was a tax dispute with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). I was very surprised that my father asked me to work for him and that he thought I should think about taking over the business. He thought that there was an opportunity around the expansion of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) while he was also trying to retain his current clients. For the first time, my father told me that despite the frustrations of the business, it was lucrative and a good financial option. He set a salary for me which he explained would be an after-tax amount. He would guide me to take over the business over the course of 3 years while paying me this after-tax amount. Using a Chinese

saying, he explained that each mountain could have no more than a single tiger. He told me that during my 3 years working for him, he would consider my opinions but that he was the Boss. He also told me that after 3 years, regardless of whether I was ready, he would leave the business and I would be the one calling the shots.

I remember thinking to myself, I don't think I have ever had such a serious conversation with my father, a type of conversation that was both foreign and left me anxious. Not having any computer programming background, I wondered how I would ever help my father, much less take over the business in 3 years. I was determined to work hard and not let him down. I also rested in the knowledge that he would probably do his most to help me learn the business. I hoped that by working with him, I might develop more business acumen while gaining work experience. I wanted him to share his wisdom and the things he learned with me, not unlike those days when I was still a child playing table tennis with him. Being a fresh MBA grad, I was also concerned about how I would gain credibility with his team and clients.

3.4.3. On Control and Power (一山不能二虎) ⁴

My father's conversation with me clearly illustrated the importance of delineating control and power in the business. It was interesting that he foresaw that this would be a source of conflict between the two of us as we worked together. I remember that he elaborated that people often did things differently and there was not necessarily a right or wrong way, while ultimately we wouldn't really know whether the best decision was made until after the fact. I think that this view was useful as it set clear boundaries of control within a timeframe of 3 years. The unspoken and inferred facts flowing out of this arrangement was that he would also take full responsibility for all decisions during the 3 years as I learned the business. I was encouraged to disagree with him although he made it clear that in the end, because of his experience and because ultimately, he owned the business, he would make the decisions. This liberated me to watch and learn. On the other hand, I wonder whether he underestimated the timeframe required for me to truly develop a thorough understanding of the business that had taken over 20 years to build. His conversation with me helped start us on the right foot. I was working for

⁴ Translated as one mountain cannot accommodate two tigers, which is a colloquial expression meaning that two high achievers need their own territory or hunting grounds because they will inevitably be in competition if put together.

him and he owned the business. He wanted to transfer the business to me but it was up to me to learn. In 3 years, I would call the shots.

With most of the family business clients for whom I have consulted there have been few instances in which there was the clarity that I experienced with my father. In some of my cases, as the founder of the business, my father would often not want to retire or relinquish control. A son would often feel disempowered because there was no clear timeframe after which he would be calling the shots and taking responsibility for his decisions. This is an important part of learning. Coming back to the Chinese expression 一山不能二虎 (one mountain cannot accommodate two tigers), I wonder what happens when two Tigers are on the same mountain; when the hunting range is too small to accommodate two leaders. Perhaps either the younger Tiger needs to leave the mountain entirely to find his own range, or more often than not, there is conflict and a test of power between father and son in which both will lose. In the majority of cases, the father may win in an absolute sense but at the same time lose because by winning, he may crush his son's spirit or the son may win causing a rift and emasculation of the father. Even more sad is when these tensions play out in court where the only winners are the lawyers.

I once worked for a client who had many family members involved in the business, including extended family and in-laws. The son of the Chairman explained that it seemed his father had unleashed havoc on the family as he lamented why everyone around him was a "Yes-Man" and did not take the initiative to solve problems together. They all waited for the patriarch to give orders rather than help by shouldering some of the responsibility. The son then explained that the unspoken reality was that it was because the Chairman would always undermine people who took initiative to try and move something forward. It was easier to wait for the "alpha" to issue a command than to take action and be reprimanded. Interestingly, this kind of control and power in the family business would often also extend into home life and family relationships.

3.4.4. What is our Business?

In the business lifecycle a business will go through changes as its product and services mature. In 2004 my father's business was reaching one of these stages. A key product that had been a cash cow for the last 18 years was reaching maturity because he had developed the program in a dated programming language that had now been replaced by the development of programs that worked within a graphical user interface. Around the time, larger players like

SAP, JD Edwards, and Oracle were entering into the spaces of mid-size organizations and as the large organization market space had matured.

When my father asked me to join the company after graduating with my MBA, I had completed a team consulting project using his company as a Case Study. We had identified an opportunity to branch off into new revenue streams by restructuring his organization's team. In the project, extensive market research was also done and prospective new clients were identified. My father had read the report and concluded that the best opportunity would be to try and upsell his existing clients with a new service rather than seeking out new clients. Among the different products, he was sure that GIS had the greatest opportunity. He had decided that Wilco would continue the renewal of the technology of its mainstream product while devoting some resources to developing a new product offering. By the end of 2004, one of his clients had initiated a request for a proposal for managing the Financial Systems. My father was invited to participate in the bid but was not consulted on the requirements despite having provided close to two decades of continuous service.

Even as I began my work for my father, he advised that I would not need to travel weekly with him to the Island. He explained that there wasn't much I could do for him on the bidding process side and that dealing with the Canada Revenue Agency could be done from Vancouver. He requested that I travel with him to the Island once a month. He encouraged me to go back to school part time to complete a GIS programming course and also to take some courses in relational database programming. So, at 25, I took my first computer and programming courses at the British Columbia Institute of Technology. As a good student I excelled at all three night-time courses. However, it was an ongoing struggle to connect the training to my father's business. It was almost as if my father had brought me onboard but still wanted to keep me at a distance. I was perplexed about what he was protecting me from. For about 6 months, I travelled once a month with my father to the Island to work with him. However, while I was on the Island, I would work from our family home by myself while my father travelled to see clients. I am still not entirely sure why in these 6 months he did not want to bring me into his client's office.

During this period of my life, I remember the most satisfying part of my day was when my father came home for dinner and we would be able to discuss his day and some of the work I was doing independently. This was something that had been missing for me throughout my

childhood. Through these dinner discussions I was able to get a sense of his clients, their IT needs as well the challenges the business was facing.

Still, this often felt like I was learning about the business in third person. I wanted to accompany my father to the office and meet his clients and the key decision makers because I saw relationship building and marketing as a strength I could bring to the table. My father also had staff with whom I wondered how I would work. Nevertheless, my father would say it was better for me to stay at home because there was nowhere for me to sit at his office. The only time I met with my dad's staff was over lunch at a restaurant. Although we had pleasant conversation, I began to wonder how I would win credibility with staff members who had so much more experience working with the clients and who would always be more technically competent. I remember spending a lot of time thinking about how to differentiate and run a business where I was not the technical expert.

When I spoke to my father about this, he would dismiss my concerns and tell me staff always knew who was paying the bill and that as the boss, I didn't need to be the expert. He explained to me that at one time, he was always on the forefront and knew more than his staff but over time, he had begun letting go and in reality, his staff knew more than he did about certain aspects of the product. Also, since I would be entering the business in a new area of the business, the GIS track, it would not be that important to interact daily with the other staff.

Although everything he said made sense on an intellectual level, my father's answers did not alleviate any of my concerns. I got the sense that he just wanted me to focus on the new area and not meddle in other aspects. It was almost impossible for me to learn about the business and establish the relationships I felt I would need while staying at home. I also felt it was easier for my dad to discount technical competency in his business because he was confident he could pick it up with a solid programming foundation unlike his business graduate son. Over time, my interest and engagement with learning my father's business started to wane again and I began to wonder whether I really wanted to take over the business. The development of the GIS business was also stalled because my father's core business was at risk as a few of his larger clients had decided to go to a Request For Proposal (RFP) process for the IT business. It was very troubling that my father was only invited to participate in one of the three clients' RFPs. Around the same time he also received a notice from the CRA requesting an audit of his GST records.

Just 2 years prior to the recent notice from the CRA, the business had been audited and fined \$2.5 million related to payment of PST. As a result my father was very concerned and his attention quickly shifted to dealing with the auditor. Not coming from an accounting background, I tried my best to help him organize his records and invoices and discovered that his paperwork was a mess. Fortunately, over the course of 2 months, we finally resolved the audit with a small fine. However, in the midst of all this my father also lost 3 of his largest clients. When we spoke about this over dinners, he revealed that he believed that over the next few years his other clients would follow suit. Someone close to procurement with one of his clients had let slip that there was concern that my father's business was for the most part entirely reliant just on him and the decision to go to an RFP was based on that risk. Secretly, I couldn't help but wonder if I agreed with that risk assessment. After all, his potential successor hadn't been brought on until very late in the life of the business.

3.4.5. Opportunity for Stable Employment at a Crown Corporation

About 9 months into working with my father, I reconnected with my professor of strategy from my undergraduate studies. Over lunch, he mentioned that another one of his students had called and was looking for someone to help with corporate strategy. I was intrigued as this was part of my training. But when I asked where it was and he said Insurance Corporation of British Columbia (ICBC), I remember my heart sinking. I didn't want to become one of those union people my dad had described that worked in government. I wanted to be rewarded financially for my hard work rather than just trading my time for a salary. I didn't go to business school to work at a Crown Corporation. My professor suggested that it was for a short contract anyways and he thought it would be a good opportunity. I reluctantly put my name forward.

That night I discussed the opportunity with my father wondering how he would see things given that we were trying to launch a new line to his business. Surprisingly he was not only supportive but actively encouraged me to take the opportunity. He said, Crown Corporations offer great benefits and stability making it a great job. I remember asking him how this would impact the family business and he said I could always come back if things didn't work out at ICBC.

I couldn't help but feel that he was almost relieved that there was another opportunity for me. I remember wondering about why he might feel this way. On hindsight my reading of the situation was that for my father, there was a bit of both relief and perhaps a sense of loss later

that I would not be taking over. I still wonder whether I was a burden or help during this short stint working for my father.

When I got the government job and was offered long term employment, my father was adamant that I should take the job. It was a bit of a whirlwind during the ensuing years after I decided to work at ICBC. In the 7 years that I worked there, I aggressively took on multiple roles while trying to gain experience and constantly reminding myself that working for a Crown Corp was only for a season in life. Nevertheless, I remember pulling long hours as one of the youngest managers in the corporation. I remember staying late and often eating dinner at the office to catch up on projects. My father never really asked me about work and the new line of business that we were supposed to launch quickly fell by the wayside.

It was also shortly after I began at ICBC that I met the woman who would quickly become my wife. We had met at church and within a year, I bought a house and got married. I moved to a suburb about 30 minutes away from my parents. Both emotionally and physically I felt more distant from my father than ever. Many years later, I heard through my mother that my father was disappointed that I had not spoken to him more about my decision to get married. I remember thinking to myself, what was there to talk about?

The early years of marriage were quite difficult as I struggled to establish myself as a man. Sometimes with traffic it took up to 1.5 hours in total to drive to work. I also learned that my bride had never lived on her own and despite deciding to stop working for her parents to become a full-time homemaker, she struggled to take care of things around the home. Many arguments ensued as we tried to establish our own household. Sometimes I would catch myself wondering whether it had been this difficult for my father but decided that if he could do it, I could too.

3.4.6. Starting a Fashion Design Business (Wabi Fashion Design)

After about 6 months of trying to be a full-time homemaker, my wife decided that she wanted to go back to school and study fashion design. In the winter of 2007, she graduated with her certificate in fashion design at the same time an opportunity appeared for her to open a ballroom fashionwear store at the Crystal Ballroom in Vancouver. I was securely employed at ICBC and would be able to help the business do its book-keeping and also tend the store on weekends.

When I casually spoke about the opportunity at a family dinner, my father was characteristically quiet. I later spoke with my mom about it and she told me that my father was not very supportive of the idea. He had asked her to tell me to consider how it would impact my family. According to my mother, he was worried about how much it would tie down our time, the stress it would be for my wife and he was also skeptical about the profit potential. He did not think that the business was worth the amount of time and energy that it would take. At the time, I remember feeling that his advice was so hypocritical. All that he was telling me to consider was not something to which I had ever seen him put second thought. In fact, he was still working the same hours and travelling between the Island and Vancouver. If he cared so much about impact on family, how had he neglected to see my mother being alone all this time?

When I later tried to speak to my father directly, he offered some cryptic advice about the stress it would place on my wife and turned the conversation by asking about whether we had thought about having kids. When I tried to press further to understand his thoughts, he just responded that having your own business was a lot of pressure. He wouldn't speak further about the subject. I don't remember my father being in attendance at my Grand Opening. Other than getting an occasional question from him through my mom, we would not speak about the subject of family business again.

About a year into our business, my mortgage was coming up for renewal and I was looking for some bridge financing because the business had been financially draining and because our strata corporation had just put in a special levy to fix the rainscreen of our condo. The bridge financing would be double-digit interest. I remember having a conversation with my mom and she suggested that since interest rates were high, I should ask my dad for a loan and work out a better interest rate. My mother explained that this would probably yield my father a better return than some of his investments anyways.

When I broached the subject with my father by telling him I would pay him prime + 2% for the duration of the loan, he was pensive and said that we would need to put in place a written agreement and that I would need to change the title of our home to include my mother until the loan was paid off. I understood the need for a written agreement but was quite angry at his suggestion that we would need to change title. Did my father have such little faith in me that he would require collateral? I remember storming off in anger telling him I would find another alternative even if it were more expensive. Beneath the anger, I remember feeling quite hurt by what I saw as confirming evidence that my father did not trust me. Moreover, I began wondering

whether my father's coldness towards me was what the Chinese meant by 六亲不认,⁵ which roughly translates into not acknowledging personal relationships when it comes to business affairs. Was my father in business mode when I asked him about investments, returns and loans? Sometimes I wonder if asking him for the money as being help for a son would have yielded a different result.

3.4.7. Dad Retires

Shortly after I started *WABI Fashion Design* with my wife, my father began wrapping up *Wilco Computer Services*. He had lost his main clients and had found an opportunity for his staff to become employees for his remaining municipal clients. My father and I were both so busy during this period of our life that neither of us spoke about how we felt about the business. It felt awkward to speak about it but I know that I was feeling a sense of loss as he wrapped up his business. Sometimes I wonder whether he also felt this loss. I remember wondering what my father would do after he was retired. After all, he didn't seem to have any interests in the 30 plus years he ran his business. The business and his work were front and central to his life. I had tried to encourage my father to discover new interests, perhaps with my mom. However, this was something in which my father didn't seem to be ready to engage. To him, it was a luxury he would only have after retirement. He had spoken about dreams of travelling across Canada in a trailer hitch with my mom. But he never actioned or took these plans any further. To the best of my knowledge, the only interest he had with my mom was taking weekend shopping trips to Seattle or going for dim sum on Saturday mornings. Other than that, my memories of my father were of him waking up characteristically early like he would on a workday and just pattering around downstairs while the rest of the family was waking up. I had a deep fear that my father would die from loss of purpose as soon as he retired, which wasn't too far from what happened.

3.4.8. Dad Diagnosed with Degenerative Neurological Disease

Months after he wrapped up his business, my father was diagnosed with an incurable degenerative disease, Multiple System Atrophy (MSA). There were some symptoms of something not right. For example, his driving skills had deteriorated, and we noticed that he couldn't seem to drive in a straight line or that he would occasionally lose his balance and fall.

⁵ 六亲不认 (Describe the meanings of the characters if you wish.)

However, it wasn't until he wrapped up the business that he had the time to get full testing. My father went from specialist to specialist until he finally landed at the University Hospital where research centers told him that there was very little known about MSA other than that it affected a very small percentage of the population and that it was incurable. Life expectancy was between 7–15 years, but he would slowly deteriorate, losing mobility either from the legs up or head down. Drugs for Parkinson's or MS could help with some of the symptoms but would not be a cure. There were Research Centers dedicated to MSA in New York, but the specialists could only prolong life controlling symptoms. The specialist explained that how fast he deteriorated depended on how active he tried to stay and whether he disciplined himself to do physio exercises daily even though it would be difficult.

When our family found out that my father had been diagnosed with MSA, we were all in denial. By this time, I had moved out so only my mother and sisters were living at home with my father. For safety and mobility issues, my father stayed in a room by himself on the first floor of the house. As a family, we were hopeful that he could stay in the family home but within a year, my father's condition rapidly deteriorated. He would fall and because I wasn't in the house, it took the efforts of my mother and both sisters to help him up. Before long, this situation became unsustainable and my father had to be moved into a home with dedicated nursing help and he was moved to Little Mountain Nursing home which was about a 30 minutes driving distance away from our home at the time. We committed to driving to see him at least once a week. On my weekly visits, I began to notice that other than being transferred to a wheelchair, my father was also starting to not be able to speak very well. It was very difficult for me to visit him as I was struggling with slowly losing him and also contemplating what it would mean to become a father as my wife was pregnant with my first child. I felt very lost in the situation. The text below is a journal entry about how I felt back then.

3.4.9. In the Face of Helplessness

"There is no good son beside the bed of a father who is sick for ten years (怎么看待“久病床前无孝子 ”) – thus goes the Chinese proverb. I never thought that I would have to live through this reality, nor would I have ever imagined seeing my dad die a slow death.

About 2 years ago, my father retired at 54 and was diagnosed with a progressive neurological disease called Multiple System Atrophy. I sometimes wonder whether this is a just

a name that the medical professionals give to diseases that they can do nothing about, where all systems begin to shrink and shut down without obvious cause.

To an outsider, it might have seemed a progressive deterioration in his physical condition. To me, it was a downward spiral in his will, a loss of purpose to live.

My first reaction to his condition was one of denial. I kept telling myself he's only getting slower because of the accumulated fatigue and stress of the past 25 years of business. His problem was psychosomatic. If only he had more purpose outside of work, like an interest, things would be better.

Yet where would one begin to cultivate interest when one had not known anything other than work, TV and sleep. I began to try and encourage him to play chess with me. By the third time, he began to tell me to go play with someone else because he was feeling tired and did not have the energy to focus. He just wanted to stay in his room, watch TV and sleep.

I tried to ask him about his dreams and about my mother's dreams for life in the later years. It was met with an awkward silence. He told me at one time he had wanted to go to the Holy Land but this wasn't important anymore. He didn't have any dreams or ties left. He was ready to go home. I asked him about mother. What about her? He couldn't just leave her without having enjoyed life together. He said, I will leave her everything I have, what else can I do?

I was livid after encountering wall after wall. I was infuriated because I began to judge him not as a father but also as a husband and a man. I could not help myself. My father wanted to live the epithet on his grave to rest in peace even now. Did he not know that none of his family was living in peace? Did he not know that it was unacceptable logic to suppose that exerting 110% in the first part of life meant he didn't have to put any effort into the next part of life?

Following this conversation, it was a full 2 months before we talked again. I needed this time because every time I saw my father I writhed with anger. I wanted him to get better but he did not seem to want to get better. There was nothing I could do to give him hope.

I had originally thought that when we had our first child, Ulteira Hennessy, he might take joy in being a first-time grandfather. But we were no further past the first trimester than my dad decided to move into a nursing home. He did not even want to get up to go to the washroom

anymore, choosing diapers instead. It is ironic that he has chosen the life of a dependent rather than that of caregiver for another generation.

Now my dad lies in the bed, dying. Dying with others who are also dying, but having lived a good two to three decades more than him. This Thursday, on the third day of November, he will have his 56th birthday. I no longer know how to celebrate with him.

I find myself visiting him less and less. In the end, it only took 2 years, not 10, for me to no longer be at the side of my father's bed.

3.5. Becoming a Father – Finding Myself as a Man

3.5.1. Ulteia is born (First Grandchild)

Shortly after we shut our business down in 2010, my wife became pregnant with our first child. I had wanted a son but we had chosen not to find out the baby's gender ahead of time. By this time, my father was at the Little Mountain Nursing Home and I remember trying to make an effort to visit him once a week. I also remember one of the questions I struggled with regularly. At that time, I was wondering whether my children would ever get to know my father given his deteriorating health. There were many sleepless nights where I woke up frustrated that I did not know my father either.

I remember how awkward it often felt sitting beside my father's bed or beside him at the dining table in the nursing home. Things were more bearable when my mother was present. There were times I would try to share my thoughts with him about my hopes for the future.

On one such occasion, I mentioned that I would like to have a son but was unsure about how to be a good father. My sharing was an invitation for him to share his reflections about being a father himself, but he stayed silent. I remember asking him whether he had any ideas for my child's Chinese name. My father would always say he didn't know and needed time to think about it. After asking a few times and getting the same response, we stopped asking and decided on the baby's name ourselves.

Later, I might hear bits and pieces of his thoughts through my mom. But it often felt like I was speaking to a wall, even if it was softer than brick. I never felt my words connected. For example, a little after I told him about my hopes for a son and naming, my mother told me that

my father wanted me to know that I shouldn't give my wife pressure and that God would provide what he thought was best. When I asked about the name, my mom told me he didn't say anything about this. This seemed so general and unhelpful to me at the time.

During the period that my father was sick, I remember feeling quite frustrated with him although I continued going to the nursing home once a week. When our daughter was born in 2011, I remember telling him that we wanted to name our child Ulteia Hennessy Chen, 陈贤韵. Her English name was our blessing to her because it was a Spanish word that the pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago would say to each other, meaning to go-higher, go-further. Our blessing to our firstborn is that she would go higher and further than us. My father just smiled and didn't say anything. Later I would hear from my mom that he wanted to remind me not to give our next generation pressure. Just take things naturally. We waited about 3 months before bringing her to meet him for the first time. He just smiled the first time he met his grand-daughter. This is interesting because a few months ago, my daughter, who is now 8 years old saw a video of my father before he became sick and was surprised that he could actually speak. I hadn't realized that she had always thought he was mute because in her memory, my father never spoke but just always dotingly looked at her as she sat on his lap.

3.5.2. Enterprise Resource Planning Implementation (SAP)

In 2011, I began a large Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system implementation project at ICBC. The ERP system that ICBC chose was SAP,⁶ a system that was also used in the municipal government space. I couldn't help but think that it was ironic that after my father shut down his IT consulting company, I was now entering into the IT space again. What was different was that there was a whole team of technical experts and I was leading the project from a business perspective.

The 2-year process was complex and very stressful. There were many challenges around integrating the implementation of SAP with other aspects of the system. By this time, the time with my dad at the nursing home had become very awkward. There were long periods of silence as we struggled with things to talk about. The SAP implementation gave me a common

⁶ SAP ERP – is a German based Enterprise Resource Planning system that is dominant player in large corporations and governments

topic to speak to him about. However, because it was difficult for him to vocalize, my mother often had to be there to help translate what my father was saying.

My father recalled many of his experiences as a systems integrator and shared with me some of his successes in integrating since he was both the designer and user of the system that would later train others. He explained that SAP had many set parameters, which resulted in a real lack of flexibility. I would sometimes vent my frustration in translating between the business and IT teams and how the implementation team would lose sight of the main purpose of the system. I would also lament the wanton waste of money in customizations and hiring consultants. My father would attempt to calm me down and tell me that it wasn't worth getting worked up over.

I told him about the long hours I worked. My father would quietly tell me that it wasn't worth it and that I should consider whether my wife felt supported with a new child. I remember when I heard this from my father, I was a bit angry, partly because I felt it was hypocritical since he had not done this during his younger years. During this period I felt my dad and I connected more than ever on a work level. Despite his seemingly calm demeanor, somehow I felt that he understood my frustrations.

3.5.3. Interest in Life Review Frameworks – Interview Father

As I spoke to him about his work, there were moments I felt that I might have a window to understand my father more. It was during this time, as I was studying for my doctorate that I came across Life Review Processes (Ando et al, 2010). I began to wonder whether it would be possible to assist my father to do this kind of reflection while using technology to record his thoughts. I saw the potential for a series of videos and journalistic interviews to capture the essence of my father so that my daughter would know him after he had passed.

Although on the surface my father seemed to be supportive of the idea of me recording his thoughts for Ulteira and writing his own story in a Life Review format, in the end it was largely a failure. My father didn't have answers to basic questions about himself. This was exacerbated by challenges with his speech. I was struck by the fact that not only did I not know my father but he had not stopped to reflect about himself. In many ways, it seemed like he did not know himself. I was a bit taken aback by this. I also began wondering whether my father saw reflection as merely navel gazing and a luxury for which he didn't have the time.

It was easier to ask him factual questions about his childhood, my grandfather (whom I had never met) and the kind of work he had done before landing on computer consulting. For the most part, everything that he shared with me was new information which I tried to faithfully record.

Between these kinds of questions, I would ask the occasional reflective question. For example, it was during this time that I finally asked him the question my mentor asked me (almost a decade ago) about what motivated me towards business. When I asked my father, he paused for a moment and replied that he had never thought about it and didn't know. I pressed on, asking him whether he was motivated by money, power, prestige or not being able to work for someone else. After pondering for a while, he hesitantly said he thought it was for the money. I was perplexed by his answer because to me, my dad didn't love money. He gave it away freely even if he wasn't willing to spend it on himself. He had also accumulated a lot of it a long time ago. On my dad's deathbed, I remember also asking him whether he enjoyed computer consulting. He paused and told me he had never thought about it, but that he guessed he liked the computer part but really disliked the people part of his work.

Still, despite the long pauses and delays in answering basic questions about himself, some interesting stories emerged out of my time interviewing my father in a Life Review format. Given my father's cryptic utterances, it was often my mother who would translate and help fill in the gaps. The process became one where my father would often listen to my mother translate or tell the story and he would just nod if he agreed or shook his head if he disagreed. Long after my father passed away, my mother later told me that my father had been exhausted by my visits. He would ask her why his son needed to know the answers to so many tedious questions.

3.5.4. Father's Reflections on Being Son and Relating to Father

The most powerful story that emerged out of the Life Review process was when my father shared how he had failed to take over his father's business when his father suddenly passed away. My father was only 16 at the time. He was also the youngest out of a family of 8 children. Up to the point of his father passing away, my father said he felt no responsibility and was more interested in hanging out at pool halls and playing table tennis. However, when his dad passed away, he was one of the only two children left in Hong Kong. The others had either emigrated or were studying abroad. About half of the children came back for their dad's funeral.

My father had apparently taken a vow over his father's corpse that he would take over all responsibility including taking care of his mother. It was almost as if my father matured overnight. I remember interrupting my father's story to ask him whether he felt he was a good son. My father shrugged and said that while his father was alive, he seldom spoke with his father but knew that he was his father's favorite child. "So did grandpa ever beat you since you were such a bad kid?"

Only on a few occasions for staying out late or not coming home and worrying mother. However, I remember thinking since I would get a beating anyways, I might as well stay out later." So I guess not, I wasn't a very good son because I wasn't very responsible.

Even as I asked my father whether he thought he was a good son, it became a reflexive question – have I been a good son to my father? Did my father approve of me?

3.5.5. My Father's Failure to Take Over His Dad's Business

His father seldom took interest in family affairs because he was busy with the business. My dad told me that his dad only came home to have dinner once a week because on all other evenings, he would have business dinners or meetings that would occupy him late into the night. Apparently my grandfather's language skills were amazing. In the 1950s, he had taught himself how to speak English with very little education and had started a business exporting products to New York. His main clientele were Jewish businessmen. The family business exported woven fabrics, silk, snuff bottles and ivory artwork, employing about a dozen people.

None of his older brothers wanted to take over the family import-export business. None of the children had been exposed to the business. Prior to my father's father passing, my dad's only exposure to the business was occasionally being asked by his mother to go to his father's office to ask for grocery money and money to pay for family expenses. My dad explained that he loved these occasions because his father would often give him something extra for an allowance which he would use to go out and play pool or get a snack with his friends.

When my grandfather passed away suddenly, my father tried to rapidly learn the business and assure the staff that they would still have work. However, one of the staff decided to strike out on his own taking away a few of the primary clients. When I asked my father why his succession of the business failed, he explained that other than one of the workers taking away key clients, many of the existing customers didn't find him credible—being a 16 year old

with little experience. Within 6 months, my grandfather's import company, *Wilco Import and Export*, shut down and my father immigrated to Canada with his mother and my mom.

3.5.6. My Father – Overshadow or Source of Illumination

As I reflected on the few entries I had collected from my attempts to do a Life Review with my father, I couldn't help but to begin to evaluate my own life in light of my father's accomplishments. By the time my father was 24, he had become a father. By the age of 28, he was a father of three. By 35, he had a successful business, multiple houses and was a multi-millionaire. Yet my father had no interests and only a few close friends. By 55, he was in a nursing home, paralyzed and slowly dying. Had my father had a good life? Was I on track to have a good life? Subconsciously I began to evaluate myself against him and started to feel less accomplished. I wondered whether my father was proud of me and whether he approved of me even though I failed to take over his business. I didn't know him and I felt that he didn't know me.

3.5.7. Leaving ICBC to Start a Consulting Business

In the fall of 2012, I was presented an opportunity to leave ICBC to start my own consulting practice. I had just finished the SAP (an enterprise resource planning software) implementation project and had developed a transition plan to move operations from project planning into operationalization. In my plan, I had suggested redistributing my team in organization development (OD) practices across the business units and to eventually phase out my leadership position.

My plan was received and implemented in advance. I was offered an opportunity for a promotion in the corporate development unit where I had originally started my career at ICBC when in fact, the company had actually phased out my position while I was on parental leave. When I pushed my Director for an answer around what would happen if I did not take the position, it was revealed to me that the company would need to let me go with a generous severance.

I figured that this was a great opportunity for me to leave with a cushion to develop my own consulting practice. I discussed this with my wife, who was supportive of whatever direction I would take. The second person I consulted with was my father. When I broached the subject at

our regular Saturday lunch at his nursing home, he was silent and asked me what my wife thought. When I told him, she was supportive, he told me that he thought it would be a bad idea, particularly if we wanted to have a second child. He said ICBC was a stable Crown job with a defined benefits package that I could retire with 80% of my highest earnings. I told him I really wanted to explore the world and learn more in other organizations. My father retorted that I could explore finding another job in a Crown while continuing to stay at ICBC until a better opportunity arose. He really questioned why I felt compelled to leave.

I remember returning home conflicted about my dad's advice. I could understand the logic of what he was telling me and I remember wondering whether my father knew who I was. His rationale did not speak to my underlying motivations. I began feeling irritated with the feeling that he was only looking at the situation as if he were me rather than from my perspective. He really did not understand me. The majority of his objections were based on fears and the unknown of leaving the security of what was known. This was not all that surprising coming from my father. After all, he had always placed a premium on security and stable employment. It was something that he had not experienced himself but often seemed to long for. I became more resolved to leave ICBC to start my own consulting practice. It became more evident that I was not my father as I thought through some of his issues and concerns.

I found myself wondering how ironic it was that my father's personality would have preferred to have a stable job whereas out of circumstances, he had started his own consulting practice and done quite well. That was something that I actually wanted to build and was probably more in line with my own ambitions. I was not ready to settle.

3.6. Disorientation – Tragedy Strikes

3.6.1. My Father Passes

In the late Spring of 2016, while I was on business in New York, I got a call in the morning from my sisters saying that dad had been hospitalized and had contracted pneumonia. I was scheduled to come home a few days later and my sisters told me that it was optional whether to return home. This was not the first time my father had caught pneumonia. I told them to call me again when they arrived at the hospital and were with my father.

This had been the fifth or sixth time that my father was in the hospital for respiratory issues because the paralysis had started affecting his esophagus and occasionally small bits of

food would go into his lungs instead of his stomach, causing an infection. The first time this had happened our family was very worried because it seemed like my father would stop breathing and would need to be put on a ventilator for prolonged periods of time. After this happened a few times, we came to realize that assisted breathing would just be part of my father's journey.

On this morning, there was something different in my sisters' tone of voice. They seemed very worried. I spoke with my mother who conveyed to me that my father was indeed very sick, but this had happened before. My mother told me not to come home from my job since I would be returning in a few days and couldn't do anything to help my father even if I came back.

After hanging up the phone, I couldn't shake off the feeling that I should probably be back in Vancouver so after struggling for about 2 hours, I spoke to my client, who was very understanding, and began making flight arrangements. I called my sisters to tell them I would be coming home on the first flight back. When they picked up the call, both of them were with my mother beside my father's bed. Things seemed very tense and my mom said that she would put me on speaker phone with my dad. There was a long awkward silence as I struggled to find words to speak to him and realized that he wouldn't be able to answer.

So I just called out:

“啊爸 (Aba which means father), *hang in there, I am on my way home to see you.*”

No answer.

“*Are you feeling ok?*”

No answer.

My mom took the phone and told me dad was between lucid states but had nodded his head weakly and squeezed my mom's hand when he had heard my voice. It was at that moment that I began to feel a strong panic and overwhelming guilt for even waiting for the 2 hours before making arrangements to get home. Thoughts about being a horrible son and being a workaholic began flooding my mind.

I was able to secure a flight that evening and began driving down to the airport, which was about 3.5 hours away. My heart was racing as fast as I was speeding down the I-87 highway. I had gotten about halfway down the speedway when I received a phone call from my youngest sister who was sobbing. She told me that dad had passed, and mom was in a frantic

emotional state trying to wake him up. They were waiting for the doctor to come by to pronounce time of death. My sister told me that she had to go for now and hung up.

To my surprise, I broke down in deep uncontrollable sorrow. My mind went blank as I was heaving in tears and trying to keep the car in control while going at 100 miles per hour. I'm not entirely sure how I actually made it to the airport as everything seemed to blur after that call. I remember trying to make repeated calls to my wife who did not pick up. I cried for about half an hour. These were the last tears I shed for my father's passing until a year and a half later.

On the long flight back, I began to tell myself I did not have time to grieve. I needed to take responsibility for helping hold the family together. I needed to be strong and prepare to help with the flurry of administrative things from arranging the funeral to dealing with extended family. I caught myself wondering if this was how my father had felt at 16 when his father had passed. Had he forced himself to be pragmatic, convincing himself that his emotions didn't matter since it wouldn't change anything? Was this what made him seem to grow up overnight from carefree to being overly responsible for his mother and the rest of his family?

Once I landed, my mother picked me up and it was a long and quiet journey back home. I was greeted by my wife who had just put the two little ones to sleep. It looked like she was unpacking from a trip and was still unloading luggage from the vehicle.

She tried to tell me that she was there to speak when I was ready. Suddenly I became angry that she hadn't been there when I tried calling multiple times earlier in the day nor had she returned my messages. However instead of letting out my anger, I became cold, distantly quiet, and told her I was tired and didn't want to talk. The next morning, she asked me again how I was feeling. I did not feel like speaking and asked her where she was. She was quiet and said she didn't hear the phone and had just realized that I had called multiple times. I told her I needed to be there for my mom and sisters and without much further discussion, drove off to meet my sisters and mother to visit the funeral home together and confirm arrangements.

As we worked through a slew of paperwork, the funeral director explained to us that my father had already made full arrangements for his death a few years ago. He had requested that he not have a funeral service and that he should be cremated in the most basic cardboard box. The director had a binder of urns that my father's ashes could be transferred to for a fee. My mom turned down all the options and asked for the most basic vessel as she planned to transfer his ashes into a vase.

The funeral director told us that because my father had made all arrangements including providing payment in advance, the amount had yielded sufficient interest of a few hundred dollars to cover a more expensive urn. My mom told him to issue a check as this would have been what my father would have wanted.

It was a bit of a whirlwind as the appointment ended with us being guided to a viewing room in which we could press a button to release my dad's body into the crematory. The room felt like a viewing room for an execution and my mother chose not to enter. I remember asking the funeral director some silly questions including how they would collect the ashes and whether this would be all the ashes. I was surprised that the director told me they would go in with a vacuum cleaner to ensure they got all of my dad's ashes. We left the funeral home with my dad's Death Certificate and a presentation folder of his funeral package. We got out in time for a late lunch. I spent the rest of the day with my sisters and mother, recounting our favorite memories with my dad. I felt that day was our only experience to grieve together. But for me, I was still in state of shock and had not even actually entered into grieving. I was also trying to limit our memories to happy reflections as I needed to stay strong for the family. I was most worried about my mother, who by now was living alone.

My two sisters and I tried to divvy tasks to keep my mother from being overwhelmed. My youngest sister took on the majority of the financial and asset transfer tasks because of her accounting background. I was tasked with communicating with my dad's family and to try and keep them at bay because despite good intentions, they had often imposed their perspectives on my mom, inadvertently placing a burden on her. I tried to take care of as much as I could in the week before my next scheduled business travel. Work kept my mind off my father's passing. I did not want to deal with my father's passing and there were still mornings that I woke up in disbelief that he was no longer on this side of life. I pressed into my work and maintained my productivity while blocking out the absence of my father. I too had become like that shark my client said many entrepreneurs were like. I needed to continue moving forward to survive. Even as I continued moving, there was a cold distance that remained between my wife and me.

3.6.2. My Wife Leaves Me

Three weeks from the date of my father passing, while I was out of town at a client's I received a strange e-mail from my wife. It was a letter of separation written in both English and Chinese that outlined my wife's decision to resign from her role as my wife. When I first read the

letter, I thought it was a joke; in part because my wife wrote in classical Chinese and in part because it caught me entirely off guard. The decision to write in both languages was also interesting. It was almost as if she thought I wouldn't understand it if it were just in one.

We did have intensified arguments about temporarily relocating to New York because the travel back and forth every other week was getting to me. My wife was not working, our children were young, and I thought it would be easier for the family to be in New York for a 3- to 5-year period as I worked on the project. I remember her saying that it was quite unfathomable moving to another country since her parents had worked so hard to get to Canada. She told me leaving Canada would invalidate her parent's decision to immigrate to give us a better life. I explained that it was a temporary move and that we needed to make decisions for ourselves and follow where opportunity was. This was an ongoing discussion and it had never occurred to me that this might lead to her leaving me.

After receiving the e-mail, I called her cellphone, there was no response. This immediately brought back memories of trying to call her after my father had passed. I left messages which were not returned. A few days later when I returned from my business trip, I came to an empty home. My wife had already packed up and moved back to her parents with the little ones. I asked to see her and she reluctantly agreed to a brief meeting in a coffee shop. She explained that she didn't know what she wanted to do next, just that she didn't want to be with me anymore. She also said it was the better thing for both me and our children. She said that we had irreconcilable differences but refused to elaborate when I pressed to find out what these differences were.

The e-mail and her resolve was a shock to me. When I asked her whether she was open to seeing counselling and whether things would be any different if I stopped all consulting work and settled in Vancouver, she told me No, everything was too late and she had been deeply wounded beyond possibility of reparation. She said I could support her by paying her a monthly stipend. I told her I was not accepting her resignation and was treating the time as a cooling period and would welcome an opportunity to work on our relationship. I urged her to think of the family and future of our children – to which she replied she was doing this for the children.

3.6.3. Seeking Father Figure in a Time of Crisis – Calling my Father-in-Law

I proceeded to try having a conversation with my wife's father, both to find out what was happening and to see if I might alleviate any financial burden caused by my wife and children imposing on him by paying him some rent. Her father refused to return my calls until I tracked him down in person at his store. He didn't want to speak but reluctantly agreed to call me back later in the evening.

My father-in-law told me he was afraid to speak to me because my wife might not let him see his grandchildren. I asked him for advice to which he said it was too late and he couldn't give me any advice. He explained that he had also urged my wife to work things out with me and that his wife was actually quite worried about my wife moving back in because they were just finally getting used to the adjustment of being empty nesters. I asked him whether I could contribute partial rent and he became indignant, asking me how he would one day explain to his grandchildren that he charged them rent while they were living with him. This was ironic because a year and half later, my wife made a claim in Supreme Court that she owed her father a huge debt for unpaid rent and demanded that I pay her accordingly.

I remember telling my father-in-law that my father had passed away and I was asking for his advice not as my wife's father but as an older man imparting advice for a younger man in a difficult situation. It wasn't until I said this aloud that I realized I was missing my father. Even as I was asking this man, who seemed like a stranger at this point, I was wondering what my father would have done if he were in my situation. In the end, this man refused to speak to me saying this was between me and my wife and he was choosing not to be involved. I was both angry and hurt by his response. I tried to reason with him that by taking my wife and my kids in like he was doing, it was enabling her to make a decision that would ultimately hurt the family in the long run.

I explained that my source of income was with my consulting business and my clients were predominantly on the East Coast. I had had ongoing conversations with my wife about a temporary relocation to New York. My father-in-law became quite incredulous asking how I could ever expect my wife to move with me. She would be moving away from her parents which from his perspective would never happen. I asked him what would have happened if my mother-in-law had decided to stay in Taiwan living with her parents when he had decided to immigrate to Canada. As an immediate family unit, business and means of livelihood may necessitate

moving away from our known center of life. He coldly responded that clearly his wife had faith in him whereas my wife did not have faith in me. He boldly declared that he didn't know whether his daughter would ever find happiness but all that I had failed to provide for her, he would take over in responsibility.

I was livid after the call. I realized that in that moment I yearned to speak with my own father who always had an uncanny ability to delineate his responsibilities about things to let go of. This man, who I called father once I married his daughter, was not my father. He had not answered my plea for help and the man who would have answered was no longer around to speak to me. There was a mix of deep sorrow and anger. But underneath all of the emotion was a feeling of being lost and helpless. I chose to follow through with my commitment to give time for my wife to potentially have a change in heart and continued working and providing my wife with the financial support. After about a year with no change in the situation, I realized my wife's heart was fully hardened and that there would be no chance of turning things around.

In the long lonely nights on the road, I began thinking about my role in the breakdown as well as my options moving forward. I felt so trapped and helpless. I also began to question my assumptions about the priority of work and the implicit expectation that family should adapt to where opportunity brought us.

3.6.4. My Daughter Asks Whether I Love Her More than the Business

During this long period of separation, I continued working on my business, which meant that I was usually out of town for three weeks and then back in Vancouver for my one week off. At the time, I was working very closely with a client in the seafood industry bringing a high-tech recirculating farm online and raising salmon and shrimp to bring to market. In the one week that I took off, I would return to Vancouver and take care of my daughters who were 3 and 5 years old at the time. During this one week of parenting time, I would take on full domestic duties including taking my daughters to and from school. On one occasion after school a dialogue like below unfolded.

“Daddy, you really love your fish right?” – my eldest daughter asked as she averted her eyes, looking down at the floor sheepishly.

“Yes I do. It is really an interesting challenge raising them from egg through to a large fish. Daddy has been helping a client bring both their technology and fish to market”

“Daddy you love your shrimp even more right?” – my daughter continued to ask

“Yes I do. This is really a research project but of all the different kinds of seafood, people in North America eat shrimp the most. There is huge potential in the shrimp business.”

And then she asked the question she really wanted to ask:

“Daddy do you love me more than your fish and shrimp?”

I was shocked that my 5-year-old daughter would have this train of thought and reasoning. She assumed that because I spent so much time on my consulting business and being absorbed with my client’s fish and shrimp project, meant that I loved the fish and shrimp more than I did her.

After recovering from the initial shock, I told her, “There isn’t even a comparison. Indeed I love the fish and shrimp but I also eat the fish and shrimp. I will never eat you.”

She seemed relieved and went back to her playing. That night after I put the children to bed, I started thinking back to my own childhood where I felt like I was competing with the business for my dad’s time. Was my daughter alone on the playground waiting for me to play ball? Had the story of insecurity in a father’s love played out across generations? I felt exhausted.

3.6.5. Breakdown in the Highlands of Scotland

On the tail-end of a business trip to Scotland in late 2017, I was on a tour through the Highlands. Scotland had long been a country I had wanted to visit in the past both because of the history and the distilleries. As the small group tour van wound through the meandering paths of the mountain and as I drank whisky, I began breaking down. It started with an overwhelming sense of sadness of the land as I looked out to the grey skies and barren yet lush mountainside. The driver was playing Eddie Reader over the van audio system as he told us the sad history of the warring clans and the blood of so many generations spilled. I started thinking about how screwed up my life situation was and I began thinking about my father, whom I had not known. I began to wonder whether I was a good son. I was wondering why I was working so hard and for whom? Everything seemed meaningless in that moment.

And before long, I was weeping in the back of the bus. I came back to what my responsibilities were and how my father had succeeded in working like he did while living up to his responsibilities. It was in this moment that I began to really wonder about what my responsibilities were to my two young daughters and what it would take to be a good dad in the

given context. I was stuck, without anyone to talk to. My clients and many people in my extended family told me that I should just move on.

3.6.6. Transformation – Butterfly

Shortly after I returned to Vancouver and wrapped up all my consulting projects, I was spending some time playing with my youngest daughter Suseia who was in pre-school at the time. They were studying butterflies and the process from which the caterpillar becomes a winged butterfly. This is a familiar transformation story but I began to think about the live chrysalis displays in the New York Metropolitan museum. I remembered seeing many butterflies that did not make it out of the cocoon and died in the display at the butterfly conservatory.

As I researched the actual biological process to help my daughter understand more, I was amazed at how sanitized the story of its transformation had become. Perhaps it is this sanitized version of radical transformation, which seems innocuous and magical, that has made it such a popular and palatable symbol for metamorphosis. As the caterpillar enters into the chrysalis, it releases an enzyme that eats away at its body from the inside out. The body of the caterpillar continues digesting itself until all that's left are groups of densely organized cells called imaginal discs which were once lodged inside the caterpillar. These discs were grown while the caterpillar was still in the egg and were dormant until this radical creative-destructive process in which the caterpillar metamorphoses. The imaginal discs contain the genetic blueprint for the growth of each part of the adult butterfly from the limbs to the eyes.

Apparently if the chrysalis is disturbed or damaged during this phase, the butterfly will never grow and stay dead in the primordial ooze. There is literally a death of the old before the new emerges. What's even more amazing is that despite this type of melt-down and death, there have been studies that show that the butterfly can remember experiences from the latter parts of its life as a caterpillar. As I've reflected on this new dimension of a core that was formed while it was still an egg, before the caterpillar emerged into the world and the fact that the caterpillar needs to melt itself down back to its core before being reconstituted into its new form, I've wondered whether there are implications for my own transformation journey.

I began to wonder about what has been passed onto me by my parents from before I was born into the world and whether deep pain and suffering are natural prerequisites, or at least a common part of the journey of coming to full adulthood. Before long, my daughter was

asking me why I was crying while I was helping her research butterflies. I didn't know how to answer her question but perhaps subconsciously I began thinking about what I would have to endure to emerge on the other side. I also wondered whether I would get through the transformation. The anxiety of not knowing what was at my core was also suffocating.

3.6.7. Dealing with Child Protective Services – Dealing with Models of Parenting

I was scheduled to be with my client for another three days before returning to Vancouver when I received a call from an unlisted number on my cellphone. It was Child Protective Services of Canada. I was unsure about whether the call was a hoax or scam. The operator explained that there had been a call suggesting a number of serious but not urgent issues with my parenting as a father and that an officer wanted to meet with me with the children. I tried to obtain more information about what this was about but the operator said she was not at liberty to discuss. I was very confused but booked an appointment with the officer at a time that I would have the children.

I was surprised and immediately called my wife after the shocking call. She did not pick up but I left a message asking about whether she had called the Ministry. She did not answer. When I picked up the children from her, she refused to engage in the subject. About two weeks later, the officer came to my house and explained that there was an anonymous call alleging that I was an abusive and neglectful father. The officer explained that she had to interview both me and my daughters alone. By this time, I had found out that my wife had made a number of allegations to a Family Justice Officer at the Family Justice Centre, who was obliged to make the call to the Ministry. I was both angry and quite worried about what was an abusive and neglectful father.

The thoughts I had in Scotland began resurfacing as I wondered what it meant to be a good father. I felt I had tried to have more connection with my daughters than my father did with me when I was their age. Yet was this insufficient. Did this mean I was neglectful or absent? For the first time I began thinking about the trade-off that growing my business had on my role as a parent. Thankfully the interview with the officer was very brief and the officer concluded quickly that the accusations were unfounded. She promised that a letter would be issued to me within a week.

My focus on the issues of what it meant to be a good dad became more pronounced and a focal point of my attention as I returned to Vancouver and ceased the consulting work. I began to take both group and individual parental counselling. This time was very fruitful to me because I had a sounding board to reflect on how my own childhood experiences shaped my implicit understanding of what it meant to be a father. I realized that although I always knew my father loved me, I was never sure that he approved of me nor saw me as an adult. I also realized that I judged him for his actions both as my father as well as a man, and that it was this judging attitude that both distanced and protected myself from past wounds. Inadvertently my own standards of what it meant to be a father were shaped by my experiences, both good and bad.

Out of this process of separating my experiences from what I valued, I began to develop my own standards of what it meant to be a good father. In a parenting counselling session, I was asked a very profound question about how I wanted my children to remember me. In that moment, it suddenly occurred to me that my parenting and presence was a key component of my legacy. Up to this point, I had implicitly adopted my father's model that providing financially was my primary duty.

If circumstances had not forced me to go through the chrysalis stage of melting down from within, perhaps I would have not stopped to consider that I had an option to adopt a different model of parenting. Perhaps I would have continued a life where work and business were front and center, pushing out other aspects of life.

3.6.8. Aspirations of Children and Fathers

During summer vacation, I took my daughters to a Children's Museum in the US. This location had many rooms that mimicked different vocations including a restaurant, barbershop, veterinary clinic, gas station, police office, fire hall, grocery store, theater and even an airline. My daughters ran from room to room, putting on costumes and pretending to act out the different roles, often asking me to participate in their make-belief roleplays.

Two of their favorite rooms were the restaurant and the veterinary clinic. Not only did they spend the most time in these rooms, they also had the most elaborate roleplays and storylines in these rooms. My youngest daughter particularly loved putting on a white lab coat and playing Doctor with the many stuffed animals in the veterinary clinic. Her childhood

nickname in Chinese is “Doh-Doh” and as soon as she donned the lab coat and put a stethoscope around her neck, she would ask everyone to call her Dr. Doh Doh.

My eldest seems to like to cook and loved to put on an apron and start making dishes to serve to customers sitting in the restaurant. I was surprised that I found myself trying to direct her to the veterinary clinic to play more rather than the restaurant. I also found myself calling my youngest Dr. Doh Doh and asking her about what she enjoys about being a doctor. When I asked my older child whether she wanted to work in a restaurant, I was relieved to hear that she liked cooking but did not want to be a chef or cook. Then she told me she wanted to be a professional gymnast because she seemed to enjoy gymnastics. I went from one anxiety to the next and caught myself telling her how difficult this path would be.

3.7. My Consulting Experiences as Mirror for My Experiences with my Father

At the end of 2013 after I had left ICBC, I started a consulting business. By 2015, I had landed a few long-term contracts with some family businesses in which I had the opportunity to work closely with fathers and sons on different projects. These clients were all of Chinese background where the founders were immigrants to Canada or the US and their children were second generation. I found that the topics of legacy and father-son dynamics were very close to the hearts of my clients.

Through work and happenchance conversations, I found that I was often drawn into discussions about challenges fathers and sons had working with and understanding each other. These conversations often triggered memories or reflections that I had with my father and working with him. I had originally recorded these experiences as part of my own embodied experiences but ultimately determined that fascinating as these narrative accounts were, they were of a different nature than the other autoethnographic accounts I had included in this chapter.

My consulting experiences were important to the free associative memories of my past and despite choosing not to include them in their entirety in this study, I thought it would be important to summarize some of the themes and insights I had from my encounters. Consulting with my clients were often like a mirror for some of my experiences or how I remembered my father.

3.7.1. Primogeniture Responsibility

Amongst my clients, there seemed to be a common expectation for the eldest son to take over the family business. There was a strong sense of duty that the next generation felt for taking over the family business, often because this was seen as an important part of carrying the legacy of the father. Fathers expected their son to join the business as the founder's right hand man, with little real power to make change until the father actually left the business. This was seen by the father as training while it was common for the son to feel incapacitated and demotivated.

3.7.2. Difficulty for Founder to Retire

Founders had a very difficult time retiring from the businesses they created because the business was built around them. The founder often saw relationships with clients and employees beyond mere business relationship. Founders would sometimes make excuses for not being able to retire. The family business was a source of desire to be needed and connected.

3.7.3. Common Desire for Respect

On multiple occasions I saw fathers and sons get into conflict because both felt they were not respected by each other. Unfortunately, fathers often felt whenever their son had a different opinion or tried to do things in a different way as not respecting or learning from what the father had instructed. Obedience was commonly seen by fathers as respect.

Sons would feel disrespected by their fathers because they were not heard and were unable to add value by acting like they thought appropriate.

3.7.4. Communication Challenges

There were numerous communication challenges between fathers and sons. This ranged from basic challenges around the lingua franca of their relationship or conducting business to differences in communication styles or preferences. Since the founders were often immigrants, their primary language would have been either Cantonese or Mandarin while their children would have spoken English with varying levels of proficiency in Chinese. This became an issue around communicating about more complex issues.

Cultural differences which also led to norms of how business is conducted, how one approaches conflict and the underlying values of family and business also came to the fore as barriers to effective communication. For example, a founder who saw creating the family business as a means to employ extended family which may not have been qualified for the job would be seen as duty of family to take care of each other by one generation, but seen as nepotism and a business constraint by the next generation.

I observed that in the father-son relationship, one party tended to attribute communication challenges to being an issue with the other party; either not being expressive or a poor listener. When the power dynamic was layered onto the relationship, the son just ceases trying to communicate.

I also saw that fathers would be quite comfortable sharing about how they had overcome a past failure but more reluctant to share about struggles or challenges that they were working on. This led to sons often feeling like their father stood heads and shoulders above them.

3.7.5. Differing Motivations and Appeal of Family Business

It was common occurrence for fathers to forget that the family business was one of many options for their children. If children were able to enter into one of the prestigious professions like becoming a doctor or engineer, it was easier for fathers to see their children succeeding in other paths. Otherwise, fathers would make a determination that perhaps succeeding the family business would be a better path for them.

Overall, my consulting experiences helped me see that fathers had hopes and aspirations for their sons. These hopes came from a very different set of experiences and context from their sons. In many ways, seeing how expectations, a common desire to be respected, communication challenges, and what family business meant for sustaining a livelihood in my family business clients helped me remember and reflect on my time working for my father.

In the next Chapter, I will be engaging in a Progressive movement outlining my aspirations for the future. My hunch is that as I look at my own dreams, I will see how I come from a very different context than my father. This will be looked at through my Analysis and Synthetical movements in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4.

Progressive Movement – Visioning

It has been a surprise to me how difficult it has been to engage in this movement of the Currere process. In the past, it was easy to dream and be driven by visions of my future self. On hindsight, I realize this was because before the divorce and my career came to grinding halt, I was dreaming without integrating the other aspects of my life. For the most part, my dreams were about outward pursuits around career and entrepreneurial opportunities. This was also how I measured success.

My decision 3 years ago to relocate back to Vancouver for family has brought the relational sphere to the forefront. The divorce has been a reset in understanding my role as a father and what I would hope for in a relationship with a new partner in life. It has also caused me to think more about what's important to my identity other than work and providing financially.

Despite repeated sessions of sitting in meditative reflection with fountain pen and paper, sometimes with tea, at other times with stronger beverage, I had a hard time dreaming freely about the future. It was difficult to separate the current constraints and pain of the past from future possibilities. Perhaps this was because I was pre-occupied with the present – trying to adapt to my primary care-taker role for half the time the children were with me while being overwhelmed by thoughts of how I would ever find work being tied down. It almost seemed like thinking about the future was idealistic and hardly practical.

For months I struggled and could only come up with limitations and strong feeling of “stuckness.” It was around this time that I began to take nature walks that became a regular practice to unload from sitting unproductively.

4.1. Using Nature as Part of Meditative Reflection on the Future

As I walked in the forest, I saw diverse life living in symbiosis and began to see this as an extended metaphor that helped me with my reflection. Wandering along the rough trail, I began looking up at the tall and straight trees that seemed to soar. Time as experienced by these trees extended far beyond my timeframe. As I looked at how different trees grew, I started studying the trees, I began thinking about whether the growth and succession of old and new

growth could be helpful in understanding my story. The meditative process thinking about the future also led me to start thinking about what I would look like if I were a tree and how this might reveal some ideas about a projected future.

When I got home, I began to draw what a tree looked like in my mind. I imagined a pine tree, which is often featured in Chinese landscape painting. This evergreen grew out of rocky ground, its roots extending across large areas winding around rocks. The tree was alone overlooking a cliff face. The soil seemed dry but the tree seemed to be able to find sufficient nutrient. It branched out in a multitude of directions and lacked height. The tree was gnarled with branches twisting and turning. It was a resting place for birds and shade for animals. As I fast-forwarded in my minds-eye, through the different seasons, there was very little change to the tree as the environment continued to change.



Figure 4.1. Painting of Imagined Pine Tree by Samuel Chen

I started thinking about how this picture related to one future vision of myself. Particularly I was drawn to the ability of the tree to survive in what looked like dry conditions and was able to survive through the seasons. It continued branching in multiple directions just like my diverse pursuits and interests. The ability for my interests and pursuits to connect with others and provide shelter or life to others was also something that I realized I resonated with. The fact that a Chinese pine tree was what came to mind when thinking of myself was also interesting in my connection with my Chinese heritage. But unlike its North American counterpart, Chinese pine seldom grows tall and is often the species used in bonsai. Its growth could be directed by a

Master gardener creating different shapes. On some levels, growth could be said to be stunted, but on another level, it is directed growth based on the intention of the Master gardener.

Since my Chinese name also includes the character for a tree, more specifically Vernicia fordii, 桐树 I began thinking more about how this tree looked like and compared to the pine. My Chinese name was given to me by my grandmother and she had explained to my mother that she hoped that I would grow strong, straight and tall. But never having seen this tree in person, I began to do some research. Unlike the image of the Chinese pine tree, Vernicia fordii, was straighter with a few main branches that formed the crown and main foliage. The leaves were heart-shaped and fruits and flowers would develop from Spring through Autumn.

I learned that this tree has been very important to China as, since times of old, oil produced from the ripened fruit of the tree was used for lamps. This oil could also be used as motor fuel or used as a waterproofing varnish that was used on ships.



Figure 4.2 Drawing of Vernicia fordii, tree with same character as my name 桐

As I thought more about the properties of the tree, after which I was named, I started to reimagine myself based on the following words that I would describe the tree after reading more about it:

- Productive and yielding high energy fruits
- An enabler for illumination
- Protective finish for other surfaces
- Changing with the seasons
- Versatile in its uses & application
- Having a solid foundation

- International in scope – both in its application for ships that would sail around the world and its value as a commodity

The vision I have for myself moving forward is a person who has a high energy in his pursuits in life. Although the primary driver for these pursuits is not money, they have the potential to generate revenue and bear fruit. Considering my future career, I see multiple revenue streams from these interests that could also fund further development of these interests.

For example, my interests and explorations of beverages could become an opportunity to host tastings, group buying opportunities and product sales. I can see myself doing this with coffee, tea and alcohol. These interests could also help me connect with different people. Although not necessarily my primary revenue stream, it could supplement a main career. It would involve myself sharing and teaching about what I have learned as I journey through my interests.

Due to the fact that each of these are culture products, I could also see myself using my “funded” interests to travel to learn more at the source while enabling trade. I would be connected to people at a local level while also using social media and technology to connect with people internationally. Like a network of trees grounded in different geographical locations, I could draw support and a learning circle that spans across the globe.

One of my heroes when it comes to a diversified career is Pierre Beaumarchais, who lived in 18th century France. He is my hero because despite having the ability to specialize and focus on a single thing in life, he reached a level of excellence in many areas throughout his life.

He was an exemplar of adaptability and was a polymath, someone who had the ability to draw from diverse bases of knowledge. Interestingly enough, he succeeded his father’s trade as a watchmaker. He became very well versed in his craft and even had a few patented inventions in this field. However, he also went onto many adventures beyond his father’s craft including teaching music in the royal court, writing the Figaro series, upon which Mozart based an opera, becoming a diplomat and later a spy, doing international trade and at one point even becoming a revolutionary (Lever, 2009).

When I think of my future self, I have the opportunity to do many things which may become a primary source of income at any point. What may be a side-hustle could become a

primary focus and source of income for a phase in life. My future self would laugh at the idea of being bounded by a traditional career path because it would be near impossible to predict a trajectory based on how my diverse interests drive pursuits. I would see that business and work is a confluence of intention and opportunity that is enabled through connections and relationships.

Just like the tree, different seasons would yield different structures and forms that I would take. And just like a tree, I would be willing to relinquish one form as the context changes in order that I be fully free to pursue something else. The height of the tree is ultimately not the determinant of whether it has grown and used its context to the fullest. Rather it is the fruit that the tree bears and the fact that it continues to grow with its environment.

As I continued pondering the Chinese characters for legacy and what I want my legacy to be for my daughters and the next generation, I thought about the expression 承先启后, which is an expression of receiving first and being able to unveil or reveal later insight for the previous generation. Stepping forward, I want to be in a position where I want to have fully received and digested what has been left from my father (namely his model of how he made a living through business and how he was as a parent) and to be able to generate insight or approach things differently. It is not an outright rejection of what my father has passed onto me but rather a receiving with gratitude while discerning what is good to be passed on.

The characters 传盛 is phonetically very close to 传承. The former means to transmit out of excess or abundance and the latter is legacy. My future self wants to be able to give out of abundance. The character for overflowing abundance, 盛 is made up of the parts 成 and 皿. 成 is the character for success or to build whereas 皿 is a sacrificial vessel. The two parts of this character poetically depict abundance being built through sacrifice.

If I think about passing this sacrificial vessel as an extended metaphor for legacy, what would the vessel contain? Traditionally it would be alcohol. For me, this elixir would contain the synthesis of all the good things I have learned including aspects of what my father filled it with and the things that I have had to unlearn. The complex liquor would contain not being afraid to work hard, being strategic, being able to persist through adversity and the ability to be a continuous learner. What would be filtered out would include being addicted to work, parenting

based on fear or criticism and a perpetual winter. As my daughters taste this complex wine that I have aged, they would continue adjusting the flavour by taking out or mixing in elements that they like.

This metaphor unveils that my wish is that my daughters are able to receive my offering while having the freedom to take out elements that do not necessarily serve them. Perhaps one of the most important things I want to pass on to them is that they are free and have agency over their life. I would want to be remembered as someone who is willing to transmit whatever I have learned, a model of living free while respecting individuality and agency. Rather than being hung up with whether my children are ready or not to receive from me, the aspect that I have control is the ability to share ongoing what I am learning including what things I have unlearned.

My struggles with the Progressive at this point have had to do with feeling mostly constraints as I look out three, 5 or even 10 years. As a result, just as I have reached far back to my early childhood in the Regressive movement, I have zoomed out further to what might be one alternate reality of the end of my life. It has also been an iterative process of creating space to meditate on potential futures. Undoubtedly the exploration of my dreams, hopes, possibilities and wild imaginings will continue to unfold with time and healing.

4.2. Obituary for Samuel Chen (Delivered by his Sister)

On this day we celebrate the remarkable life of Samuel Yin Tone Chen who is survived by his wife Sherry, two lovely daughters and seven grandchildren. Throughout his life, Sam was an enterprising businessman, insightful consultant, and passionate teacher. In each of the spheres of his life, he met and impacted many people. Sam's joy in life centered around connecting with different people. He was a world traveler who always wanted to see more, experience more and learn more.

Other than my brother, I've never met a person who would travel to Vietnam just so that he could learn about the regional differences of Pho, a type of rice noodle in broth. He completed a 9-day whirlwind tour from the North to Central to South Vietnam. When I asked him upon his return whether the trip was worth it, he told me that food was a pathway to understand people and culture. He told me that everything from how salty a broth is, what ingredients they used, what the broth was made from, when they ate it all helped him understand the regional culture of a people.

In his fifties he decided to travel to Australia for 2 months, bringing one of my teenage nieces, just so that he could volunteer to work with a world-expert studying one of his favorite insects, the dung beetle. I wasn't sure what I was more shocked with, that it was such a strange reason to travel to a different continent or that he was able to interest my niece to volunteer with him through her summer break. He told me that in his early 1920s, he had had an opportunity pursue a graduate degree with a world-renown expert in cockroaches, which would have opened the door to him becoming a forensic entomologist. He told me that although in the end he decided not to pursue this career tract, his fascination with bugs never ended. He also told me it would be a great way to bond with his daughter, working and learning together in a field that she may be interested in.

In his sixties he decided to take up pottery, which brought him all over Asia learning from famous potters. When I asked him why he decided to take up pottery so late in life, he told me it was never too late and he just wanted to know more about how the vessels he used to brew tea impacted the flavour. He also wanted to be able to make his own teapots, cups, and plates which he could serve guests he invited to his home. I remember him asking me "wouldn't bespoke tableware be a great conversation starter?"

In the words of the sage who wrote Ecclesiastes, Sam believed that there was a season for everything. But one might say that Sam lived in the Spring more than any other season. Despite being born in Winterpeg his Winters seemed short and Sam always came across as having plenty. Whether it was money, time or opportunity, Sam lived as if these were never in a shortage and that he had a world of choices to pursue living a full life. He lived with an underlying youthful optimism.

I think the longest winter that I saw my brother live through was the period after our father died and his wife decided to leave him. My brother wrestled with dealing with a lot of grief. His decision to drop his work to return home to be with his children and become a single-dad changed his life. It was a soul-searching period in his life as everything turned upside down. This was made worst during a prolonged pandemic. Yet like Sam always does, he treated trauma that didn't kill you as opportunity to learn and grow. That being said, stress during this period of his life nearly did kill him as he suffered insomnia, repeated cases of the shingles and chronic gout. My brother always had a different way of looking at things because amidst a painful outbreak of gout, he told me that he was thankful for this condition because it helped him connect to his body. He came to learn that his body seemed to know when something was not

right before his mind or heart was ready to accept it. This period of his life taught him that there were other ways of knowing beyond intellectual or emotional. He began to trust what his body was telling him and he began to take better care of himself physically and was most fit in his fifties.

He was an avid learner with many interests and I think it was connecting with others that helped him keep his passion for interests alive. From his love of beverages both alcoholic and non, to his love of language and esoteric pursuits of ancient Chinese scripts and history, he never stopped learning. It was as if one of the goals in his life was to become the Chinese version of the *Dos Equis* World's Most Interesting Man.

In his 1940s, Sam began a shift from learning about things external to him to learning about himself. He began, one might say a journey inward which became an ongoing focus for his life. Perhaps this shift was also prompted by the longest winter I just mentioned. In the latter part of life, he realized that he would always have a restlessness in his spirit which he learned to harness and control through a reflective practice, an intentional quieting of his spirit.

One of his favorite Chinese phrases which is from the *Dao Te Ching* was 知人者智 · 自知者明. Which roughly translates as he who knows others is wise, but he who knows himself is enlightened. His joy was getting to know others while his life mission was to get to know himself. He was an example of a true life-long learner and someone who believed in life-long human development.

For over a decade, Sam spent his working hours building a business from the ground up. Before his prolonged winter, my brother had spent 5 years building expertise in aquaculture as a salmon and shrimp farmer. Divorce was very common in this field because of how all-consuming the work was. In fact, he would often remark that amongst seafood farmers, there was a saying that contracting AIDS, aquaculture induced divorce syndrome, was something everyone in the field had to contend with. So on his second attempt in aquaculture, he focused on helping people manage their risk and bringing the right team together. He was able to bring together his past experiences in insurance and HR to add value for others in the business, while keeping his family as a priority.

So it was a great surprise when he sold the business and left to do International Missions work. There was a type of unpredictable dynamism to Sam which made his life

interesting but also drove others crazy. Whatever you might say about him, there was never a dull moment. His life experiences became opportunities to connect with others. Ever the storyteller, he was always hosting meals and connecting others in small, intimate settings.

In his final days, he often referred to death as the final transition on this side of life and that he would be promoted to glory. He perked up at the thought of drinking wine, learning to tend to a vineyard and finding rest in a cup of tea in heaven. One of his favorite Bible verses is found in Revelation 22: 1-3

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him.

He often wondered aloud about what tea made from the leaves of the tree of life and the river of the water of life would taste like. He would often tell his daughters and close friends over a cup of tea that he was convinced that the leaves from the tree of life would heal the nations by bringing people together to have authentic dialogue over tea. And as he was serving tea to others, he would say that he was preparing for this job on the other side of life.

I really believe he was onto something because when Sam invited you to tea, you knew that there was something important that he wanted to talk with you about. He had a way of asking questions and being curious that would make people open up naturally. People felt seen and heard after each encounter.

The world will miss the light and energy that Sam contributed to the world. But we know that death does not have the last word and undoubtedly he would be delighted to see you on the other side over a glass of wine or tea from the tree of life.

4.3. Eulogy #1 by A Daughter

I will miss my father because he was the one man who was consistently in my life. It didn't matter how busy he was, he would be there for me at every turn in my life. He did this by being present consistently and taking time to spend time alone with me. Throughout my development years, he was the person whom I turned to for strength, wisdom and assurance that I was loved for who I was.

It all began at the dinner table. Although my dad was busy and had many social and business obligations, it was more of a rule than an exception than he would have dinner with us. Dinner began from cooking through cleaning together. My sister and I learned how to make our first dishes under his tutelage. He taught us how to use a knife when we were still in elementary school and his love of razer-sharp Japanese knives was passed onto us. My husband still sometimes comments about how most ladies have extensive shoe or handbag collections, but somehow his wife has a large selection of dangerous-looking knives. Food and drink were a core part of family life.

It was at dinner that I told my family about my first boyfriend. It was also the place, I told them about my breakup. We laughed, cried and shared the full range of emotions over meals. It was also at the dinner table that I learned what was worth fighting for and how to fight fairly. I learned that it was okay to be frustrated and that conflict was inevitable within any relationship. My father instilled in us, that shared meals were a sacred space where our lives intersected. It was a space where we shared about what we were learning about, struggling with or needed help from each other. My father modeled authenticity because in addition to listening to us and being attentive to what was going on in our lives, he also shared with us things that he was struggling with. I learned through my father that we continue developing and growing even as we become parents and age. From an outsider's perspective, our family meals may have seemed like a facilitated talk show where everyone participated.

I remember being nervous when my father remarried. I was worried that our relationship would change and that my stepmom would not get along with us. Turns out I had nothing to worry about as I love my stepmom and my relationship with dad didn't change with Sherry. In addition to spending time together as a family, my father continued spending time with just me in daughter-father alone time at least once every other week. We would take turns choosing what we wanted to do. This was how my dad got to know me for who I was.

I think dad must have changed a lot after my mom left him or he had learned a lot more about being in a relationship after her because watching dad and Sherry I learned a lot about what it took to be in a happy marriage. In addition to being a good listener, my father was also authentic with his own feelings and needs. My dad was in no way perfect and like all people, I saw him get triggered or angry at times but anger never had the last word. My dad was also quick to admitting his faults and asking for forgiveness, which is something I've heard Sherry

say she really appreciates about my father. My father modeled the humility of being a man in development up to the moment he breathed his last breath.

On hindsight, I would say that I learned a lot of important skills of being in a healthy relationship watching dad and Sherry – skills like communicating needs, negotiating, setting boundaries and how to show love. The most important thing I learned though was that in a healthy relationship, it is important to be expressive about your own needs as well. For example, my father came to realize that he had a much stronger need for socialization than Sherry does. So they worked out a mutually agreed upon schedule in which they sometimes entertained together and at other times, my father would host by himself.

My father taught me what it was like to live in great freedom. He embraced the choice to see options rather than constraints and reminded us that we always had choice in work, love and the pursuit of our interests. He modeled living courageously in sometimes taking a leap of faith in pursuing what he said his heart called out to him while being able to hold onto his responsibilities.

The moments I have the most vivid memories of my father was in the midst of difficulty. It was like when the family business almost went bankrupt. Although my sister and I always knew when my father was stressed, he would never take it out in the home. Daddy had a tendency to shoulder everything by himself. He bore the heavy load and struggled with wanting to always protect us. Yet I also saw him learn to let go and accept help. For example when my sister offered to join the family business after one of his associates left, I saw him accept in grace. I think looking at it externally, their relationship strengthened out of working together.

My father also modeled a strange ability to radically accept me for who I am today but also loved me too much to not encourage me to be more. My father's ability to simultaneously affirm while lovingly inspire me forward was what propelled me towards excellence. This cultivated an internal drive for excellence which was not shame or pressure based but one based instead on a curiosity and belief that I could do more.

For example, in the last years of my undergraduate, when I wanted to give up on pursuing my dream of becoming a veterinarian and go travel the world on a working holiday visa with my best friend, he never told me what to do. Instead, my father talked to me about the freedom I had to make choices and that part of growing up as an adult meant we also lived with the results of those choices. He told me that he saw me as someone who had tenacity and was

smart enough to do whatever I put my mind to. When I finally asked him whether he thought I should drop school and go, he said that he couldn't speak for me but if it were him, he would finish the remaining year of school before going just because he knew that it would be more difficult to pick up school later and because he tended to leave things unfinished.

So when I did decided to drop out of school in my last year of undergraduate to travel the world, only to return 3 months later because I had gotten in a big fight with my friend and did not want to continue the journey, I felt a bit sheepish when I returned. But the person who was waiting with open arms for me at the airport, was my father. Never once, did he make me feel like "I told you so." Instead, my father was eager to hear about my adventures and what I had learned. He shared with me pivotal transitions in his life and moments where he had decided to give up on something prematurely and then learning later that he wished he had finished but that it was a valuable life lesson. He actively supported me in finishing my degree and continuing onto Veterinary school. If it wasn't for him, I think I might have given up.

A year after my failed world tour, my father invited me to take a summer break with him to go to Australia. He offered to fund the 2-month trip in which we would be research assistants to Dr. Coleoptera, a world expert of dung beetles. It was wonderful being able to work alongside my father and to watch how he learned. My father was the oldest assistant at the research facility by at least two decades and was in fact, often mistaken for a senior collaborator. Everyone assumed my dad's doctorate degree was in entomology because of his passion and depth of knowledge in the field. My father was always full of questions and never afraid to admit he didn't know. It was fun watching and sometimes collaborating with him to find answers, which often involved sharing a bottle of wine or two.

My dad was someone who never stopped being curious and striving to get better in all that he did. He modeled an openness and authenticity about his weaknesses. I think this is what made his life so interesting and what allowed him to connect with different people. Dad had a cultural fluency that allowed him to be in different countries and different worlds. I don't think I would have learned Chinese nor come to understand my heritage without him. Although I hated the idea of going to Chinese school as a kid and my father did not force me to go, one could not help but be inspired by his own pursuits of the language and Chinese arts. On many a weekend, I would observe that my father would wake up early or stay up late reading Chinese or practicing calligraphy.

I have also been able to pass on part of this cultural heritage to my children because of him. My father is also a reason that I am a Christian. I watched my father wrestle with his beliefs and faith. He was not satisfied with just blindly accepting the faith of his parents. I watched him engage and reconcile his faith with personal and societal issues. I think he modeled someone who had to work out his salvation.

And although I will miss him immensely, I know that he is watching me and that we will meet again on the other side of life. I look forward to having tea with him when I meet him again.

4.4. Eulogy #2 by Another Daughter

My dad had these silly adventure days with my sister and I every other Saturday where he taught us how to explore and have fun. He kept this tradition going through our high school up to the day we left for university. We went for hikes together, explored parts of the city that we had never been to before, or learned something new together. Looking back, this is something that I really treasured in our time together, so much so that I have continued this tradition with my husband for our three children, all who adore my dad.

Dad always seemed like the life of the party. He loved hosting and was an excellent chef. There was always something he was learning that he wanted to share. My dad made the world both bigger and smaller for us at the same time. Smaller because he made us see that things were attainable and understandable. Bigger because we were exposed to the expanse of knowledge, cultures and the world waiting to be experienced.

He made it a goal to help us connect with aunts and my grandma and I think this helped us see that we had a larger support network. Growing up, it was not easy learning how to navigate two families with my parent's divorce. I have seen more and done more in life than I would have probably done without my dad. He taught me that calculated risk in life was important and part of living in a big world.

My dad was the parent who was most interested in going through my report card with me. I remember him sharing with me that to him, a letter grade was much less important than whether I thought I could have done better. Before going through the teacher's comments, he would always ask me what I thought I did well, what I thought I could do better and what goals I had for next term. My dad also used report card time to help me explore my strengths. Going through a report card with him was like a celebration and I quickly learned that I would get ice

cream or some delightful treat after the discussion. To this day, I hold my memories of going through my report card with my dad as a model for performance management discussions with my staff.

One of the most memorable times I had with my dad was when he brought me to Europe. Since I was child, he told me that I had been given a middle name related to one of his favorite drinks, more precisely the distillery. On my 21st birthday, he brought me to the distillery, and we toured the country together for a week. It was on this trip that I had a soul-searching conversation about what I wanted to do with my life. I know it was a difficult time for my dad to leave because two weeks before our planned vacation, one of his business associates left. But the fact that he went on the trip with me anyway showed me that I took priority over work. I will always remember this trip because my father's commitment to me made me feel so special and loved.

On the trip, my dad shared with me that he believed in the planned happenstance theory of career development; that all of our experiences allow us to realize opportunities as they emerge around us. When I asked if I could work in the family business and maybe even take over one day, he told me that was definitely one option we could explore but then he asked me to reflect more on why I wanted to be in business, how I thought I could contribute to the business and what I wanted to learn. He told me to take a few weeks to think about it as I finished my studies and to come in for an interview with the answers to those three questions. I was surprised that when I showed up for the interview, it wasn't my father but with one of his associates on the other side of the table. I later learned that my father wanted to ensure I was able to garner the respect of other people on his team. He told me that he could provide the foot in the door, but it was up to me to learn the technical aspects of the position and that credibility would need to be earned. He also warned me that it would be doubly difficult for me as the perception of nepotism was inevitable.

I ended up working for my dad for 5 years. During the initial years, he rotated me through different positions. It often felt like as soon as I got used to a role, he would rotate me or put me onto a project that pushed me beyond my comfort zone. My dad would not allow me to call him dad at work and he refused to step in to bail me out of a difficult situation just because I was his daughter. During this time, shared lunches or dinners became an even more important time for us because it was over a meal that I could ask him his advice and how he might approach different situations. My dad was able to put on a different hat during these times. As a

boss though, it felt like he was harder on me than to others at work. I realize on hindsight that this was all for me. Although my dad had high standards, he was always affirming.

Over time, I gained credibility with my co-workers, clients and business partners. Because of the different rotations, I was also able to participate more effectively in strategic conversations. By the third year we began exploring options for me to take over the family business. My father was adamant that succession was only one possible option amongst many for me. He reminded me that the world was my oyster, and it was important to explore the breadth of my options before making a commitment. In the end, I chose not to take over the business and my father ended up selling it, but I think in those 5 years of working together, I came to understand my father in a totally different light. I think he also learned more about me. I gained valuable work experience but perhaps even more valuable was a deeper understanding of myself.

That time and my experiences was what enabled me to start a business with my husband shortly after I left my father's business. The biggest lesson I took from working in family business was that the business needed to serve our purposes. My father once explained to me that in Chinese, business is 生意, which translates as meaning or essence of life. When a business stops giving life, it is time to relook at options for work and livelihood.

I am very grateful to my father and will miss him dearly. He was such a wonderful role model for me in pursuing business as a livelihood and as a sojourner of life where we are in development till the end of our life. And every time I begin to criticize myself, I hear his affirmation and am reminded to have self-compassion.

4.5. Epithet

Here rests a loving father, a most interesting human being in development that found fulfillment in his relationships, interests and livelihood – His connected legacy has yet to be fully revealed on this side of life

Chapter 5.

Bringing it Together (Analytical & Synthetical Movements)

In this chapter I will bring together the two pictures of the Regressive and Progressive and analyze what I have to learn or observe from them. The purpose of the analytical movement is to examine the two photos that I have created of embodied memories of the past and the dreams of future possibilities and look at the present without being encumbered by the two superimposed onto the present. This section is about getting a handle on who I've been and who I imagine myself to be.

I have chosen to combine both the analytical and synthetical movements in a chapter because based on this understanding of the present, past and future, I will freely choose what is next.

I will examine three topics including the Family Business, Legacy and the father that I want to be. After an analytical movement focused on each topic, I will end each section with statements which summarize a synthetical movement. These statements represent convictions which I will live by moving forward.

5.1. Family Business

5.1.1. The Meaning of Family Business to Me

Livelihood (Means towards Ends)

In Chinese, one of the ways to write business is 生意.

The characters translate as the essence of life or giving meaning to life. There is a recognition in the Chinese language that business represents a vision for life, encompassing both the means to survive in the present and also what one wants to create for the future. In this way, business also enables the end, which is to sustain a livelihood while allowing the pursuit of purpose.

For me, business is one possible means that I could use to make ends meet. It is one possibility among many as I could work as a professional or pursue employment in an organization. It entails taking on risk and not having the same safety networks that stable employment might present but based on market performance, might also be rewarded commensurately. Unlike my father's story, I have a range of options and these options do not need to be forever. In fact, even as I look at my life, there have been different seasons where I have taken very different approaches to work. I worked in large public organizations. I was also able to pursue an entrepreneurial project. I live in a different context than my father. Unlike him, I do not readily accept that work has nothing to do with personal interests but rather whatever strategically provides the most financially. These do not need to be mutually exclusive for me.

I really admire my father's ability to be strategic and to be able to read the times. His read on Lilliput from Gulliver's travels and realizing that he would have more success starting a computer consulting business in lower competition areas, his assessment on how to beat someone at table tennis and his rationale for choosing computer science are all stories that are important to me. They are part of his legacy to me about being able to judge market conditions and seeing both my strengths and weaknesses relative to others. Family business is a strategic response to these market conditions and alignment with one's strengths.

In consideration of the image of myself as a tree, I am free, and it is also part of my makeup, to pursue diverse interests. These can but do not necessarily have to be separated from work. In the world where more people have side-jobs tied to their hobbies (sometimes referred to as side-hustles), I want to look at how my interests in beverages and cooking could become a means for multiple revenue streams. Many of these, as they are embedded in my everyday life would involve my daughters and would be suitable for starting a family business. I am already teaching my daughters how to cook, involving them in roasting coffee together and soliciting their help in editing photos for posting on social media. The natural progression next is to look for market opportunities to turn this into a revenue stream. As I look at my fictional eulogies I realize that it is not a business that I want to pass onto my children but the spirit of inquiry about self, including interests and talents, and the ability to spot how this might meet the needs of the world. I am in the middle of this process and my hope is that they will see my journey as a source of encouragement in their journeys.

At the moment, I have yet to see a market opportunity in using my interests to sustain the family financially. In fact, to continue exploring these interests actually requires a financial

investment. Buying green coffee beans, roasting equipment or taking brewing classes all require money. My first order of business should be to find a way for my interests to be self-sustaining. This might start with offering private classes to share with smaller groups as I continue learning. It might entail selling some freshly roasted beans on the side to friends. It could also be partnering with one of the bigger businesses to help with their social media marketing.

For me, family business is not an either-or decision. With my education and experiences, I am able to find stable work that pays a good salary. And I am free to choose working for someone else for a season of life. This does not define who I am. Rather it is being fully formed as a human in each facet of life including being a father, husband, and someone who is trying to use his giftings to the fullest.

In my explorations, I have come to realize that one of the reasons I am interested in pursuing family business or an entrepreneurial path is that, like my father, I do not believe that a time-based salary allows for the meritocracy of market performance. Being able to reap the efforts of working harder and making the right kinds of business decisions is an important source of validation for me when it comes to work. With this knowledge, I am free to work in an organization with the realization that ultimately, I want a direct correlation between compensation and performance.

In looking at the portrait of the Regressive Movement, I also see that regardless of whether I am working in an organization or in my own business, I have a propensity to be absorbed by work, which impacts my family. Whatever I do, I need to ensure there are boundaries in place that prioritizes family life and my role as a father. After all, it is “Family Business” and not “Business Family.” A regular reflective test I will use for myself is the Chinese etymology for business (生意). Is the work or business giving life or is it sucking out life? This question will help me identify when work is working me.

Connection

It is clear from examining my regressive movement in Chapter 3, that business was a channel that I wished to have connected with my father since childhood. Whether it was my attempts to learn about his business, ask for summer work (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.2), expressed aspirations of what I wanted to be when I grew up (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.10) or even my attempts to conduct business on school grounds (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.6), I saw the family business as a means to connect with an absent father.

The family business was a source of pride that I had for my father because despite his instruction to me about pursuing a professional path like his friends, the business brought in more money than any profession. Business was the means by which my father provided for his family financially and he was good at it.

Moreover, I remember in my primary years when boys would compare their fathers bragging how strong their fathers were or since close to 60% of my classmates' fathers worked for the pulp and paper mill, where their fathers stood in relation to the organizational hierarchy. My father was working in a new field of emerging computing and mainframes. This was a cutting edge field and my dad was his own boss. I wanted to know more about my dad's business. Unlike my classmates who could explain that their fathers cut down trees or worked a specific piece of machinery, I had a hard time explaining what my dad did.

From the Progressive movement in Chapter 4, I see that family business has a lot of potential as a means of connection point with my daughters and a way to capitalize on the intersection of interests, work and relationships. Since work occupies such a large part of our waking hours, working together presents more time to learn and problem solve together. Reflecting on my obituary and the fictional eulogies of my daughters, business also allows me to connect with a broad range of people, expanding my circle of influence. My desire for this connection is not at a transactional but at a deeper level. I think why my epithet read that my connected legacy has yet to be fully revealed on this side of life is an indication of the level of connection I want to have with people around me, especially my daughters. The impact of our interaction and shared experiences continues to be a source of reflection and transformational learning. Such that it is not possible to fully know how I may have impacted the other person through our authentic sharing.

Freedom

Inferring from some of the comments my father made about business in his later years, my father felt trapped in the family business. Despite having amassed significant wealth, he lived in a perpetual Winter that had formed out of past experiences of loss and poverty. This Winter propelled him forward but there was no end in sight. The idea of retiring with a pension was something that he wished for in a professional career. The business was also run quite lean, and my father was always on call.

Strangely, I started on the opposite end of the spectrum in a work environment that had a pension, that at least on paper had a 9-5 work schedule and where there was sufficient redundancy that it was possible to take three-week holidays. However, I still felt trapped in this work because I had leaders who dictated my priorities. No matter how hard I worked, I would still be getting the same salary. So to me, business and by extension, the family business represented the possibility of freedom.

It represented the freedom to express an entrepreneurial side of me that was evident since I was a child. In business, I could choose what I was passionate about rather than furthering the organizational goals that I may not believe in. Business was also liberation from time-based compensation. It would also represent freedom from being evaluated by managers or other leaders who may not be competent in their assessments. Finally, it was an opportunity to build a team of my choosing, including being able to hire family members.

5.1.2. Unspoken Costs

Yet at the same time, there are many spoken costs of starting and running a family business. There is an all-consuming attribute of entrepreneurship that takes a toll on multiple dimensions of life. There is a deficit of literature on the costs of life as an entrepreneur. Few entrepreneurs have given thoughtful consideration to these costs before embarking on their journeys. This neglect has often led to broken families, failed marriages, personal health breakdown and identity crisis. In the early 2000s, the concept of a triple bottom line was introduced into how businesses evaluated themselves and should be evaluated by shareholders. These included the social and environmental aspects in addition to the financial performance of business. I think that entrepreneurs who are starting business should add a fourth dimension to include personal costs to this equation. Although personal costs are perhaps more difficult to quantify than profits, social and environment, they often have even greater personal tangible impacts that affect life satisfaction and speak to the core of identity.

In considering my experiences with my father and what I have observed with my clients, some of these personal costs are relational, emotional, physical and developmental. Many of these personal costs are not visible and may be things that an entrepreneur comes to accept as normal, although they also have the potential to often spill over onto those closest to us. Having experienced breakdowns due to family business both as a child and as an entrepreneur who

traded-off his role as a husband and father. I wonder whether in both circumstances I was an unaware victim of choices, sometimes made by me and at other times by others.

During the process of my analysis, something I noticed was that each of the personal costs I have identified below are also a possibility for professionals. What I have identified as unspoken costs experienced by my father and me may very well be the result of an unhealthy relationship or understanding of work as much as it has to do with family business. I have come to realize that I had relied on work as a source of validation at the cost of exploring my role within the family as a husband who has the ability to set the emotional tone of the family, and as a father. The propensity to fall into this trap is there regardless of whether I choose to work as an entrepreneur or as an employee in an organization. I would only say that working as an entrepreneur, there are fewer structures and boundaries preventing me from pouring myself into work. There are also fewer resources and more at stake personally. Ultimately many of these unspoken personal costs may be felt more acutely in a family business setting without a very disciplined approach to work and time management.

I have broken down some of these costs I have experienced both as a son and now as a father to young children.

Parental Absenteeism (Missing Out on Major Transitions)

Reflecting on my formative years, my father was absent in large segments of my life because he was working and trying to grow his business. This led to a rushed childhood. On hindsight I begin to understand that my desire to conduct business and earn profits on the school grounds was to win my father's approval and attention. There was also a childhood naivety that believed that if we had more money perhaps my father could spend more time with me rather than constantly being at work to provide for us. I think I developed very skewed perspectives around what it meant to provide and how much was necessary to accomplish it.

My childhood was marked by the pursuit of an unattainable standard. With my father being mostly absent, he did not take on much responsibility for nurturing, encouraging nor teaching but was involved in my life primarily as an evaluator. This makes sense as this involved the least amount of time and commitment but it meant that my father was always spotting and verbalizing any deficiencies that he saw. As I consider that my father had never studied music nor could he play piano, it is rather ironic that he was the audience member who always seemed to be the most critical. In later years, I think I stopped caring about what he

thought and actually did not like playing the piano in front of him anymore. Strangely, despite his absence, I began to internalize his voice as my own.

Although this inner critic helped propel towards continuous improvement, it also led me to an ongoing dissatisfaction with myself. Today I can see that this dissatisfaction also widened the distance I experienced with my father because I associated it with how my father thought of me.

His prolonged absence through my adolescence and coming to adulthood prevented an opportunity for repairing this past perspective of him and how I believe he saw me. I also doubt that my father fully saw the impact his words had on me. Time together would have potentially enabled me to see that perhaps the critical nature of his feedback earlier in my life did not represent how he saw me now. The effect of my father's absence due to busyness with the business was also augmented by the fact that he passed away at such an early age.

Now as I consider my role as a father to my daughters, I believe that a more important role I have is as an influencer rather than a critic. An alternative option is for me to journey with them. Carrying them on my shoulders when they are young so they can see further. Walking beside them when they are growing into adulthood. And standing behind them as they become adults.

Beyond time apart, there was also a growing relational distance as my father's world became increasingly mysterious. It was a reality that many things had happened to my father, too many to share and perhaps too difficult to share. Having later experienced life as an entrepreneur, I really can attest that it was often a struggle to hold it altogether. On one hand I really wanted someone to understand, and in particular my wife at the time. However, I felt that once I began to share, the dam would be released, and a torrent of negative energy would come out.

I also didn't believe that anyone outside my situation could understand it and I began to appreciate how this inner turmoil could be translated into an attempt to protect others from experiencing my stresses. Was it not enough that one person bore the load? It was a very isolating experience. Over time, I began to turn to larger nightcaps during which time I tried to calm down from a stressful day and the only other person who seemed to understand what I was going through was my business partner.

I am coming to realize that my father was probably feeling the same thing. Perhaps this is why my father seldom talked about business other than occasional complaints of interpersonal tensions at work, it was difficult for the rest of the family to understand what consumed my father's time and emotional energy. He had little emotional capacity for us when he came home from work. With limits in both time and available energy, little effort towards building deeper relationships or exploring self was possible. Even on weekends, he would be fielding phone calls or going back into the office alone to finish projects for his clients.

Ironically as I embarked on my path in business in 2013, I had unknowingly replicated the same model within my family. Coming to this awareness, I can now see how important it is that I be present at major transitions in my children's lives. Since many important transitions are unplanned and unexpected, it is important for me to be present throughout. This allows for mutual growth and understanding instead of an arrested understanding of each other from a time of who we were in the past.

Analyzing my past and future, I can also see that there are options that I could intentionally explore to prevent parental absenteeism. The first realization is that in business, the world will seldom collapse with what may seem like an emergency. Establishing and sticking to boundaries is very important for preventing absenteeism. Creating backup and contingency plans for others to take over, similar to what happens in organizations when there is key person out of office, is also important. This might mean building some extra capacity into the business. Looking back and both my experiences with my father and at my own experiences in business, I also think that the concern or need to protect children from even knowing the stress of work is also unfounded. My fears of an unreleased torrent of negative energy had to do with not regularly releasing bits of stress. Instead I had created a dam of unexpressed stress. If I were to engage in family business again, I think I would involve my children in learning the business and to be more intentional about creating a learning opportunity by going to work with me should an emergency that I can't delegate come up. These are all potential opportunities to address the unspoken cost of parental absenteeism.

Personal Health (Emotional and Physical)

The accumulated stresses of entrepreneurship also had an impact on my father's health and I do not believe that it was coincidental that the moment he decided to retire was also the moment he was diagnosed with his neurological disease. It was almost as if his body, finally and quite completely communicated that he was long overdue for rest and since he had ignored it

for so long, the only way to find rest was to incapacitate him completely. My father went from a very fast-paced life to a state of absolute debility. I have no doubt that he had elevated blood pressure as an ongoing reality.

In my consulting experience, it has anecdotally been a common phenomenon for many entrepreneurs to die shortly after they retire. It is a common concern that many of my past clients have had. This is evidence of both the disproportionate importance that work occupies in a man's life and also how work has a way of permeating into life that pushes out all other spheres of meaning. Nowhere is this truer than in starting and running a business.

In my 5 years building a fish farming business, I also experienced a similarly isolating fast-paced world. In the back of my mind, I would remind myself that this was for family—my entrepreneurial venture was to provide for family and was in the service of a better life. This did not materialize. A full 3 years after leaving the business, I was still on the path of recovery. Looking back on this experience, I realize that accelerating life to a frenetic pace in order get things done with the business had a cost of deferred exhaustion. Speeding up, in fact leads to slowing down after the fact. The physical exhaustion aside, I was also emotionally isolated from my family and friends. This was a vicious cycle for me because the more I poured myself into the business, the more distant I was from my relationships. I was also no longer regularly engaged in my church community. I ceased engaging in life-giving interests like art that would have provided rejuvenation and been important to my quality world. I was irritable whenever I did have a free moment because of suppressed fatigue and accumulated stress. The business pushed everything out and I would have increasingly defined my life purely by business achievements and pursuits.

It seems a common modern trend for people to talk about the search for a balanced life. A life where work, family, leisure and other pursuits could come to some magical harmony through planned boundaries. However, work-life permutations into the other dimensions of life go beyond physical or time-based boundaries. It is physically possible to leave cellphones away and take long walks in the forest, but it is often mentally much more difficult to draw and maintain those mental boundaries. Often, I would be walking in the forest or spending time in a bathhouse to be away from the calls and expectations of work, but my mind would continue thinking about work issues. To compartmentalize is highly ineffective when it comes to the major domains of life. While I was deep in the throes of birthing a business, it felt like swimming a marathon where as soon as I stopped, I would drown. I would wake up in a panic at night and

when I could get through the night, the underlying tone of my life was “fuck” what do I need to do next or what did I miss? Looking at this now, I recognize that this undertone was a deep frustration with not being able to find rest nor fulfilment along the journey. The work itself was beginning to feel futile and meaningless. It was an indicator that the business was not life-giving but life-sucking.

The entrepreneurial life is one heavily driven by market forces that are often not something one can control. The endless list of things to do is part of the dynamic dance with these forces. In 2015 during the Superbowl EDS®, a digital services company, released a commercial depicting people who build planes in the air. The commercial humorously but accurately depicts life as an entrepreneur. The lack of security creates a motivation to continue growing and preparing for what is like a perpetual winter. In good times, an entrepreneur is often thinking about bad times and realizes the cyclical nature of business.

Clearly my embodied experience of the past as an entrepreneur and as a consultant to family businesses are a far cry from the ideal life I envision for myself. The portrait imagined in my Progressive Movement includes a deliberate pursuit of relationships and personal interests which intertwine with business. I am able to operate from a position of plenty where there is no need to rush or expedite things. Opportunities may come and go but there are plentiful opportunities to choose from – like a bird searching for food in Spring rather than Winter.

Unlike the airplane in the Superbowl commercial, I imagine myself as a tree which is growing organically. Growth in this case does not come through pushing to complete the next critical task but by maintaining the right surrounding conditions. To name a few, these conditions include being emotionally healthy, physically rested, being in right relationship with those important to me and having space to pursue my interests.

Emotionally, it is not that I no longer imagine myself dealing with ups and downs, but that I would have people to share this with and that my ups and downs would not be quite as extreme. I want to be someone who has time to love, live and pursue my interests without straining. Looking at this now, my interests in tea are about slowing down physically. The time to brew a cup using small teapots allows my mind to quiet and calm down. My interests in coffee, wine and whisky are about making space to share authentically with friends and to find emotional release through resonance and connection. I find wine and beverage a great pretext for opening up and staying open for others.

State of Unrest (Addiction to the Frenetic Pace of Life)

I think at the heart of an entrepreneurial endeavor is the inevitable risk of taking on too much-- a risk driven by a lack of resources that could range from financial to people and expertise. It is like trying to fly a kite. One begins running after releasing enough line but even after the kite is airborne, with a change in wind, the kite begins to fall again. Before long this sort of running and the need to maintain perpetual tension become the new norm of life. One may want to take a break but there is a realization that as soon as one lets go, the slack will result in the kite plummeting to the ground.

Looking at my past experience, I was caught in a cycle of running because I was afraid that the kite would fall. For me, there was also an addiction to the thrill of the fast-paced nature of business transactions with new sets of problems to solve. I liked the fact that no day was the same and that there was always something new to learn. The most difficult thing about taking a vacation was thinking about what I was missing when I was relaxing. Taking on work, solving problems and meeting business needs became a core part of my identity where I began to believe that "I was the only one who could solve the problem." Insidiously, the idea that my personal significance was derived largely (or even entirely) from the business crept into my psyche. On hindsight I realize that I had associated running (or in the case of my consulting, flying) and a busy life as part of my identity and a marker of success. It took losing my family and my life crashing around me, where I was forced to stay grounded in Vancouver that I began to become aware of how uncomfortable it was for me not be in a whirlwind of activity.

In examining my Progressive movement, an option to counter this flurry of activity is to develop an intentional practice of slowing down. For me, this could include making and drinking tea, engaging in meditative reflection and carving out time to share a meal with family and close friends. It is important for me in my envisioned future to create space, both in terms of available time and also in the emotional capacity, to be in relation with my daughters and future partner in life. I do not want my life to be identified as busyness but purposeful pursuit of relationship and interests.

Relational Deficits and Missed Connections

Whether it was in my experience growing up in a family business watching my father, or while I was engaging in a business of my own, or in what I saw consulting for my family business clients, I often saw relational deficits and missed connections.

As a child, I do not remember my father having any friends that he could truly confide with. The long hours at work prevented connection with both family, people at church and friends. As I started to run my own business, the most obvious loss of connection was with my wife followed by my children. Due to travel and general fatigue from the bustling activity, I also began to drift away from friends I regularly saw before I started the business. I saw my business acquaintances and business partner more than my friends. Some of these acquaintances and my business partner developed into personal friendships but never became deeper because of the conflict of interest with business. Looking back, my world of contacts became wider but a lot shallower. If I were to imagine my future funeral, I doubt any of these contacts would be in attendance.

With some of my family business clients, I saw that fathers often did spend a lot of time with their adult sons. And although this presented a potential opportunity for deeper relationship through a daily business interaction, it often led to role conflict instead. The power dynamic between boss and employee and conflict at work tended to cross over into family life, creating distance between father and son at home. Unresolved business issues would also spill over and sometimes involve spouses and extended family outside of the business.

Thinking about the impact business has on relations and the projected future I envision where my daughters might be involved, I realize that I would need to develop a strong emotional maturity and ability to communicate authentically about my feelings while also being able to elicit their thoughts and feelings.

I wonder what it would be like if my children worked for me and I named the role conflict bringing to light that as a business owner or boss, I would ultimately make final decisions in the business but that this role shouldn't translate into the personal or family setting. As I reflect on my interactions with my father while working for him, one of the conversations I most appreciated was him being clear about transitions and decision making (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.4.2 and 3.4.3). Perhaps there would also be value in taking it one step further by inviting role reversal to ask what my children would do if they were in my shoes. I think that foundational to the ability to engage in an activity like this would require trust, self-awareness, an ability to be authentic, an ability to listen and be empathetic and clear lines of decision-making.

From my perspective, the relational deficit and missed connections, at least with family members that I was working with, could potentially be buffered by working together. There is an opportunity for the family business to create a greater mutual understanding and appreciation. Moreover, it opens up the possibility to come to a shared understanding of what is important and what the work represents and doesn't.

Sacrifices to Personal Development & Interests Outside of Business

I am reminded by my experience of trying to conduct a Life Review with my father and coming to understand that he had spent very little time thinking about his own interests or discovering who he was outside of his role as the provider and business owner. My father often spoke about his desire to rent an RV and travel across North America but due to business obligations, he could never take more than a week or two off work. My father had never made it a priority to pursue interests or to realize his recreational desires. Unintentionally, work and the business took up all his energy. In retrospect, his foray into playing table tennis with me (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3) was an attempt to take some time for leisure while connecting with me. However, before long, he also saw that he lacked energy to continue this with me.

During my time as an entrepreneur, I also remember how exhausted I was at the end of each day. All my energy had been depleted in facing the challenges of the day. I remember working weekends and on the occasional day off, I would want to do something that was not mentally involving. I often felt too exhausted to engage in interests I had in calligraphy, learning about tea, or delving into study. This was in large part because I left these activities to after I had expended all my energy on work. Without being conscious about it, I had also deprioritized these pursuits which ironically have the ability to rejuvenate.

It is also interesting to note that as I look at my obituaries and eulogies in Chapter 5, that my faith and spiritual formation are very important to me. When I compare this to the recounting of my experiences running a consulting business (see Chapter 3, Sections 3.5.7, 3.6.2, and 3.6.3), I was no longer in regular community with church. I did not spend much time in Bible study or prayer. I was disconnected. Neglecting the spiritual dimensions of my life also became something that I unnecessarily put on the sacrificial alter.

5.1.3. Interpreting my Father's Final Analysis

Although my father never directly articulated this to me, he realized the cost of entrepreneurship and business. In retrospect, his cryptic references to the time and energy that would be required to get a business off the ground, his suggestion that I consider my wife's feelings if I were working long hours all the time, his comments about not working too hard because it was not worth it, and his constant discouragement of me going into business were all hints to his final analysis of life in business. His words actually mirror my past experience but I have only come to realize this parallel through the process of Currere and writing this thesis.

At the time, I interpreted each of his comments as being hypocritical and immediately jumped to a place of judgement because of the disconnect between what he was telling me and how he lived. Now I see that perhaps it is a key principle of interpretation that when a parent says something that comes across as hypocritical, it is another way to say that this is what they are struggling with and have not yet overcome.

So what was it that held my father so tightly to his work and business while he was a healthy and abled person? Perhaps beyond money, a conceptual responsibility as a provider during a perpetual Winter and his work ethic as an immigrant, it was his desire to be at the center of things. Certainly, in the height of my involvement in my own consulting business, I realized that there was a validation that I sought from being needed and respected by clients. It often felt like things would collapse if I didn't continue working to faster timelines, getting more done and providing insight that could be operationalized.

I was able to see how I was making a difference in my own business. It was more difficult seeing how I was making a difference being at home with my wife with a crying baby or toddler running around. There was no clear goal in being present at home and it was hard to see how I was making a difference. At the time, work seemed more freeing than being at home.

I thought back to my childhood and why my mother would try to put us all to sleep before my father came home from work. Perhaps my father too felt at lost with what he could do with little ones making noise and testing their boundaries of free will. Afterall, children would always call for mommy anyways. It must have felt quite foreign for my father, as now I see it did for me when my first, then second child came.

In the midst of this, it was easier to tell myself that I was needed by my clients and the business. I was free to choose this option to turn my energy here where things made sense. Both my father and I had made the same decision. The key difference is that my mother shared a similar cultural value and system that this was ok and she should be expected to take care of things domestically if her husband was out providing financially. My mother could authentically say to me that the reason my father was not home or available to play with me because he was working. This answer wasn't enough for me but it was enough for her.

When the same cycle repeated itself with my then wife, I had already internalized that it was normal for a husband and father to pour himself into work if his wife wasn't working. In fact, there was a side of me that would have thought this was my way to provide for the family and it was an expression of love. Unfortunately, different value systems would have led to very different interpretations about the motivation for my actions.

My wife would have been wondering why I was working so hard. Without ever expressing to me directly, perhaps she was looking for emotional, relational and spiritual forms of support during a time that she was feeling alone too.

I seldom saw my father's emotion, other than when he got angry. I never saw my father in fulfilling friendship nor did I find that he really valued relationships outside of his own family. Yet perhaps this is why he told me to consider my wife's feelings. Beyond feeling angry when he told me this and then turning to judgement, there was an underlying sadness because it triggered memories of when my mother had been crying alone.

His cryptic instruction to me was a statement of regret where he was telling me he didn't know the answer but that he knew that something wasn't quite right with how he had poured himself into work without considering the feelings of the family.

Strangely, he was telling me this at a time that I was actually working not as an entrepreneur but as a mid-level manager inside a Crown Corporation. This was a dream job from his perspective where there was stability and one didn't have to work long hours. Ironically I was working long hours nevertheless. Reflecting on this now, I see that one's relationship to work goes beyond whether one is in business for themselves or working for someone else. Although the external demands of entrepreneurship and working in a large organization may be quite different, ultimately it is the internal drive which dictates what one chooses. Both my father and I had this kind of drive. The "rat-race" can be run whether it is within an organization or your

own business. This kind of race is a far-cry from the running the course of life as envisioned in Currere. There is a lot of activity but no real progress or growth because it is unidimensional.

Although my father had encouraged me to pursue a career in one of the “five professions” (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.9) because he believed I would not have to work such long hours, I am now sure that I would have been working just as hard.

As I look at my past experiences being on the “receiving” end of my father’s absence because of his work, I realize that I desire to be present for my children. The relational connection was something I desired as a son and now as a father, it is something I desire to fulfill with my daughters. Further, with my heavy focus on work, I was not present for my wife during a key transition in our family life. She needed my emotional support and partnership in the overwhelming journey of parenthood.

My father had realized this all but too late and by the time he spent time reflecting about it, he was incapacitated in the care home. All he could do was try to express this realization to me in a form of unsolicited advice. Another way to look at it is that part of my father’s legacy to me is an unresolved struggle of finding a right relationship with work. His life and my experience of our time together as parent-child is a first-hand warning for me to live differently

Family did not necessarily have to be a casualty of business even though it was one of the likely candidates. Regardless of whether I decide to pursue the business route or return to organizational employment, I want to approach work differently. Work, fulfilling as it might be to me, is the means to life with my children, my next partner in life and in community. I have the ability to come to a right relationship with work in my generation and with my family. This begins with prioritizing my family over work.

5.1.4. Challenges & Opportunities to Learn Together in Family Business

From a family legacy perspective, teaching and learning has a role in assisting in overcoming some of the challenges that I saw in both my experiences with my father’s business and that I saw in my consulting experiences with family businesses.

Recognizing Free Will, Agency, and Individual Differences

In my experiences I have seen the previous generation failing to recognize free will in two forms. The first is in continuing to make decisions for the next generation. Often this is

under the guise of having determined what a good life is and wanting the next generation to follow so they don't have to take detours. The second is in the persisting archetype of being a protector, in which they prevent the next generation from taking on risk which is necessary to motivate growth.

On multiple occasions through my development, my father actively tried to steer me away from the entrepreneurial call, directing me towards a professional tract. Beyond telling me that it wasn't a good life and telling me the good parts of his friends' professional lives, he never really spoke to me about what was actually good and more importantly why. This is a difficult question to answer and requires reflection. Fathers would also do well to understand that what is good for one person might not be good for another. It is important to acknowledge individuality.

For example, one of my clients made it his personal routine to visit his factories every week and to personally interact with everyone from the front-line to management. He was also known to conduct business over lunches and dinners which were booked with clients and internal staff. This client was an extrovert who enjoyed the social aspects of business whereas his son was an introvert. Other than meeting with two or three people in his inner circle, he did not like socializing. What the father interpreted as a good life from business would not necessarily be, in its current form, good for his son.

I think this is why in my envisioned future, although my children may choose to work with me in business, I do not necessarily see them taking over a business that I build around my strengths and interests. What I build and how I choose to build around it may not fit with my children's temperament and interests.

In the case of my father and me, he had made a determination for me and despite the fact that he was probably thinking he was protecting me from hardship, it was a subconscious reflection that he didn't like his life as an entrepreneur. On another level, it was also taking a positional stance that because he had already suffered through hardship and made it on the other side, that I shouldn't have to. I have begun to wonder whether this is the flip side of a man's pursuit of immortality and influence beyond his own lifetime. My father was effectively asserting that his hard work should be credited to my life.

What's ironic about this is that I don't believe my father would have become the man he did without going through hardship. Rather than protect me from hardship, perhaps it would

have been more useful to me if he had shared with me lessons that he learned through hardship and also what specific aspects made it hard for him. I have often wondered whether hardship is inherent in the entrepreneur's role or whether it is misalignment with personality. My father had a low tolerance for risk yet whereas I find this thrilling.

Looking ahead, I think that this is why it is important for me to continue learning about myself and being able to model and communicate these discoveries with my children while encouraging them to do the same. Self-knowledge becomes a common language to explore options, which may include working together in a family business or not.

The conditions in which a son joins a family business are also quite different from when the father founded the business. Despite being marked as an anointed heir by means of familial tie, there is confusion in role, authority and credibility as an employee, often with less experience than others on the team. This was a challenge for me as I thought about working with my dad's staff. My dad's solution was to keep me separated from his staff which also made it difficult to learn the core of his business. It also limited my exposure to seeing him interact with his staff and clients – which I believe is a core component of learning the business.

Since I was involved with my father's business as an employee, I wasn't really taking on any risk myself. In the language of business, there was no skin the game. On one hand this presented an opportunity for me to learn the ropes of the business but on another level, I really did not undertake an entrepreneurial endeavor. My father had made a decision about the business he thought had a good chance of success and devoted some resources from the business to develop this new line. Because he had made this prior determination, my evaluation was not important. This also leads to a difference in commitment. Thus if my work experience with my father's company was also to impart entrepreneurial values, it wouldn't serve that purpose.

The family business context creates an opportunity for fathers and sons to learn about how they are different, where their strengths are, and what motivates them. It also presents opportunities for varying levels of commitment of personal resources with a direct payout based on those decisions.

Learning through Trials or Suffering

Suffering is a means into transformational learning because in the pain, there is possibility to re-evaluate beliefs and assumptions which were otherwise frozen as part of one's identity. Too often, fathers will try to protect their progeny, inadvertently stunting the opportunity for growth. The same could be said of failure.

I have had many conversations with family business clients where the founder would openly talk about how a business failure like a bankruptcy was an important and formative experience for him in his entrepreneurial journey. Yet when it came to his son, instead of allowing his son to take risks and experience the potential for failure, he would withdraw his son from the situation just before things failed so that his son never took responsibility.

This might have been done in the name of saving face and protecting his son but in reality, it harmed his son because it deprived him of an opportunity to experience firsthand loss. The lack of suffering decreased the likelihood that the son would reflect on reasons for failure or how he could revisit his actions. I can't help but wonder whether the desire for a father to protect an adult son from hardship is also tied to the father's own ego – a “not on my watch” mentality that helps prop up their own image and ability to control or influence. This kind of mindset might be at a subconscious level. In the past, when I've heard my clients lament their son's failures, they will also present themselves as the hero, where they have had the foresight and power to protect their sons.

With my father and me, the Geographical Information System (GIS) business venture never did get off the ground. I left prematurely to work for ICBC before we had a sellable product. On some levels, I wonder if my father's encouragement to go the ICBC route was also an attempt to protect me from potential failure. What is clear is that as soon as I left, the project fell by the wayside. On analysis now, it would have been failure or encountering difficulty that would have been the opportunity to learn together. An experience of hardship is an educational experience for father and son. It is a necessary process for building resilience and a spark for joint problem solving. The process enables learning about each other's strengths and solidifying a practical appreciation for what each person brings to the team.

In the 1960s and 1970s, it used to be that when a child was born, the father would be invited to sit in a waiting room where they would smoke cigars. Beginning in the 1980s, fathers were invited and often asked to be in the room with the mother as the child was being born. This

philosophical change recognizes that when a family goes through moments of suffering together, there is a deeper relational bond through the experience.

In the age of Keiretsu corporations in Japan, there was a recognition that suffering together would create deeper bonds and so during training programs, cohorts of a generation of management would sit under waterfalls or be put through extreme physical hardship.

An example of how my father and I could have learned together was perhaps facing an angry client that felt work delivered had not been up to standard, sharing in the losses of a project that did not take off, or working through the night to meet a timeline for a deliverable. However, like many Chinese fathers, my father's tendency was to shield me from hardship. Learning activities like this could help inform effective legacy in a family business context. The activity would become a shared educational experience to return to for reflection. I could see how overcoming a struggle together would become a story that would be passed on to future generations. These stories would communicate embedded values, morals or lessons that one generation may want to pass on.

I think that is why when I authored eulogy #1 by my daughter (see Section 4.3), there is the inclusion of a fictional memory where I involved my daughter in facing a challenge when one of my business associates suddenly left. To the daughter facing the problem with me, it might be learning about being prepared for the unexpected and building some excess capacity into a business to cover staff absences. To the other daughter who was uninvolved in the business, she would have still heard about the experience and perhaps come to understand it as a story about accepting help graciously and pulling together as a family in the face of difficulty. I have come to understand that these types of stories and interpretations of shared educational experiences are an important element of legacy.

Handling Crisis Together

One of the periods in my life that I felt closest to my father was when we were both facing a crisis together. During my father's company's second audit, I helped him with compiling financial records and corresponding with CRA. It was also during this time that his long-term client, which represented about 40% of his revenues, was going for an RFP after nearly two decades with him.

I felt closest to my father when he was under stress and when he asked for my help. I was also able to see how he confronted problems head on and also how he faced disappointment. The opportunities to see my father under these circumstances was quite rare under normal family interactions.

Despite having lost the client in the end, the crisis allowed us to work together and see each other's strengths. The biggest thing I gained was watching how my father got back up from the disappointment and continued moving forward.

When I asked the heir-apparent of my clients whether they believed their fathers would have had successful businesses without their past failures; failures ranging from bankruptcy to total deterioration in markets requiring a shift in the business, they unanimously said no. However, when I asked them whether they had ever shared or worked with their father through these failures, only one said they had. The rest have said they were often shielded or protected from these trying times. On more than on occasion I heard stories where their father had sold off or written off entire books of business, often to protect their son from facing these problems.

It is unfortunate because I believe that these moments of crisis are a unique opportunity, and one that is more frequent and has lower ultimate impact than crises in a personal life. Without minimizing the impact of challenges to businesses or projects, it is not comparable to a sick or dying family member. The business has its natural ups and downs and these are opportunities to teach and learn how to roll with the waves and weather the storms of life. It is in these moments that we are tested and can see what we are really made of.

The needs of business, as they intersect with the developmental paths of both father and son, create an opportunity to come together around the need of an inanimate third entity. The ability to discern which of these needs are just the regular ebb and flow of the business and which are truly crisis, also allows for the cultivation of a calmness and ability to face life with equanimity.

Role Permeation and Being Able to Wear Different Hats

When I joined my father's business, there were times that the line between boss and father often blurred. I noticed that I was more reluctant to question the rationale behind a decision or propose a different idea during team meetings because I worried my father would feel disrespected. At work, my father was also less hesitant to shut down my suggestions

abruptly. Most of the time, I felt quite disempowered working for my father because I didn't feel like I was part of decision making. After the fact, I could always ask my father why he decided on one course of action or another, but as I look back, it would have been much more powerful learning in the moment. As an employee and different individual, my father would have also benefited at times from a different perspective.

Perhaps something that would have helped us address this disconnect would have been intentionally taking on different roles, a kind of changing of hats for the sole purpose of learning. It seemed that my father and I only had familial and work hats. Both the father-son hat and the boss-employee hats reinforced a power dynamic that created distance.

There is the opportunity to suspend these roles by taking on a third or fourth hat. For example, during a meeting, my father could temporarily take on a client's perspective; making suggestions or evaluating a proposal based on what excellence would look like from a customer perspective. Instead of immediately making a final decision, my father could have solicited input from me by intentionally taking a different perspective and creating the space for taking on a different point of view.

Since it is the father that is typically in the power position, this strategy does require fathers to be willing to temporarily suspend their power in order to create greater understanding. However, just like my father clearly stated that he was the one who would make the final decisions and be ultimately responsible until the time that I took over the business; establishing ground rules or setting boundaries would be important if one were to temporarily take on a different role for learning purposes. Buy in to engage in this process would also have to begin with the father.

Asking the Why (Having Different Why's)

The experience and motivation towards an entrepreneurial path can be very different between generations. In the situation with my father or some of my experiences consulting for clients, entrepreneurialism was a means of survival in the face of limited options for gainful employment and as the means to support a family. In other instances, the entrepreneurial path was a necessity for the type of personality who did not want to be told what to do or be dictated to by another. At other times, the motivation might be a combination of both of external circumstances and inherent personality.

In a memorable conversation with one of my family business clients, it was clear that for him, the entrepreneurial path was a means towards personal freedom. He had been able to design a job that played to his strengths and interests. As an extroverted dreamer, tinkerer, and hands-on leader, he had designed the organization around himself. For him it was an interesting assumption that his son would find joy in the life that he had shaped around himself.

For my father, the business was a means to a livelihood and commensurate compensation he would not have been able to find working for someone else. My father also saw a low-risk opportunity to capitalize on an emerging field of enterprise resource planning software.

Looking at my current situation, I realize that I have a wide selection of choices. The choice to enter into an entrepreneurial path is a much more conscious decision that requires deeper self-reflection around motivations. My “why” for starting a business is very different than my father’s. At the same time, my father’s ability to identify and size up an emerging technological opportunity is an excellent model of how I should consider my external context. Some questions that I continue to ask myself while reflecting and looking for business opportunities include:

- What am I giving up as it relates to family to pursue my path?
- How does the business impact my commitment to personal development and spiritual growth?
- Are there ways of making a living that provide a balance between my interests, and my family responsibilities while enabling me an opportunity to benefit financially beyond a salary?
- What am I going to do with the stress of uncertainty and ongoing problems of an entrepreneurial lifestyle?

These are questions that I often also asked my father who quickly dismissed them. From an educational perspective, this could have been a fertile moment for mutual learning where my father could have reflected and shared his experience as one reference point for me to make my own decisions. He could have shared his “why” for pursuing a family business and helped me explore my “why” in choosing a livelihood.

When I look at my clients and my father, I find an undervaluing reflection, and an apparent belief that it is a waste of time because ultimately they started their businesses because for them that seemed to be the only logical option. They did not over-think their

situations or possibilities. In fact, my father and most of my family business clients would have assumed if someone had enough energy and time to ponder such questions, then they had excess energy and time that they could be devoting to succeeding in their businesses. It was almost like they believed that for an entrepreneur to succeed, they need to have a singularity of focus that is unhindered by the doubts that might surface through reflection.

As I began considering my own “why,” I needed a sounding board and reflections from someone who had walked down the path. This could have been an important learning opportunity and chance for interaction between me and my father. It would have been rewarding to explore my motivations for endeavouring in business and whether my choice of career would be influenced by the expression of an entrepreneurial spirit. I think if we had had this conversation or discovered it through working together, the next question would be whether it made sense to direct my entrepreneurial energy towards the family business or potentially a business of my own.

My motivations for entering business have shifted since when I was working for my father and dreaming about entrepreneurship at twenty-five. At the time, entering into business was primarily motivated by the opportunities for financial reward followed by a freedom from working under the expectations and direction of others.

I saw that my father was financially more successful in business than most professions. As a child, my father’s financial success was something that I was really proud of and something I aspired for. I romanticized the idea of being your own boss and having freedom. Although looking back now, my father was not free.

In theory, he had the ability to dictate his own hours but in actuality, he was bound by the needs and timeframe of his clients. He ended up using his freedom to work longer hours. This was exacerbated by a lack of boundaries around his work hours. Although he did not have a boss, he still worked under the expectation and direction of his clients. Strangely now that I examine my experience working for him in the family business, I would be bound by my father’s expectations. Additionally, my father was also bound by the expectations of his staff. I remember my father sharing with me that a reason he couldn’t retire yet was that his staff depending on the business, in other words “him,” for survival. They had families and mortgages. My father’s experience has helped me understand that whether I work for myself or others, I will always be to some extent bound by the expectations of others, be it staff, clients or a boss.

Today, as I examine my motivations for entering business against my envisioned future, I can see that my primary motivation for business is actually freedom to express and pursue the diversity of my talents and interests. Business enables me to be productive in a way that intersects with the market. Although finances are still important, I have other options for a high paying job as a professional. I need to evaluate whether I would have more freedom combining my work and interests as an entrepreneur or having more bounded work hours being employed with time to pursue interests outside of work. Most importantly I have come to realize that an overarching priority is being available for my family. Because of my circumstances today, I no longer see that a decision about family business has to be an either-or decision in my life. I am free to pursue different paths during different phases of my life and the needs of my children.

Finally, when it comes to business and being able to offer a service or product to others, there is an intersection with values. For my father, he had an underlying belief in fiscal responsibility in the delivery and maintenance of public services. He saw his consulting business being about improving efficiency in municipal government so that property taxes for the average taxpayer wouldn't escalate. There was an intersection between his personal values and the value that he wanted to provide his clients. Despite not understanding what my father did as a child, he always told us that the technology services he was providing to his municipal clients saved the government at least three full-time staff at a cost of less than one person's salary.

When I was undertaking a project for one of my consulting clients who was in the seafood business, I came to understand that a driving force for the founder was to be able to grow protein to feed the world under increasing constraints. He had a deep seated value in farming more efficiently and in a more ecologically sustainable way.

The underlying reasons for a business vision is connected to a why that is value-based. Looking at the intersection of my interests and business, I see that a key motivation for me to start a business in tea, coffee or cooking would tie closely to a value of wanting to connect people through culture and experience.

Developing Mastery and Competencies for Today and Tomorrow

Entrepreneurs may sometimes discount technical knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) that they have developed mastery over long periods of time. Looking back, this was certainly true with how my father gave me a *DOS for Dummies* book to learn programming on my own

(see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.1) or his explanation that I would not need to know the technical aspects of programming to run an IT consulting business when I started working for him 20 years later (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2). My dad had an implicit assumption that I would learn whatever I needed on my own through reading, taking courses or on the job. There were however, things that I wanted and perhaps needed to learn directly from him.

For example, my father determined that I should just learn software and technical skills related to Geographical Information Systems (GIS), a new field for the business to expand into. His idea was that I would best learn this by enrolling into a training program. However, on hindsight even coming out of the training program I would only have a baseline, theoretical level of knowledge that would be insufficient to help launch a new product. I had no background understanding of how his municipal clients operated, how the engineering department performed geospatial functions or with what systems GIS would need to integrate.

Most experts do not appreciate the levels of their actual knowledge and skills, nor do they know how important their experiences are in helping them learn. That is why in the corporate world, knowledge management has become such an important element of business process re-engineering. There is a missed opportunity when fathers and sons who work in family business do not take a more systematic approach to what core competencies and learning are required for the success of the business today and tomorrow. Although my father was not an expert in GIS, he was an expert in municipal governments.

It would have been useful to see how my father actually learned on the job. It would have been helpful to see who he spoke to, how he obtained information with his clients or how he extracted knowledge from salespeople. I would have benefited from attending conferences with my father or seeing him interact with different clients.

Taking a page from the business process re-engineering world, it would have been useful to start off with what core processes were part of his business. The process of exploring how things were done, would have allowed discussion around why they were done in that way.

While consulting for family businesses, I started to wonder what things were most critical supports for learning directly between generations: on-the-job working with staff, through a mentor, or through external training programs to name a few. My belief is that although a lot of the technical skills may be picked up on the job or through external training programs, fathers are probably in the best position to help the next generation understand the “why” and thought

process of how a decision is made. The closer an area of knowledge, skill or ability is to the core strategy or competence of the business, the more important it is for learning in that area. KSA in core competency areas becomes a common language for learning together.

5.1.5. Synthesis

Looking at family business through the regressive, progressive and analytical movements of Curren, I now come to what this means for me in the present. If I had to place everything together in my present situation (Pinar, 1975), I would summarize it with the following three convictions:

For me, family business is one choice among many as a means of livelihood

Whether an entrepreneurial path is right for someone depends on the reasons for choosing that path and the unique make up of a person. There is an entrepreneurial spirit in me, so business is a natural expression. A primary motivation for entering into business for me is the freedom to express and pursue the diversity of my talents and interests.

However, like a peregrine falcon, I am also able to switch priorities for a season to nurture the next generation. Like the *Vernicia fordii* tree, business is a means through which I can bear productive fruit but it is not the only means. Given my knowledge, skills and abilities, I am able to work for others as well as work for myself. Both could provide a good living. Engaging in one path does not preclude me from the other, in fact, it may be possible to pursue both at the same time.

The underlying value for me to start a family business would be to connect people through my interests.

There is a curriculum opportunity represented by the concept of legacy, especially with the added intersection of family business

My father's story and the shared experiences I've had with him are educational. It is possible for these educational experiences to continue being reframed and reinterpreted through time and reflection. I understand that how I understand my father's story is part of his legacy. Through a better understanding of his legacy, I have also concluded that I can be more intentional about the legacy I want to leave my children. This has included identifying that

hardship, crisis and suffering may be important learning moments when we experience it together.

Family businesses present an added opportunity for teaching, learning with and from each other across generations. As such, it is an additional means by which legacy can unfold. Developing mastery in core aspects of the business, exploring new market developments and corresponding business opportunities, and using work as a means to learn more about the unique gifts a son or father bring to an organization are ways that the intergenerational story can be enriched. Since the kind of family business I will start will reflect my interests and passion, the business will also be a point of potential connection with my daughters.

At heart, if Currere is like running a course, I would like to be running a relay course with family. One where I ran first with my father ahead of me and now where I am running ahead of my two daughters. As we develop into adulthood, I yearn for a time that we are running together and sharing with each other along the way. Unlike the unidimensional rat-race of life dominated by work or business, this race is about growing deeper and fuller into who we are as wonderfully made people.

One area which I am working on right now is finding the right relationship with work. This was an unresolved struggle that is part of my father's legacy. It is like a baton that has been passed onto me.

There are unspoken costs for pursuing a life in business

The unspoken costs that I identified as part of pursuing a life in business are the same for someone who does not have a right relationship with work. I could equally be absent as a parent, be stressed out physically and emotionally, be in a state of perpetual unrest, have relational deficit with people important to me and sacrifice my personal development, whether I am working for myself or others.

That being said, for me, business augments the potential for me to incur these costs if unchecked because there are less external boundaries around time and because I will have a tendency to push harder. I think that that is why I need to set my own boundaries around protecting priorities like family time, develop a practice of regular reflection and potentially recruit an accountability partner. Sharing meals with my children is something that I want to protect as a consistent time to be present through transitions in their lives.

Engaging in a regular process of meditative reflection and perhaps a quarterly retreat using the Currere movements will be a good way to check in on whether moving forward with Family Business is still a freeing, and live-giving, option for work. I will be recruiting at least two accountability partners who I will instruct to ask me whether business continues to bring and support life or whether it crowds out life. I will share about how my journey on living out a right relationship with work is coming along and what specific actions I want to commit to for the purposes of aligning my intended priorities and life. Other than accountability, these partners will also be invaluable in providing an additional perspective.

One of my hypotheses is that as I begin to engage in these practices, the time frame of how far I zoom out to my past with the regressive movement and how far I zoom forward into the future with the progressive will become shorter and shorter. I will begin to live more in the present such that even my reflections will become more immediate.

Ultimately I realize that I must balance my desire to create and be fulfilled with work and the priority I put on my relationship with my daughters and future spouse. I realize now that I will not feel fulfilled if I succeed in business at the detriment of family.

5.2. Legacy

The working definition of legacy that I started with in writing this thesis is that it is the journey to full personhood across generations and the results of connected and collective aspirations. Connected because one generation's journey impacts the next. As a parent, the starting position is also an aspiration that the next generation, with the support of this one, will have more opportunities to live a fulfilling life.

5.2.1. Cultural Nuance

I have begun to understand that my understanding of legacy has been heavily influenced by my cultural background.

In Chinese culture, succession is a strong marker of lasting legacy because there is continuity. To ensure this happens, there are cultural expectations placed on the eldest son. From a Chinese perspective, the goal of a good child should be to make their father proud.

传承 or 承传 – the order of transmitting and receiving

In Chinese, legacy is a compound word, 传承 which is made up of the character 传, which means to transmit or pass on, and the character 承, which means to receive. So conceptually, from a Chinese understanding, legacy is a process of transmitting and receiving between generations. This transmission and receiving can mean both physical as well as more abstract aspects. It can also entail taking on the mantle of responsibility for something. In a family business context, succession has components of all three. There is the actual business, the know-how, values or relationships, as well as the continued vision or mission of the organization.

Legacy is usually written in the order of transmit and receive but I found it intriguing that it can also be written and understood with the characters reversed, 承传. It begs the question of which comes first, readiness to receive or readiness to transmit? Could it be that legacy as understood by the early scholars of the language understood that legacy doesn't just flow one way and that it isn't always sequentially initiated?

Over time the common order of the characters has become 传承. This is also in line with my experiences with my father and what I saw consulting with other family businesses. My father only initiated a conversation about joining the business during a crisis (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.2). There was very little consideration around whether the next generation was ready to receive and what needed to be transmitted. There was only the reactive epiphany that a successor was needed.

It is also interesting to note that the Chinese characters when written in calligraphy have an entirely different flow. The character for to transmit (传) is highly structured, full of lines and angular strokes whereas the character for receiving (承) is full of flowing curves, the character is reminiscent of the character for water. Is it possible that even in the development of the characters, the people of ancient times understood that it is possible to plan and structure while to receive is a much more fluid process.

So what does this extended meditation on the Chinese words for Legacy offer in terms of potential implications. First, the process of legacy may actually be receiver-driven versus

transmitter-driven, which is counter to most approaches. If this were true, it would mean that there is much value in potentially exploring what it means to be a successor (继承者). To be a successor, one is providing continuity to something. To what are they providing continuity? This is a personal question that may have many different levels of answer that a person must discover themselves.

Second, if it is easier to structure transmission than receivership, what can one do to create the proper conditions of receiving? If it is not structure, then perhaps it is providing the space for discovery. Taking on a legacy is asking the next generation to move into an unknown which requires exploring the mystery of self. If the son is to be able to take what is passed onto him and grow it into something else, he needs the space and support to explore what this would look like while providing continuity to what is most important.

Third, it is important to consider what a successor is also choosing to receive other than inheriting the business and taking over responsibility for it. Through the lens of unexamined costs of entrepreneurship, the successor is choosing the path of business and signing onto the costs relationally, physically, and emotionally.

In order to receive well, the successor needs to fully consider what alternative paths they are giving up in order to pursue the family business. They will also be taking on the values and implicit commitments made by the founder at the start of the business, if not fully adopting for the future, at least accepting that it is the starting basis from where to shift.

What does it mean to be a successor? (继承者)

Successor is also a compound word in Chinese. It includes the character for receiving, 承, that is used in the word for legacy. 继 means continue. 者 means person. A direct translation of the characters would represent a person who receives and continues.

Embedded into the language is an understanding that a successor receives what is transmitted and continues on. Coupled with the idea that obedience is a marker of filial piety, there is an expectation that to honor your parents, one should listen to and receive what is transmitted, at least during their lifetime.

It wasn't until closer reflection that I began to see that culturally there is often an expectation that a successor continues on the story of their father, including the mission of an organization. Within a Chinese family business context, it is not uncommon that the father maintains his role as the patriarch and has a high level of influence, if not control, over the direction of the business long after the reigns have officially been relinquished to the successor. Culturally, the father is the one who sets the standard of excellence and has the final word on whether a successor has done well or not.

In examining my retrospective movement (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.3), my father saw the potential for conflict between us as I embarked on a succession path with the business. I don't think he had the same level of expectation as what I have seen from founders of Chinese family businesses with their sons during my years consulting. At least at face value, my father proactively tried to delineate control and power explaining to me that he would exit the business and let go after 3 years. Although this was untested, I believed that ultimately my father did want to exit. However, during the time period I was working with him that I realized that I had been culturally indoctrinated into looking to my father for approval. I was quite disappointed when he did not provide his approval when I starting a business with my wife (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.6) and when I decided to leave ICBC to start my own consulting practice (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5.7). His lack of approval was interpreted to be disapproval.

What would make my father proud? (我以你为荣)

In Chinese, there is an expression that children yearn to hear or feel from their parents. So much so that even in adulthood, if they heard it expressed from their senior parents, it would often bring tears to their eyes. The saying is 我以你为荣, which roughly translates as I am glorified because of you. It is the ultimate sign of approval or pride usually tied to outstanding accomplishment. It is often also amusing that fathers may invoke their ancestors in expressing by saying not that "I am" proud but "we," the generations before us, are all proud of you and if they could only see you, you would be the source of their glory. It would be like saying you have brought glory to the clan of your last name.

Perhaps each generation's hope is it that the previous generation would be proud of the next. In Chinese understanding there is a heavy emphasis on the previous generation teaching and providing proper instruction to the next generation. Additionally, there is an expectation for parents to be able to provide every opportunity for the next generation, even at the expense of

their own well-being, to grow and excel so that they can be proud and approve of their children. There is a vision of a better-self hidden within this idea.

Embedded in this thinking is that your father or mother knows better than you what is good for your life. This breeds a type of dependence and would work against individual development, something that I realize that is very important to me. When I think of what would have brought great pride to my father, it might have been succeeding in becoming a specialist doctor or one of the big five professions (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.9). The rest of the Chinese community would also affirm his accomplishment as a father in grooming his son towards a distinguished profession. To my father, and perhaps many Chinese fathers, he would feel that he left a worthwhile legacy simply by providing for and grooming the next generation for a better life. There is a glorification of self-sacrifice as a father in the process of providing for family.

Subconsciously I had also become influenced by this type of thinking, which became evident playing with my daughters at the Children's museum and how I wanted to encourage and direct my youngest to become doctor Doh-Doh and how my heart sank when my eldest said she wanted to be a gymnast (see Chapter 3, Section 3.6.8). In reflection today, would I be any prouder of one daughter over the other if one became a veterinarian and the other became a professional gymnast? Probably not, as long as they were both happy and were able to sustain a livelihood. What would make me proud is if they put their all into whatever they committed to do and found joy in excelling in their interests. At the end of the day, it is their life and not mine so defining what is a good life is also their job and not mine. It also became apparent to me that I didn't really care whether others, regardless if they were my ancestors or even my parents, were proud of my daughters' career decisions or not.

Behaviorally this realization would mean that I should model a commitment to authentically searching for a good life according to me. Part of this includes pursuing my interests diligently and continuing to explore what attracts me to certain interests. It would also mean that I should be curious about my daughters regardless of whether I thought the path they were exploring was difficult or easy. My focus should be on understanding the reason behind what attracts them to a certain path or why they enjoy something.

When I examined my fictional obituary and the eulogies from my daughters (Chapter 4), work in itself or their profession did not feature highly as a goal for my role as a father. I realize that out of my pain of feeling a lack of approval during my own childhood, I wanted my

daughters to know that I was proud of them for who they were, not for what they did. For example, thinking back to my piano performances, what I needed from my father was not praise or criticism for what happened on stage, but the discipline and diligence leading up to the performance or wonderment about the innate musicality and expression in my playing. Alternatively curiosity about what was going through my mind when I was playing the piece would have demonstrated a desire to understand me. At the heart of the matter, I realize that I wanted my father to see me. Seeing my accomplishments or the results of my efforts are only outputs. So when I think of my daughters, I want them to know that I see them for who they are and support them in whatever endeavors they decide to pursue. How they perform at those endeavours does not change my approval of them as my daughters. Moreover, their performance is momentary and does not mark who they are or how good they can eventually get at whatever they put their mind to.

5.2.2. The Good, Bad and Ugly (Unconsciously Passing on Struggles)

It has been a messy entanglement to try to separate my father's legacy from the one which I hope to leave. I once asked what my father had achieved in life. My father replied rather tersely that it is up to God and the next generation to know. He only knew that he had done his best to fulfill his responsibilities and obligations to his family.

On hindsight, my father probably felt that I was evaluating him when I asked him about his legacy. In reality, I was looking for a counterpoint to help with my own reflection, expecting that he had had more time to reflect on the same question to which I did not yet have an answer. I was looking for insight about the future based on his experiences but his pushback felt like a rejection.

The process of coming up with my Progressive movement has been very helpful in beginning this separation and I have taken a closer examination of some faulty interpretations of my experiences with my father and the business that seem to be holding me back. Life can only be understood looking backwards, but it must be lived forward (Kierkegaard, 1980). There is a complexity to making meaning of the experiences we have because in the moment, it is impossible to see the outcome of our actions unfold nor is it possible to fully comprehend the entanglement of hopes and aspirations that we have, those that we live with, and the entities with which we interact. Yet perhaps this is what makes life epic. The more epic the story, the longer it takes for the entanglement to unravel—like different strands enmeshed in a ball of

yarn, our story is not just our own. The hermeneutic look at life helps us to closely examine our experiences. There is no clear beginning and ending to the intertwined strands of our life, nor is there a single objective way to tell the story. I have often wondered whether Kierkegaard's observation can also be understood intergenerationally. To what extent is it possible for families to look backward and live forward together? How much richer would life be with greater intergenerational reflection and dialogue? Unfortunately, there are few intentional opportunities for this to happen other than at funerals.

Through a closer examination of the vignettes in my Regressive, I have been able to excavate what I have learned from my father, what I needed to let go of, and ultimately what I need to move forward in the next chapters of my life. I came to realize that the interpretation of these experiences could equally be building blocks or stumbling blocks. In the Analysis movement, I have uncovered three faulty interpretations which hold me back from moving towards the future I envisioned in the Progressive movement.

I delving into these three faulty assumptions, I found Madison's (1988) nine principles proposed for the assessment the validity of a hermeneutic interpretation of a text to be useful. These include coherence, comprehensiveness, penetration, thoroughness, appropriateness, contextuality, agreement, suggestiveness, and potential (Madison, 1988, p. 29). Madison suggested an implicit tenth principle in assessing how to choose one interpretation over another based on the ability for the interpretation to be extended further. I think this last principle is particularly valid as I look at my own story and how these interpretations of my experiences have led to a "stuckness" in how I see myself, my relationship with my father and the world. Each of these interpretations or assumptions I have constructed and internalized are, in Madison's lingo, limited in potentiality. They limit the future interpretations of life experiences and when more closely examined, are not comprehensive nor thorough interpretations of life.

Faulty Interpretation 1 – In coming out of a failed business and marriage, I have failed as a man because in my current state and limitations I am unable to provide financially for my family.

My father and his father before him, had a provider Archetype as a core element of their identities. This Archetype was intertwined with a strong sense of obligation and responsibility to take care of family physically and financially. To an extent this familial norm is also derived from a cultural foundation that is particularly strong in the region from where my family comes. In fact, if you ask someone from China, they would likely say that people from the 潮州 (Tieow Chiew)

are known for their tea drinking customs, excellent seafood and their chauvinistic but very family-oriented men.

The provider Archetype was passed onto me but as a second-generation immigrant, the cultural context is quite different than the environment in which my grandfather or father lived. However, I continued to live as if that were the norm without realizing it may be different than the arrangement my spouse would choose. In my mind, it was acceptable for me to fly like an Eagle as far as I wanted as long as I would return with food. Further, in prior discussions with my wife, I had thought that she was in support of this arrangement. Afterall, it had worked for my mother and father despite sacrifices.

Our separation 3 years later was both a surprise and the beginning of a wake-up call. Although I struggle with ongoing guilt for not having a job at the moment, my family is not starving and even after the division of assets and legal fees, I am still providing for my children from the storehouse. For the past 10 years, I was able to provide for family based on a certain ordering of life and arrangement. The divorce changed this equation.

The feeling of failure stems from an uncertainty and doubt about how I will find work in a parenting schedule that feels very constraining and grounds me to Vancouver. However, when I reflect on the fact that prior to this past year, I never had to play the role as primary caretaker including making food, driving the kids to school, teaching them how to tie their shoelaces, it has been a relatively short time and quick learning curve. In my surface interpretations of not having immediately gone back into the workforce, I realize I miss this fact that I have been adjusting. In fact, it has been a tectonic shift based on a reprioritization of life where being a present father for my children became a top-level priority. In this regard, the interpretation of my life at this moment, should not be defined by the archetype of provider but rather the nurturer role that I implicitly chose by quitting my job and coming back to Vancouver.

Perhaps the better evaluation and interpretation will happen in 10 to 15 years if my daughters still ask, "Do you love me more than your salmon, shrimp or work?" Will it be obvious that I chose as a first priority being with them and spending time being present with them while rediscovering as a next order priority how I would sustain the family financially after the first level priority had been met. I should probably also consider that contextually we are in the middle of a pandemic and I have been trying to finish this long overdue thesis. Maybe the provider role and finding a job should not be held so closely to the core of my identity.

Re-interpretation 1 – During this season in life, I am working through some lessons in life that should cause me to pause and examine my inner life and values. I am choosing to be a present father and to provide support for my daughters who are adjusting to a major transition during the divorce.

Faulty Interpretation 2 - Pursuing an entrepreneurial path necessarily means working such long hours and laboriously that it is normal and acceptable to neglect certain familial duties, especially as caregiver to the children. These lifestyle commitments are required to succeed in this path.

This leads to my reflections about work and how it fits into a good life. I think on closer examination of my father's story, he also realized that it was not an ideal life to be so absorbed with work. Despite not having complained about it, I think that the unending demands of the business was one that he felt he could not escape and that he too was drowning under the pressures. The recommendation to go into a profession was his interpretation of more defined boundaries and certainty about retirement.

When I look at it this way, I realize that it was not business or entrepreneurship that he advised me against pursuing, but a life where work was not life-giving but life-sucking. Although I am wired quite differently than my father in that long hours in and of themselves may not be life-sucking if I am enjoying the thrill of a challenge, there were definitely times of exhaustion while pursuing my business. As a path, entrepreneurship and business tends towards pushing boundaries but at the same time, I see my professional friends – whether they are accountants, neurosurgeons or engineers, also struggling with work-life permeation. So, perhaps it is discipline and an ordered life that are the biggest differentiators of whether work is meaningful and enables living to the fullest and is not merely a choice of profession or means of livelihood. What would this ordered life look like if I were to continue pursuing entrepreneurship. Is there a way of looking at my constraints as an enabler, or at least natural boundaries, rather than weight?

I am also re-examining my mom's response to me as a child every time my father was not present. Do I accept her explanation that dad was away to put food on the table? As a child, the answer never felt satisfactory because my need for a father was still not met despite mentally accepting that my father could not be present. Having now experienced working as an entrepreneur and also consulting for family businesses, I now understand that without boundaries or a very conscious decision to prioritize otherwise, business needs have an expansive tendency and will take over whatever available time there is. So, on this level, did my father really have no time to play with me as a child and would he not be able to put food on the

table if he played with me? My answer now is “no!” It was easier for him to stay focused on work than to reprioritize.

The moments that my father did reprioritize spending time with me over work, or plan his work around spending time with me, like he did when we drove to Vernon for my provincial piano competition, were some of the most precious memories I had with him. What he told me during our time playing table tennis and the stories he shared with me about competition and his decision to locate himself on Vancouver Island are lessons that I have retained. I wonder how our relationship would have been different if this became a regular practice and there were more punctuated moments of connection with my father through my growth and development.

Letting go of the notion that work, regardless of whether it is as a profession or entrepreneurship, must be all consuming allows one to reconsider what boundaries they need to put in place to maintain priorities in life. To not consciously consider and make decisions around these boundaries means that work will creep into other areas of life, including familial duties. This uncontrolled permeability of work is one reason, business or not that, work can cease to be life-giving.

I now see one other dimension to my mom’s explanation and conclude that my father’s consistent hard working and saving had to do with an immigrant mindset where he was living in a perpetual Winter. My father lived with a scarcity mindset both in terms of his time and resources. Being in perpetual Winter meant that it was always a season for working hard, storing and rationing. There was no time for celebrating except for those small luxuries we could sneak in unseen by others. This meant that many of his decisions were motivated by a fear that if he didn’t work harder and save, that there was a real possibility that he might starve.

Having grown up in Canada with a social network and security net, the idea of starving is not as big a fear as it was seen to be by my father. For him, financial return was the primary consideration for work. When I interviewed him in those final years and asked him whether he enjoyed his work, it seemed like a totally foreign idea that he had not considered. Whereas for me, enjoying my work is very important to me. I have many choices about what I want to do for income.

Re-interpretation 2 – Both my father and I struggled with a healthy relationship with work. If left unresolved, the drive to work long hours at the expense of family life would happen whether I worked for myself or for others.

Faulty Interpretation 3 – I have failed to fulfill my role as the eldest son because I failed to take over my father's business and was also not able to take care of him through his sickness.

I have continued to have a sense of guilt and feelings of failure for not having succeeded my father's business. This sense of guilt has always been a back of mind thing that until articulated in a statement, was at a subconscious level. This interpretation is complex because it touches on my father's expectations and hopes for the business and myself. It also touches on cultural norms for the eldest male, which are also varied and especially nuanced because my father came to Canada at such a young age and the norms are a mix of his own upbringing in Hong Kong and his interpretation of Canadian culture and values.

Recently I had an opportunity to speak to my uncle, the eldest son in the Chen family, about his understanding of the role of the eldest male, particularly in the context of being a caretaker and the expectation to succeed the family business. He was quick to bring up that my father was not the eldest, in fact he was the youngest, yet he stepped up to help with the family financially when my uncle could not. He was also the first to try and take over the family business when my grandfather passed away.

My uncle reminded me that although there may be cultural norms, one can only do what they can in the moment. The higher-level identity is being a family member and whether in the context of family business, providing or being a caretaker, everyone has a responsibility to contribute how they can. He explained that he too, had struggled with some level of expectation to take over the family business but that grandmother had fought hard for him to go abroad to do his graduate studies. He had communicated that he was not interested in the family business. When my grandfather passed away, he was still studying. He explained how he had overextended himself both financially and emotionally after graduating with his doctorate to enable the family to emigrate from Hong Kong. This was around the time my father had stepped up his role, despite being the youngest of four sons.

This conversation stayed with me as I began to re-examine my interpretation of how events had unfolded and my evaluation of myself. Towards the latter part of my father's life, he had run entirely out of energy to continue the business and by the time he let go, he was already suffering from a chronic terminal illness. This was also around the same time I had my

first child and was just beginning the journey of fatherhood. In our conversations starting from around this time, my father never spoke about his business but often asked me about my role of being a father.

My father had no particular attachment to the business, even though it was quite successful. He had constantly told me not to go into business and directed me towards a professional track for reasons unknown to me until my recent reflections. Business was only a means towards livelihood. Even when he approached me after I had returned home from my MBA, I now see that he was only offering an option for me to consider. He was quick to direct me towards taking on a job at ICBC despite beginning the process of succession with me. So looking at both my prior understanding of my father, the consistency of his past messaging to take a professional track compared to what he actually did during the transition process, my father did not have a strong expectation for me, nor my sisters to take over the family business.

In the last few years of his life, his conversations with me were often about my journey of being a father. The only thing I remember about our one-way conversations was that he would also tell me to spend more time with my wife and not to put too much pressure on my children. He was happy to see my child and often asked me to leave if my visits were too long.

My mother visited him daily and was his caretaker from the moment he was diagnosed with Multiple System Atrophy, through his 7 years in the nursing home. During this time, I often saw my mother's fatigue and pain but not my father's struggles. I had a hard time understanding why he lacked the energy to try to delay the onset of the progressive symptoms. Re-reading a journal entry from that time about feeling helpless (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.9), I recognize that I lacked empathy for my father. Some of this was driven by a denial that my father, who had always been the provider, was no longer able to even take care of himself. The idea that my father needed me was clouded with an unspoken and unmet need that I actually needed my father during a time when I didn't know how to be a father to my first child.

Perhaps the cryptic questions that my father had for me about what it was like being a dad, came from a place where he was also wondering how he had done as a father. The occasional advice he was giving me about spending more time with my wife because it was difficult for her as a mother, was an unspoken regret about what he might have done differently in life, and not a hypocritical suggestion, as I believed at the time.

My father recognized that I didn't have residual capacity to take care of him as I was trying to take care of my own budding family but perhaps he also felt that, other than providing financially, maybe he could have done more. Maybe the Life Review questions I had asked him were also difficult for him to answer because he was not ready to reflect on his life and the inordinate amount of time he had dedicated to the business, and his role as father to me.

These reflections, made long after my father had passed away, makes me feel closer him. I see him as a fellow human being, who also struggled in finding meaning and living as best he could. He was not an infallible being, but a fellow sojourner who tried his best in a world that had many expectations of him too. Perhaps it is that I have judged myself harshly because I have first judged my father harshly. Ironically it seems that compassion for myself begins with compassion for others. If my father were alive today and was uncharacteristically communicative, he might tell me that his expectations of me evolved as he learned how to become a father and that towards my adulthood, he had realized he had been too harsh on me and that as I started my own family, he did not have expectations that I would take over his business nor take care of him when I was still learning how to take care of myself and my family. He had hopes for me and his greatest hope was that I would live a better life than he, in spite of feelings of expectations from others. He might have even shared with me that since shutting down his business and being incapacitated, he saw that the role of being a father went beyond being a provider or the setting of standards for his children, and that he experienced moments of joy playing with his children but was often too busy or absent. If he could go back, he might dedicate more time to this, and this was what he was trying to tell me when he told me to spend more time with my wife and children. This was too late for him, but he had tried his best in his capacities at the time and he had no regrets. But most important, perhaps he would tell me that I was a good son, who like him was a fellow human being trying to live life as best as he could and that life could only be lived moving forward while being understood looking backward. In time, all things would be perfected but perhaps not on this side of life.

Re-interpretation 3 – My father's business was not a right fit for me as his father's business was not a right fit for him. My father and I are blessed to have a wider family support network that could step in when we needed support.

The good, bad and ugly can be learned from one generation to the next. Without careful reflection and an active decision to choose otherwise, I would have continued a pattern of being an absent father who would tell himself he already fulfilled his role by providing financially.

This was something learned through experience with my father, and my father learned this from what was modeled by his father. This too is a form of legacy that is passed down. What remains of intergenerational learning from one generation becomes embedded into legacy. This learning either aids or hinders the next generation from living and growing towards full personhood because it can include both what is good and what is bad. Because it is not possible for a father to fully know what the next generation will learn from him and what experiences will become learning moments, either good or bad, I think it is important to continue to pursue growth and personal improvement. I do not believe the faulty interpretations I identified above emerged through a single incident but through time and experience. While my father was alive, there could have been opportunities for us to have discussed my interpretations and for him to express how he saw things differently. The possibility of this type of sharing and discussion would be predicated on mutual trust, curiosity and authenticity. This type of ongoing communication and connection is an aim I have for being a father to my daughters.

Bringing this together in a synthesis for what legacy means to me, I think Pinar and Grumet (1976) aptly summate:

More deeply, now, in the present, I choose what of it to honor, what of it to let go. I choose again who it is I aspire to be, how I wish my life history to read. I determine my social commitments; I devise my strategies: whom to work with, for what, how. (p. ix)

The following three statements represent a summary of the synthesis about how I see legacy.

5.2.3. Synthesis

My father's legacy is connected to mine and my legacy is connected to my daughters'

If there is both passing and receiving in legacy, what I pass on does not need to be an exact translation of what I have received. I am able to reflect, reject or adapt what I decide to pass on. For example, I reject the parenting model of my father. I seek to be more than a provider. My children are part of my legacy because they represent a connected part of my journey to full personhood. My father's sacrifice has left me with choice. While recognizing the connection of our stories intergenerationally, I have a choice through reflection to choose what elements of legacy I choose to receive and what I pass on.

The good, bad and ugly can be passed on as part of legacy.

Intentional and regular reflection on my own development is important because overcoming my struggles are relevant beyond myself. I will unconsciously pass on the bad and ugly if I don't work on them.

Revisiting legacy, both that which has been passed onto me as well as the one I hope to leave, helps clarify intent for how I want to live.

It serves as a guiding post for the mark that I want to leave on the world and how I want to be remembered. That being said, in the end, how I am remembered is not something I control.

5.3. The Father that I want to Be

5.3.1. Towards a New Archetype

As a father, it is natural to take on the roles of protector and provider archetype in the family. This is also in line with Chinese cultural expectations and the model of parental roles in my family of origin. Unfortunately, this protector and provider role is too often seen as being solely related to the physical. There is a normalized division of labour where mothers would take on the nurturer role.

My father did not participate in meeting the emotional or spiritual needs of his children because this was relegated to my mother. Protecting and providing also become less relevant as children grow up and become independent. I think this explains a lot of the disconnect with my father as I became a young man and established my own family. I naturally gravitated towards this model subconsciously when I established my own family. The unexamined assumption that this was how I should be as a father was one of the disconnects I had with my wife when we had children of our own.

As I examined my role as a father in the Progressive movement of the Currere process, I see that merely providing for my children financially is aiming too low for myself. I would also like to be present for them emotionally and be with them through the major transitions of life. This was evident in the several references to the dinner table, and spending time with them in play and adventure. Looking forward, I am aiming for lasting influence in their lives as they become adults. I want my daughters to share their struggles and seek my advice through the

different junctures in their life. I want them to consider my advice but to also think and make decisions for themselves.

In this way, I think a new archetype of parenthood is needed in my life. This need is also exacerbated by divorce. My children need a more adaptable father who can meet their needs both physical and emotional. A more dynamic archetype that can encompass different roles is required. One of my favorite animals is the peregrine falcon. I have always admired how adaptable it is and how big its range is. Despite often flying solo and making long migrations, it comes back to a place to nurture and grow the next generation.

The seasonal aspect of this role is important. One of my big struggles is that as a provider who is used to having free range to hunt, I have felt grounded. It is easy to feel constrained and trapped without realizing that as the children grow older, their needs for proximate nurturing may change. Thinking about this symbolically has helped me understand that although it seems that travelling and being part of a global community is a deeply held desire, like the peregrine, I am able to stay local for a season in life in order to nurture the next generation. It is not a permanent state and I am more than a singular role. In fact, as my children get older, as in the fictional eulogy by my daughter, I will be able to travel and see the world with them.

I have a unique opportunity at this moment in my life to reprioritize how the demands of work impact my ability to be this kind of father.

5.3.2. Ordered Relationships where Children have Priority

A fulfilled future self has properly ordered relationships. I see myself in relationship with a new life partner with whom I can be honest and authentic. This partner would share similar life values of learning, growth and open communication. This partner would be someone that I could grow with and experience life with while maintaining my primary relationship with my daughters.

Because my daughters came first, my relationship with my new partner would need to fit around my responsibilities as a father. As a successful father, I would want to have a relationship with them that went beyond just providing financially. I would be seeking to know their unique temperament and gifting by being present in their life. By experiencing life together, my hope is that I would be present both as a fellow sojourner in life who is going through his

own development, as well as a listening ear during the major transitions in their life. I would want them to be willing to share their struggles in life with me by allowing them to see my current struggles and development.

An important place in which this kind of sharing would happen would be at the dinner table. The norm in our family should be that we have dinner together on a daily basis in which I would be able to prepare meals together with them. My goal would be to maintain the dinner table as a sacred space for sharing. Part of my legacy will be the stories that I have told them about myself as well as the stories of our shared experiences and how we've made meaning of these. I am committed to having time with them as a family as well as with them individually.

This vision of what I am working towards is in direct contrast to the vignette of my daughter asking me whether she was more important to me than the salmon and shrimp I was farming (see Chapter 3, Section 3.6.4). Upon closer examination, her question was profound to me because she voiced what I was unable to ask of my father while I was a child. It was also a good reminder to do an internal check about whether my priorities were out of order. I needed to examine if business had started to become the ends rather than the means to the end. Perhaps the secret to not feeling trapped in work is not holding onto it too tightly and being able to let go when other priorities come into play. For example, in my fictional obituary, I am able to let go of the business to pursue missions work. I am able to let go despite pressing business needs because I committed to travelling with my daughters to Europe. It's interesting that these are the moments of decision and action through which my daughters are assured of their importance and priority in my life.

5.3.3. Dinner Table and Transitions

Regularity sharing a meal together is a way that reinforces the sense of priority family and children have in my life. Growing up I felt the deficit of my father's daily presence at dinner. The dinner table was where my mother and sisters would talk about what happened at school. It would be where we fought.

When I look at my Progressive movement, I can also see that one of my hopes is that I would be able to instill a sacredness in a shared meal with my daughters. This reflects a commitment in being present at regular intervals for shared experiences and being there for each other at major transitions.

Recently I have taken on a strong interest in sharpening knives, which is something that complements my culinary adventures. My daughter, who is now nine, asked me whether I would teach her how to use a knife and also how to cook. I explained to her that inevitably there was a risk of her cutting herself if I taught her. I also explained to her that if I were to be cut, I would rather be cut by a sharp one than a dull one because the wound would heal faster. A sharp knife was safer than a dull one. If I was going to teach her, I would not give her a child-proof knife but one that was sharp. I asked her whether she would accept the risk of being cut and would be brave and continue learning if she were cut. She agreed and I bought her a small, but razor-sharp Japanese knife. And now, every time I have an opportunity to cut vegetables, I ask her to join me with a smaller cutting board; explaining to her what I was doing and asking her to try it while I observed and then provided feedback. This has been a way I have tried to integrate my own interests and family life, an approach that was actually initiated by my daughter. One thing I realize is that as I continue spending time with her cooking, her willingness to share with me will flow into other domains. The very action of spending time together around a regular task creates opportunity for furthering relationship.

Additionally I think it would be useful to mentally prepare for different types of questions that might be discussed at dinner. Although a lot of this would happen naturally just by being curious about my daughters' lives, regularly thinking about questions or transitions that they may be going through would allow me both to anticipate as well as be more proactive in learning about them.

5.3.4. Remembering time that I was a son

There is an intersection of experiences between a father, who was also a son, and his son who is now a father. Reflections (regressive phase) about my father led me to investigate how my father was as a son and to consider how I have been as a son.

As a child, my mother explained that my father didn't know how to be good parent because grandpa passed away when my father was only 16. Moreover, it was the norm that fathers in Hong Kong involved in business would not return home to have dinner nor spend much time with their children. Although this does explain the starting place of my father's perspective towards being a parent, it could also be argued that my father lived through his childhood and had the ability to reflect on what he needed as a son. This would have been another avenue to reflect on the kind of father he wanted to be.

When I reflect on my own experience as a son, I remember that I naturally wanted to respect my father. I looked up to him and was proud of who he was. I was proud of his accomplishments in business. However, with the ongoing feeling of being pushed away, and the feeling of being criticized for my performance, whether it be at school or in piano, I began to reject my father. I stopped expressing my respect for him and began to look for other role models in the form of mentors (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.5). In fact, I began taking my father for granted, dismissing his wisdom for the counsel of others.

I also started having my own thoughts on what I wanted to do, what a good life was and what excellence meant. These began to diverge from my father's views, causing a rift. Culturally respect and obedience were also intertwined. As a son during my formative and adult years, I needed distance as a means to find myself because I felt overshadowed by him. It was an important period of moving towards independence but on hindsight my father would have felt unappreciated and disrespected.

I think the foundation of having authentic dialogue with a son is to enter into space both as sons rather than father-son. This practice would be important in suspending issues of power and control. As a practice, it would allow for an intentional suspension – putting on different hat, which would enable a movement towards being able to speak to an adult son as an adult even in a business environment. When I think of myself as a son, it is easier to consider ways that I am still growing. The recognition that we are all in a process of growing and personal development allows for a two-way process that fathers and sons can both be influenced and influence each other.

5.3.5. Providing Affirmation and Approval

In looking back I now recognize the importance of paternal approval by the next generation. I have come to see that the experience of rejection for a child does not necessarily have to come through active repudiation but rather a lack of response or subtle signs that other things are more important. I desire to give my children approval that is not conditional on performance. Although I appreciate the heritage of high standards and my father's well intention to play the role of the critic or judge, I realize that this comes at a great cost.

In order to assure that my daughters feel approved and loved for who they are, I am going to commit to being there for them in the moments that are important for them. Whether

this be at a school performance or music recital, I want to be there in the audience, not as an evaluator of how they did but as a fan to celebrate their work. I think this is important if I want to increase in influence while letting go of control through power or criticism.

It seems that a lack of affirmation and approval can lead to fear, competition and dysfunction between father-son relationships. For example, in Greek mythology, an archetypal tension between fathers and sons is depicted in the dramatic story of Cronus who castrates his father, Uranus. Uranus names his sons, Titanes, which translates as the "straining ones." Later on, as a father, Cronus also eats his children out of a fear of the prophesy of being overcome by them. Enmity, fear, control, and a sense of competition between generations are the prevailing ethos of this vicious cycle of struggle between fathers and sons.

In direct contrast to a desire to replace father or to eliminate son, the kind of father-son relationship I seek is depicted in Christian tradition where before Jesus began his ministry or did anything in the name of His Father, a voice from heaven declared, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

What strikes me about this picture is that Jesus was affirmed as a son who the Father was pleased in for who he was. I recognize that this is quite foreign to me because in Chinese, praise is often tied to performance, achievement or obedience. This is even embedded in the language. For this reason, I think when I praise my children for who they are, I may actually choose to use English rather than Chinese.

Because regular affirmation and celebration is not natural to me, I have taken up a recent practice of creating a Victory Journal for the Children. In this practice, I write down key milestones, expressions of unique attributes, as well as accomplishments that are important to my children and have shared these with them over dinner. My goal moving forward will be assuring who my daughters are to me.

Paternal blessing is important and there is a greater tendency for sons who do not experience this blessing to also struggle with giving this freely to the next generation. I believe that intergenerational learning between father and son is expedited through assurance in both love and approval.

5.3.6. Discovering and Playing to Strengths

I have learned the value of self-knowledge from my father's analogy of choosing to be a giant in Lilliput (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.4) and his table tennis strategy of recognizing his strengths and weaknesses (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.3). Self-knowledge is an important part of being able to capitalize on opportunities as they arise. Self-knowledge also enables one to see themselves more clearly within their environment.

One of my hopes is to model this quest for self-knowledge while helping my children discover how they have been uniquely created. This requires an authenticity and willingness to share about my own experiences of discovery and development while being willing to accept and adapt how I interact with them.

For me, a willingness to share my experience without a filter would be a first level indication of an intimate relationship. A next level would be demonstrating an understanding of my children's personalities and being able to point out differences in how the same experiences might be interpreted differently by different people.

5.3.7. Less Directive; More Coaching – The Difference between Mentors and a Father

I feel enormously grateful to all the mentors I have had throughout my formative years. The impetus to find them was a lack of communication and deeper relationship with my father. In reviewing my regressive movement, I began to think more about what the difference between my mentors and my father was?

My father was always very directive and short in his conversations. He was also quite good at discerning whether his children would heed his direction and if he decided they wouldn't, he just didn't speak about it or chose to speak about it through my mom. I think his behavior was informed by two Asian values. The first being the expectation that to honor your parents, children would obey their instruction regardless of whether you had become an adult. The second is the desire to maintain harmony and that no good could come out of conflict. So when it came to starting up my own business, my father simply told me that it would take a lot of time and energy, which may not be worthwhile in the end, reminded me about the potential competing reality of having a child, and to consider my wife. Despite conveying these reminders, my father would not engage in dialogue about the topics.

In contrast, my mentors often shared their stories where they had come across a similar situation. Rather than making a decision for me or judging what the right course of action was from their perspective, they would share and also listen to my thoughts. Even if I pressed them for an answer to what they would do, they would be quick to acknowledge that their experiences and thinking may not necessarily be the same as mine and their opinion was for reference only. My mentors had a crucial influence in my life but no control. This is an aspect that many fathers, particular those from a Chinese heritage, have trouble with. It is often seen as a role and right for the father to exert control over his children.

Thinking back to my father's comments about my long work hours and the impact it had on my wife, I believe I would have been more receptive if he had shared about his past experiences and shortcomings. Instead, because it was framed as a directive, I would resist subconsciously and immediately go to a place of judgement where I felt his comments were hypocritical.

In retrospect, I was more likely to share my struggles or issues with my mentors than my father because my mentors were there to listen to me and provide me advice or share their experiences when I asked. There was fear of being judged by my father and also being told what I should do.

5.3.8. Synthesis

Loved, approved, affirmed for who my daughters are

I want my daughters to know that they are my priority and that they are loved, approved and affirmed for who they are, independent of performance. This means I need to continue the process of discovering who they are with them.

Discovering joy in learning and growing together

I want to share my interests with my daughters as well as learn together with them. My interests offer potential as a connection point with my daughters as we discover what might also interest them. I want to model pursuit of high standards and for them to come to their own standards of performance. I refuse to be their critic or judge. I want to inspire excellence rather than demand it.

More than a provider, I want to support my daughters at major transition points in their lives

Regular presence is the best guarantee that I will be there for my children at major transition points in life. Quality time only comes through time regularly spent together. I can practice daily presence by regularly cooking and eating with them.

I want to model a person on the journey of human development

As a father I am a model of an imperfect human in development. My hope is that my children see that growth is often messy, uninvited, and painful. More importantly, I want them to know this is ok because I see this as foundational to building resilience. I want them to be able to have hope, and even find joy in a process that has yet to find completion. I seek to be authentic with my feelings including my inadequacies. I want them to know that they are appreciated for who they are today and that I am excited about who they are becoming. As part of this journey, I want to foster agency and independence by helping them make age-appropriate decisions of which they own the results.

Compassion beginning with self-compassion is the marker of recognizing that we are all on a path.

Chapter 6. Legacy as Learning Opportunity

This Chapter represents a continued Synthetical Movement as I consider how a consultant might use an educational lens to look at some of the themes about legacy and legacy processes through my biography.

Looked at another way, if we approached Legacy, within a family business setting, as a learning opportunity, what would some pre-existing conditions be for this learning to occur? Might there be an opportunity to help facilitate this learning between fathers and sons in family businesses in a more planned approach?

Returning to my working definition of legacy as introduced in Chapter 1, my thesis is that legacy includes the results of connected and collective aspirations and shapes the journey to full personhood across generations. It encompasses intergenerational learnings from one generation to the next and can include both elements that are good and bad and may either aid or hinder the next generation from living and growing towards full personhood. I have come to see through my analysis in Chapter 5 that legacy also includes the resolved and unresolved struggles that each generation wrestles with.

There was a disconnect between my working definition and my thesis statement in that I discounted these struggles. My thesis statement was that legacy is the journey to full personhood across generations and the results of connected and collective aspirations. My working definition was biased towards fathers passing on their life lessons and values but I failed to see that my father was also a fellow human being who was on his own developmental path, which meant he also had struggles that were inadvertently passed down to me.

The realization that the ugly – our unresolved struggles or character flaws – can be passed on should become what Mezirow (2000) would term a disorienting dilemma, which could spark transformational learning. The idea that I can be more intentional about what I want to pass on and that it is possible to learn together with the next generation to shape this legacy would become a motivation for personal development.

In contemplating the relationship with my father, I am also more convinced that I contribute to the shared learning that moves both me and him into full personhood. Beyond being part of his legacy by being part of his blood line and carrying on the family name, I shape the legacy he leaves through the questions I raise, through the needs I have for him as a father,

through what I share with him and perhaps even through our differences and potential conflict. I am an active participant in the transmission and receiving of his legacy. I also choose what parts of his legacy I want to retain and what I want to continue passing on.

Interestingly by acknowledging that our stories are interconnected across generations and by taking a more intentional approach, both father and son will naturally gravitate towards Currere. As the infinitive form of curriculum, Currere entails theorizing about life (Schubert, 2006). There is an opportunity to theorize about life together across generations within the family. Returning to the image of Currere as running the course, I see legacy being the result of running the course as a relay. One where in the final rounds as both father and child grow towards full personhood, they may run together before the baton is finally passed.

As I think of myself as a father, in attempting to understand and share my story with my daughters, I will need to reach into the past, reflect on its relevancy or how my experiences have brought me to the present in order to share with the next generation. My daughters will necessarily look at their present and how it relates to their hopes for the future. The process of making meaning and sharing stories intergenerationally can enable transformational learning because it necessitates critical self-reflection and creates possibility of change in perspective.

So are there ways in which planned programming can intersect with the unplanned of what happens in day-to-day interactions between fathers and their children, particularly in a family business context? Coming back to the idea of approaching legacy and legacy processes as a learning opportunity, would it be possible to develop a set of learning experiences for fathers and their children engaged in family business? If I dream about what skills or thought processes I would have liked to learn with my father in a course or series of facilitated meetings, what might I include? For example, what might a facilitator or educational consultant do to help address some of the challenges and opportunities I identified in Chapter 5? Can Currere be done intergenerationally and also incorporate themes relevant to the family business?

The answers to these questions would become another thesis or project in and of itself and are beyond the scope of my thesis. However, perhaps just like how I developed 10 convictions as part of my synthesis, perhaps I could use this line of thinking to develop some core tenets around which planned learning experiences could be developed for fathers and their children in a program that they could participate in together.

For the purposes of my thought exercise, I am envisioning fathers and their sons or daughters but I would posit that whatever learning experiences proposed would have relevance to mothers and their children or even grandparents and their grandchildren. The common ground is that they are family, where there is continued relationship over time, and they have a family business.

This chapter proposes some key tenets around which a curriculum might be built for intergenerational learning within a family business context. These tenets are meant as guiding principles for the design of learning experiences between intergenerational family member pairs. They were developed as a starting point from some of the themes identified in Chapter 5.

I have also provided some ideas around three main areas: applying Currere while incorporating family business; enhancing relational learning between generations by introducing them to different ways of communicating; and learning the business by looking at the knowledge, skills and abilities needed for the business today and tomorrow. What is proposed is meant for further development or research.

6.1.1. Guiding Principles – Key Tenets Around Which a Curriculum is Built

I have attempted to develop some guiding principles or key tenets for a learning program based on the analysis and synthesis from my experiences in Chapter 5. These tenets would serve as guiding principles to be upheld by the facilitators and participants in the intergenerational learning and are meant to support the opportunities or barriers that I identified as part of my exploration of family business, legacy and the father that I want to be. I list these tenets below and then provide greater explanation in the next section.

1. Learning is lifelong and each of us are in the process of becoming a full person.
2. We are free agents who are capable and need to be making decisions for our own lives.
3. We are unique individuals with different temperaments, gifts, and goals in life.
4. We are people of three tenses and there is power in becoming aware in seeing how each tense impacts our journey in life (a summation of Currere).
5. Business is but one option among many possibilities for work. Exploration of intergenerational learning in the business context is useful regardless of whether succession happens.

6. For the purposes of learning, there are times temporary suspension or “bracketing,” of a role may be helpful.
7. There is something to be gained by both generations in the process of intergenerational learning (learning is two ways).
8. One of the goals of communicating is to be known by and to know the other person.
9. Love is both the motivation and the foundation for teaching and learning for the intergenerational family participants.

The tenets listed above are discussed in the section that follows.

Journey to Full Personhood

There is no perfect person. We are all human beings struggling through our own experiences. The decisions we make today may not be perfect and it may be that over time, we would make entirely different decisions, but part of being human means making the best decision or trying our best in the moment. Brown and Duguid (2000) suggest that learning is meaning driven, identity-forming, and socially situated process. The journey to full personhood entails a lifelong commitment to all three.

This principle also recognizes that we are constantly evolving and that who we see ourselves and how we see our goals, and the experiences and insight we bring into a situation is dynamic-- this means we all have the capacity for change. This should impact how we see ourselves as well as others and that that any patterns of the past are not the last word. This principle is important because there is an implicit acknowledgement that we are in a state of continuous development where both generations can help each other grow.

Free Agents

We are ultimately accountable for our own lives. The decisions we make may be different than those of the previous generation. Part of subject formation includes making decisions for ourselves and critically reflecting on our own experiences. There is however value in also listening to experiences of others, especially our parents, but these can only serve as a reference point.

As our children journey into adulthood, they will also make their own decisions. What we identify as a good life or career may not be good for our children.

Unique Human Beings

Being that we have different temperaments, how we communicate, what we choose to do, what kinds of goals we set for life, will all be different. It is not a matter of one right way. A father's ideal life will be quite different than their progeny just because of a different makeup.

As family members, one goal should be to help discover this uniqueness and support each other in our journey to full personhood.

People of Three Tenses (Currere)

Pinar (1975) asserts that we bring our interpretations of the past and the fantasies of our future into how we live in the present. As such, there is value in reflection because how we come to understand the past and examine our dreams for the future, allow us to live and act differently. The iterative process of examining our experiences allows us to come to new awareness and learnings.

One Option Among Many

Succession to a family business or a life as an entrepreneur are only two options for making a living. Making the right decision as an individual requires a self-examination about gifting, talents and goals in life. There is value in exploring these options or learning a business because not only does it provide another option for work, but it also creates another common ground for father and son to learn about each other and for intergenerational learning to be applied in a real life context.

In exploring family business as an option, whether technical learning about the business ultimately becomes useful or not, the broader goal being served is whole-person development. That is to say there is value in the process of intergenerational learning as gained through working together in a family business. This is a legacy process in which life lessons and values can be transmitted and received between generations.

Temporary Suspension / Bracketing to Learn

To address the issue of business or family role permeability and the concomitant issues of power and control, this tenet calls to attention the conscious temporary relinquishing of these roles for the sake of learning. A father or business owner, in the process of intergenerational learning, can choose to dialogue with a son as another human being during a learning

experience. This is both a skill as well as a principle to uphold and supports a conscious decision to put on different hats for the sake of gaining a different perspective or sharing an experience. It also allows for a different kind of listening and questioning.

Mutuality in Intergenerational Learning

This tenet acknowledges that learning intergenerationally is two ways. It is not just a download from father to son. Along with the first principle that we are all on our journeys towards full personhood, the next generation also helps the previous generation learn through their questions, different perspectives and sharing. The old and young both have many things to teach us.

The interaction between father and son creates opportunities for awareness and learning about each other that can enrich both their journeys.

Communicating to be Known and to Know

The goal of communication between family intergenerational learning pairs is to get to know each other. This requires a commitment to authenticity in expressing ourselves while also maintaining an openness to listening and learning about the other person.

Love as Motivation and Foundation

From the perspective of a learning program with intergenerational learning pairs that are part of a family, the business should be subordinate to the relationship. Businesses may present opportunity to generate revenue, but may not necessarily be enriching to the lives that the business supports. Love, or at least empathy, is the motivation and foundation for family participants entering into a program to learn about legacy and how the family business might present an opportunity for legacy processes to unfold. For the purposes of father and son or family participant pairs learning together, profits are subordinate to the relationship and wellbeing of each other.

6.1.2. Applying Currere and Incorporating Business over Time

In Family Business, the needs of the father, son and the business intersect. There is value in exploring how fathers and sons see their needs and anticipate each other's needs. This is a great starting place to begin a conversation about the present. These needs will change

over time creating different opportunities for intergenerational learning and experiences that would inform legacy.

There may be an opportunity for fathers and sons to engage in the process of Currere individually while thinking about the family business or future work. Family business becomes part of the shared lived experience between father and son. Embodied memories or dreams of the future can include thoughts about the business. The results of reflective meditation on the four movements create an opportunity for mutual sharing and learning. It also allows for exploration of what the business might mean to the father and son in the future.

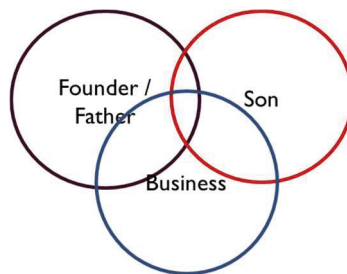


Figure 6.1. Intersection of father, son in a family business context.

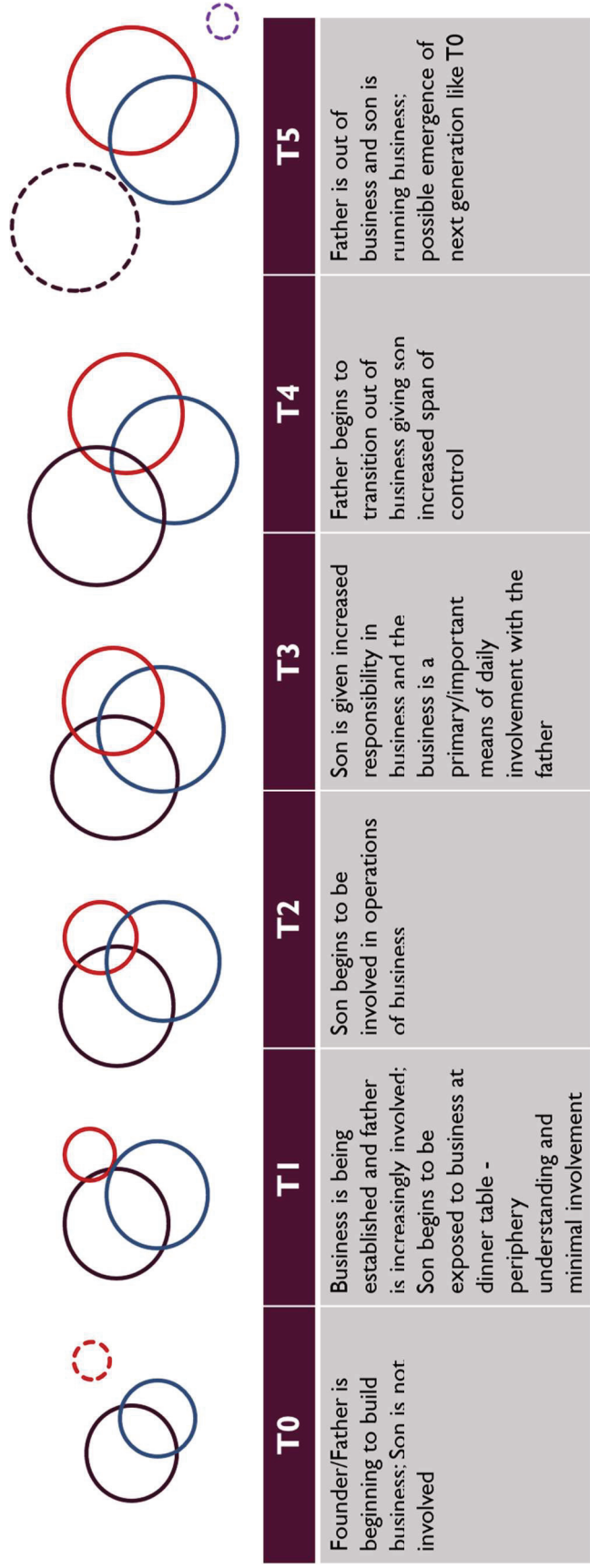


Figure 6.2. Six stage view of how family business and needs can evolve over time.

Continuing this line of thinking I have developed an elementary six stage model. This model builds from the three venn diagram representing the father, son and business and the level of involvement the father or son see themselves in connection with the business or each other. For example in T0, the son is totally not involved. It might be a common reference point for sharing about an embodied memory from the Regressive movement. For example, if I were to share with my father the story of feeling alone as a child without a father to play ball with (see Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1), I could share this experience with my father anchoring it to T0 when he was just starting his business. On the other end of the spectrum, my father could share with me his dreams of potentially exiting the business altogether and going to traveling the world with my mother in his Progressive movement. This dream would be anchored in T5.

The ability to use a timeline like this for reference point, also creates the opportunity to do Analysis or Synthesis together in what kinds of things might need to happen now in service to getting to a desired future. A common language and exploring what Pinar (1975) refers to the individual portraits of the past and future allows for building a better shared picture of the present.

Different questions and decisions would evolve at different stages. And by taking a needs-based approach creates an entry point for sharing between generations. For the son, it is an invitation to participate at different junctions of the business while allowing for opportunities for the father to affirm and solicit input from his son about the future vision for the business. This needs-based approach brings the family business dimension into the reflection process, enabling a discussion of potential futures when the son might seek greater involvement.

A planful approach like this is in direct contrast to both my experiences and those of many of my clients where the father has a reactive response to illness or crisis precipitating a sudden expression of interest to have the son involved. To the son, it would have seemed, up to that moment, that their father was ambivalent to bringing him into the business.

Timeline/Runway of Life

I found that a chronological timeline was useful in helping me identify different phases and critical incidents or experiences in my life (see Figure 3.1). The timeline was then used as a basis to anchor my Regressive movement of Currere, consisting of important past memories. I think if my father was alive today, a timeline that overlapped with his and the business could be used as a way to compare notes on shared experiences.

As I reflect on my experiences in coming up with and asking my father Life Review type interview questions (see Chapter 3, Section 3.5.3) I realized that the process of writing my own timeline and trying to fill out a timeline for my father was useful in generating questions. It made me curious about how events had unfolded in his life (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

The timeline also necessarily brought me to the present (Synthetical) and also made me think about the future. Visually it showed me how past events had shaped the present and helped spark ideas about what I wanted to achieve or do moving forward. I began to think about how, in 10 years, my daughters would become teenagers prompting my curiosity about events and experiences that they potentially would also go through.

I used this idea by asking my father to think forward about advice or what he might say to my eldest when she got her first boyfriend or when she had graduated. Even as I began to interview him, I began to think about what I might tell her and what kind of relationship I would want with her at that point in the future (synthetical). I like how author and businessperson Legg (2005) refers to a timeline like this as a runway of life. Within a family setting, we are running together.

It might be useful to incorporate an exercise like this for fathers and sons engaged in a facilitated learning opportunity for looking at legacy and legacy processes within a family business context.

Transitions and Opportunities for Reflection.

In his book, *Transitions, Making Sense of Life Changes*, William Bridges (1980) talks about the neutral zone as a place where there has been an ending but not yet a new beginning. Bridges draws on the work of Arnold van Gennep, a Dutch anthropologist, who studied the rites of passage of different cultures and noted three phases: separation, transition and incorporation. Bridges renames these as endings, the neutral zone and new beginnings.

During the ending phase, Bridges (1980) categorizes the experiences of Disidentification, Disenchantment, Disorientation.

Neutral zones are moments for transformational learning and reflection.

Bridges (1980) suggested the following steps for navigating through a neutral zone:

- Find a regular time and place to be alone
- Begin a log of neutral-zone experiences
- Take this pause in the action of your life to write an autobiography

Take this opportunity to discover what you really want
Think of what would be un-lived in your life if it ended today
Take a few days to go on your own version of a passage journey (being intentional and fully present in experiencing). (p. 121)

These steps have remarkable overlap with Pinar's (1975) Currere and Mezirow's (2000) ideas of transformational learning. Sharing about neutral zone experiences and transitions have a lot of potential as a legacy process. Stories about how a father or a son dealt with disidentification, disenchantment or disorientation would contain life lessons and important values that could be passed on.

Bridges (1980) further points out that in family research, there is something called resonance where close members within family systems will often impact each other through different transitions. For example, a son who is graduating from university and considering different job options may trigger a period of reflection and consideration for job change in the father. There is a subconscious resonance between father and son through this transition.

Taking this concept and applying it to intergenerational learning, there is opportunity for fathers and sons to learn together during the transitions or as the father or son go through a neutral zone experience. To whatever extent it is possible to anticipate these transitions, one can be better equipped to support and learn from each other.

I believe that having fathers and sons learn about some of the theoretical underpinnings of transformational learning and how what might be interpreted as trauma or painful experiences being key opportunities for learning and legacy processes would be a helpful supplement to helping fathers and sons engage in Currere.

6.1.3. Relational Learning between Father and Son

Exploring Dialogue

When I think about my daughters, I am excited to imagine speaking with them as adults. Presently, I find one of my daughters easier for me to speak to than the other because of different temperaments. I find that it requires significantly more effort me to speak with the daughter who is more quiet, sensitive and requires time to process things internally. In part, this is because she is very different than the extroverted and intuitive

person that I am naturally. The challenge for us to talk is to explore new ways of listening and understanding each other's communication styles.

For this reason, I think there is value in a learning program focused on legacy processes in family business context to include exploring an instrument like the Myers-Brigg (MBTI). A large part of the value would be in having a common language for intergenerational family members to discuss differences in preferences and to normalize these differences. A tool like this could also help learners consider different strategies for communication.

Another aspect I would consider incorporating into a learning program focused on legacy is teaching participants how to communicate differently. For example I believe it would have been helpful for my father and I to learn about Dialogue and different types of communication. In his book *Theory U*, Otto Scharmer (2007) classifies the developmental journey of conversational fields into four conversations: downloading, debate, dialogue and presencing. When I think back to my conversations with my father, on both a personal and business level, we would never get beyond debate. However, to get to shared inquiry, and thinking together, Scharmer (2007) advocates,

First, the connection to the context is more personal and more experiential or empathetic (open mind, open heart). Secondly there is a stage of sharing and listening to one another within the group. This is done with genuine empathy, person to person. Only then, after this phase of intense listening to one another, is the group ready to move into the space of real thinking together (dialogue). (p. 297)

This type of communication, which requires empathy and intense listening is a skill. It is a skill that would need to be worked on with practice and benefit from a third-person's observation and feedback. Incorporating some form of learning and practice about Dialogue would help fathers and sons on a relational basis as well as in a family business context.

Roleplay: Wearing Different Hats (Practicing Suspension)

A key challenge that was identified between my father and I while we worked together was the inability to switch hats. My father was also the boss and expert in the field of the family business. Because of the power dynamic, it was often intimidating and

difficult to speak to him. This is where I believe the idea of potentially suspending or bracketing these roles for the purposes of listening and learning would be useful.

By introducing roleplay where father or son are given different roles in a conversation to discuss real-life problem would be good practice for work in dialogue. The value of wearing different hats is useful for expanding perspectives. In fact, it may be easier to start practicing with roles that neither father or son identify strongly or directly with. For example, in dealing with unionization at one of my clients, a role that father or son could have taken on is how would a team member at the site be thinking? How about a supervisor at a different site?

Beyond roles, fathers and sons could also consider taking into account temperament differences. For example, a father who is usually an extrovert and someone who deals with conflict more directly, could be asked to think through what a more introverted and conflict-avoiding person would see in the same situation. This is where an instrument like the MBTI® may be useful.

At a meta-level, roleplaying might also be useful to have better discussions in the Board Room. For example, in de Bono's (1985) book *Six Thinking Hats* documents a process in which different people could take on different roles in a conversation or decision-making process. The father or boss, who might usually play the judge or critical feedback role, what de Bono would classify as a black hat, could be assigned a role to find the benefits of a proposed idea, yellow hat. In rotating through different hats, not only would one develop higher capacity to engage in different thought processes, but there would also be temporary suspension of the preconceived ideas that my son or my father is always criticizing the other.

6.1.4. Learning the Business Together

Taking a Page from Business Process Re-Engineering

To address the challenge of the next generation not possessing the technical know-how or skills to take over the family business, it is useful to be more proactive in considering the core competencies required for the business. This could include looking at the past, present, and future of the business. This is also important because it creates an opportunity for father and son to learn together while having discussion about where

the business might evolve. By evaluating the needs of the business both today and tomorrow, intergenerational pairs will potentially begin aligning their vision or at least have a clearer understanding of where there might be disagreement.

In the world of business process re-engineering (BPR), consultants will work with long-standing employees to first identify core business processes to the operation. They will carefully document how things are currently done as well as the core competencies required to perform these processes. They will then look at whether processes might need to be changed or if entirely new business processes will be required based on business needs. The point of the detailed documenting exercise is a means to identify system changes as well as the core knowledge, skills and abilities required. A good BPR consultant will be adept at identifying and investigating where expertise lies and the kind of knowledge transfer required for continuity purposes.

When I was working with my father, we did not discuss what kind of knowledge, skills and abilities would be required to run the business as is. He discounted his own knowledge and assumed I would eventually learn. This was in part because my father had designed his client's enterprise systems from the ground up over decades. He had a solid understanding of municipal processes as well as how his system interfaced with each of these. Had we spent time discussing these, he would have realized he knew a lot more than he realized and that I would have a very steep learning curve just to run things as they were.

If we had engaged in BPR, not only could we identify what was most important for me to learn or for us to learn together, we would have also been able to have a discussion about where or from whom I should be learning.

Incorporating a BPR exercise where intergenerational student pairs (father-son pairs) discuss this would allow for deeper reflection on the needs of the business moving forward and opportunities to learn together or divide responsibilities.

Expanding the Learning Network

When I think back to my experiences working for my father, one thing I wish we had done together was to jointly create a learning plan. He could have then paired me with his staff who may have had expertise in an identified field. This would both honor

the staff's subject matter expertise as well as create opportunity for me to interact with others within the team. It certainly would have allowed me to develop credibility and relationships before coming a manager. My father could have also looked at temporarily sending me to be mentored by one of his colleagues in the industry or perhaps helped secure project-based work with a partner that would have helped me gain the skills required.

In considering a curriculum for intergenerational pairs, a task might be to come up with a learning plan and document the expanded learning network that is available to both father and son.

6.1.5. Closing Comments

This chapter explores legacy as a curricular opportunity and proposes some key tenets around which learning experiences could be built for intergenerational pairs of family members who are working together in Family business. These tenets were developed out of some of the identified challenges and opportunities for fathers and sons to learn together (see Chapter 5, Section 5.1.4).

The three areas of proposed learning, namely: applying Currere incorporating the business, relational learning, and learning about the business explore possible opportunities for legacy processes. Currere enables fathers and sons to reflect and vision together. Relational learning explores communicating differently and moving beyond set patterns of dialogue. Learning the business together looks at what technical learning for today and tomorrow is required and who to learn from. It is envisioned that these learning experiences are two-ways and not just a download from the father to the son.

What is proposed in this chapter is a work in progress and were ideas for consideration and further development.

Chapter 7.

Concluding Remarks

Returning to my original thesis statement and reflecting on whether I would change anything at the conclusion of my study, I think I would now include the word “struggle” so that it reads like the following.

Legacy includes the results of connected and collective aspirations and shapes the journey to full personhood across generations. It encompasses intergenerational learning and struggles from one generation to the next.

I realize that part of my legacy as a father will be that my story intertwines with that of my children's. Without intentional consideration, the good, bad and ugly are all passed on. My struggles matter, not just to me but also as a starting place for my children's story. Struggles are part of our journey to full personhood and through my autoethnographic accounts in Chapter 3 and undergoing the movements of Curren, I've come to see that both my father and I have wrestled and continue wrestling with having a right relationship with work, which in his case was the family business.

It was my intention in this thesis to examine the concept of legacy and explore its significance for understanding the processes of intergenerational transfer especially in the context of family businesses. Having defined legacy as the life lessons and values that are transmitted and received between generations, family business does present an opportunity for the unfolding of legacy and legacy processes. In Section 5.1.3 (see Chapter 5), I have outlined some challenges and opportunities for intergenerational learning to happen within a family business context. I have also presented some ideas in Chapter 6 which could be a starting place for fathers and their children to learn with and from each other.

I am reminded that learning is not always voluntary and that like the caterpillar becoming a butterfly (see Chapter 3, Section 3.6.6), transformation can be a very painful process. I now see that the pain was an important activator for deeper reflection. Although I know that earlier reflection might have helped me avoid some of the suffering, undoubtedly pain was an important and necessary part of my journey.

The process of interpreting my father's legacy and considering the legacy I want to leave definitely echoes the words of 5th century Greek tragedy writer, Aeschylus.

He who learns must suffer. And even in our sleep pain that cannot forget falls drop by drop upon the heart, and in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom to us by the awful grace of God.

I believe that the pain was more acute for me because of the convergence of three significant losses. In this perfect storm of a disorienting dilemma, the person I wish I had support from was my father. No mentor nor father-in-law could replace him.

Writing Chapter 3 as an evocative autoethnography was very cathartic and helped me understand how life events are part of a holistic educational experience that may take years to unpack. I have come to see how complex it is to excavate different cultural influences on the story of my father and I as there are both Chinese, Christian and immigrant influences on our decisions and interpretation of those decisions.

So now that I have come to the end of my study, are some of my observations and reflections about legacy processes and family business only relevant to Chinese family businesses? I think I have come to understand that although the Chinese culture may impact expectations, the overall value placed on, and the propensity towards prioritizing legacy and legacy processes, many of the themes are perhaps more universal. For example, some of the dimensions that I've identified that impact legacy processes such as primogeniture responsibility, parental decision making for their children, the struggle to be heard and understood or differentiated gender roles are not uniquely Chinese. Rather, culture may impact the degree of importance and the continuum of expectations along each dimension. These are worthy to be explored and should be considered in the dynamics between different generations in a family business. From a research perspective, I would also love to dive deeper into cultural differences, but since this is out of scope for my thesis, I will leave this for future work.

In addition to looking at the potential for applying some of my learning to a wider cultural audience, I am also interested in looking more deeply at how my reflections and the method that I chose aligns with Chinese cultural heritage. For example, I would like to delve deeper into the literature that Yang (2021) has highlighted to compare, contrast and synthesize Western and Eastern ways to look at human development. There has also been work to look at how autobiographical inquiry could be applied to Chinese

audience (Wang, 2017) and how the underlying principles of Currere align with Chinese philosophy (Wang, 2020). Although out of scope for this study, this is an area of literature I am eager to delve into. I was very encouraged in my cursory scan to find that Wang's (2020) conclusion about her work was that:

this study may improve the level of objectivity of currere, and I argue certain thoughts tend to transcend the boundary between the East and the West. The association of the two thoughts further illustrates the value of currere, suggests a more international understanding of currere, and hears in a different key the soundness of currere. (p. 97)

I am glad that other researchers are also actively reflecting on how research practices and curriculum development reconcile across cultural differences. My hunch is that there will be elements from my study that also transcend cultural boundaries.

From a literature standpoint, I realize that there would also be value in exploring research around intergenerational relations in small businesses and family transitions. For example, Dunn (1999) looked at how the family factor impacted family relationship dynamics of business owning families through transitions. Haberman and Danes (2007) also looked at differences between power structures and interactions between fathers and sons versus fathers and daughters during business management transfers. I am also interested in doing further study on how different family models could be applied to look at legacy. For example, Baker and Wiseman (1998) looked at the application of Bowen Systems Theory on leadership, legacy and emotional processes in family businesses. Erdem and Safi (2018) also looked at how culture might impact family change and the application of Bowen Family Systems Theory. Both family systems theory and the application of these theories within a cultural context would contribute to a deeper understanding of legacy and legacy processes. A better understanding of family systems and theories would also assist me in my family business consulting.

Reflecting about the past while applying a cultural lens to interpreting my experiences, I have gained a deeper understanding of myself and have been able to re-evaluate what I thought I knew about myself, family business and the legacy that I want to leave. I was surprised at how many faulty assumptions that had unconsciously set in. These assumptions held me back from possible futures and fulfillment. Relinquishing the assumptions of my role as solely a financial provider has freed me to dream of different futures about work and the legacy I want to leave behind. It has also opened the

possibility of being a different father to my daughters than the model that my father represented to me.

As this study was by and large an autobiographical in nature, I realize that I have tended to use male-dominated language because I was reflecting on my relationship with my father. It has been interesting to consider that I have daughters. I believe that similar to my comments about culture, the majority of my reflections about my father and me would also be relevant to my relationship with my daughters, albeit with nuanced differences. At least along the dimensions I have chosen to look at as related to the kind of father I want to be (see Chapter 5, Section 5.3), could apply to my daughters and were things I sought with my father. In terms of looking at legacy as a learning opportunity and some of the ideas that I have proposed for different learning experiences in Chapter 6, I believe there would be value in the learning regardless of whether it was mother-daughter, grandfather-grandchild or father-son. There would probably be nuanced differences which would be interesting to study but again is outside the scope of my current thesis.

Using the four movements of Currere to make meaning and reinterpret my past, present and future so that I can live in a way that is freer, I have come to clarify my intentions about how I would like to be as a father, as a person who is on a lifelong development journey.

As an iterative process, Currere has allowed me to revisit and reflect on my experiences, deepening my understanding of life and how I want to live. I believe separating the movements has allowed me to free myself from the past while acknowledging how my present is deeply shaped by this past and how I dream about my future will impact the actions I take. Understanding has been a key to letting go.

On the other hand, I have indeed experienced some challenges using this process as part of a doctoral dissertation. One aspect has been an ongoing question around how to provide a coherent story for the reader who will be taking in my reflections at a single point of time while as a writer, it has been a dynamic process. I found that it was difficult to present a coherent story because my understanding of self, how I saw my relationship with my father and how I saw family business continued to unfold even between successful rounds of edits. Successive rounds of edits also opened up the door

to other possible directions this thesis could have taken. I constantly felt like I had to contend with ghosts of alternative theses which were useful to a holistic understanding of myself but which had to be bracketed due to the practical nature of needing to finish my thesis.

Another challenge was that parallel to the academic process, I was also actively engaged in counselling and therapy. Over the last 5 years, I have had three different counsellors who have been instrumental in my walk through different struggles in life, namely the loss of my father, a failed marriage, struggling as a father and dealing with the aftermath of giving up my business. As I worked through different topics, I found myself also stalling and struggling with my writing. On one hand, counselling was complementary to the Regressive movement of Currere, on the other hand, it also made it more difficult for me to separate the Regressive from the Analysis movement.

As an evocative autoethnography, I tried my best to authentically represent my experiences, often in areas of my life that I felt quite vulnerable. It was sometimes difficult to process feedback on my writing without feeling very personal as I dealt with issues about whether my father approved of me, who I was as a husband, who I am as a father and who I am as a man. At times, I struggled with feeling judged on a personal level rather than merely with something that I had written. There were also times I felt I was not ready to come to a new understanding of a new topic. The unveiling was sometimes heavy to bear which is why I appreciate Pinar's (1975) caveat to not rush the process.

This thesis has been an extended journey of working out what my father's legacy was and the legacy I intend or desire to leave with my children. An important goal of this study was being put together. From the perspectives of self-knowledge and subject formation, I have undoubtedly come to a new understanding of myself. These have culminated in a synthesis of 10 statements (from Chapter 5) that are convictions I will live life moving forward.

1. For me, family business is one choice among many as a means of livelihood
2. There is a curriculum opportunity with the development of legacy, especially with the added intersection of family business
3. There are unspoken costs for pursuing a life in business

4. My father's legacy is connected to mine and my legacy is connected to my daughters'
5. The good, bad and ugly can be passed on as part of legacy
6. Revisiting legacy helps clarify intent for how I want to live
7. I will love, approve, and affirm my daughters for who they are
8. I want to discover the joy in learning and growing together with my daughters
9. More than a provider, I want to support my daughters at major transition points in their lives
10. I want to model a person who is on a journey of human development

When it comes to legacy, all means including family business, can be channelled to connect with the next generation. My journey has renewed my belief that an educational approach to the development of legacy, especially within a family business context can be useful.

In summary, I have come to answers around some of the original questions I had at the beginning of my study about legacy and legacy processes as understood through the lenses of a business, father and son.

- What would a healthy relationship look like between the business and a father and son within a family business context?
 - *A healthy relationship begins with the right priority of fathers putting their sons ahead of the business and the business being a potential point of connection but only one option amongst many. This would require an understanding of different needs of the father, son and business over time.*
- Beyond the binary outcomes of succession of a business, what would a lasting legacy look like between father and son?
 - *A lasting legacy that a father can leave with their son is built on deep relational connection where there are life stories and lessons to shared. The dialogue is two-way and the legacy continues to be shaped by the relationship over the shared time father and son share on this side of life. Foundational to this relationship is a belief that we are all on a journey to full personhood.*
- What are some of the barriers that are unique to family businesses and what are the dynamics that make it difficult for a son to learn from a father and vice versa?

- *I have identified a variety of challenges and opportunities in fathers and sons learning together. These are directly related to the potential barriers. Family business augments time spent together and the possibility of role permeation (which involves different control & power dynamics) between the business and family.*
- How do the needs of each entity change throughout their life phases and personal journeys?
 - *Transitions are an important shared learning opportunities between generations. The needs of a father, son and business must be explored and discussed by those involved in this lived context. Common needs throughout each life phase for both fathers and sons include the need to be respected, the need to be affirmed and approved, and the belief in agency, that is the ability to grow, learn, make decisions and carry them through to their natural outcomes.*

Finally one last observation was that I found that engaging in the Currere process could have been a very rewarding process and a common language to share across generations. My intention is to treat engaging in the four movements of Currere as a regular process and to share this method with my children. It is interesting to consider how children have very little past and much of their future is uncertain. When you ask them about the future, they are able to dream freely without worry. As I've watched my children at play, I realize that they are fully immersed in the present. One of my personal goals in incorporating Currere into my life as a practice is to return to this state of presence.

7.1. Next Steps

As I look forward to the next few years, I will continue pursuing the opportunity to develop a learning program targeting intergenerational family members working in a family business together. This might include developing a curriculum to be offered at the senior undergraduate or graduate level where students from family businesses can attend as intergenerational pairs with their parents. It could also be a program offered through continuing education or through a consulting project.

The components and tools identified in Chapter 6 offer a rich ground to explore improving the understanding, relationship and alignment of vision between one generation of family business to the next. If legacy is indeed the process of journeying to full personhood across generations and the results of connected and collective

aspirations, family business presents a further opportunity for legacy to unfold for both father and son.

Ironically, on the personal front, 5 years after my father has passed and his business has ceased active operations, I have been approached by my mother informing me that the company still exists as a shell with assets. She asked me whether I wanted to take over the business and use it as a basis to start something of my own. She explained that it did not have to be the same type of consulting business that my father built but suggested that rather than leaving the shell and drawing down assets slowly, potentially it could be revitalized as a base for conducting other business. This is an option for work that I had never thought about but will explore as one potential path for making a livelihood.

This doctoral study has enabled me to understand considerations that I would evaluate against business opportunities. At this particular juncture in life, I would consider whether the business: allows for flexibility to continue being present at the different transition points in my daughters' lives; enables freedom to pursue other interests; and provides stimulating work while being financially rewarding. I will maintain the Chinese notion that a business, 生意, should give life or provide meaning to life. The moment it ceases to do this, is the moment I may need to refer back to the unspoken costs of entrepreneurship that were identified in Chapter 5.

When I think about what I have learned through the process of writing this thesis, I have come to a personal place of understanding that my father loved me in the way he knew how. He too struggled as a fellow human being and was a work in progress. And just as he has finished running his race, I am taking up the mantle to run my race with my daughters. I am thankful for my father who ran ahead of me. I am where I am because of him.

Nonetheless, I am resolved to be a different type of father. But it is in this resolution that I have feelings of inadequacies. In the end, I am reminded of a conversation between Luke Skywalker and Master Yoda in Star Wars®, Last Jedi Episode VIII. Skywalker had great trepidation and feelings of inadequacy in taking on an apprentice, Rey.

“I cannot be all that she needs me to be.”

To which Master Yoda says, “Teach her what you have learned you must; your hopes, your struggles, your mastery but most of all, your failures because in failure there is great learning” (Johnson et al., 2017).

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