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Towards a communication perspective on entrepreneurship

(Potential) Entrepreneurs as targets and sources of persuasive communications

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SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Is Serge Moscovici's pessimistic diagnosis in the 1970s on the development of "a linguistic approach on language and communication and, on the other side, of a psychological approach of communication without language" still relevant for social psychology today? Partially, even though one cannot deny the emergence in recent decades of a *social psychology of communication*, a specific area of social psychology aimed at studying media and interpersonal communications and social interactions by taking into account both language and psychological issues within a situated and pragmatic perspective of human behavior (Chabrol and Radu, 2008). As a consequence, the social psychology of communication is increasingly usefully employed to study various social practice areas such as advertising, media, marketing, political communication, coaching and mentoring, training and education.

How about communication within the entrepreneurship context? Bird and Schjoedt (2009: 342) explicitly stressed the idea that communication is crucial "to overcoming the liabilities of newness since actions taken to legitimize, create positive perception or reputation, and establish reliable production, delivery, and accountability systems all involve communication or display." In their recent article "What Do Entrepreneurs Actually Do? An Observational Study of Entrepreneurs' Everyday Behavior in the Start-Up and Growth Stages," Mueller, Volery and von Siemens (2012: 1009-1010) noted that "most actions performed by the entrepreneurs required some sort of communication." Significantly, their findings indicated that 64% of the working time of the start-up entrepreneurs they studied was spent on communication activities. With whom did the start-up entrepreneurs communicate? 29% of them spent their time communicating with people within their enterprise, while 31% of their working time was spent communicating with external stakeholders. The observed communications were mostly face-to-face (28%), and by e-mail (22%), telephone (7%), and other media (7%). Communication is a key activity of start-up entrepreneurs, yet little research has been conducted in entrepreneurship to study communicative activities and their impact on various stakeholders.

Two main approaches in this area have been receiving increasing attention and recognition in the field. The first is the *narrative approach* (O'Connor, 2002; Gartner, 2010, 2007; Hjorth, 2007; Hjorth and Steyaert, 2004; Weick, 1979), which emphasizes the various sensemaking strategies through which entrepreneurs build the story of their future or current business, and thereby shape or reshape their social identity in their audiences' view. The second is the more recent *impression management approach* (Anderson, 2005; Downing, 2005; Nagy et al., 2012), which emphasizes the various behavioral and communicational strategies displayed by start-up

entrepreneurs when trying to convince various stakeholders, such as business angels in pitch contexts, to support them. Specifically, they attempt to influence their audiences' perceptions relative to their legitimacy, credibility, and potential to succeed. These two approaches portray entrepreneurs as the main actors of communicative activities and, in some cases, as *sources* of persuasive attempts, especially when they use communication to acquire various resources.

Another area of research where communication and entrepreneurship are progressively studied together is *media communication*. The groundbreaking article of Nicholson and Anderson (2005) was the first to study British media press discourse on entrepreneurs. It aimed to understand how the press depicts entrepreneurs, and the potential impact of this social representation on audience perceptions of entrepreneurship (see also Anderson and Warren, 2011). Radu and Redien-Collot (2008) replicated this study in a French context while demonstrating that the social representation of entrepreneurs conveyed by the media may impact the audience's perceptions of entrepreneurial desirability and feasibility, and therefore the intentions of potential entrepreneurs. Within this stream of research, the study of public metaphors of entrepreneurs explored the underlying significance and implications of the heroization of entrepreneurs in current public discourse (Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2002; Hyrsky, 1999; Koiranen, 1995). Television shows (Boyle and Magor, 2008) and films (Lanoux Claverie, 2013) dedicated to or depicting entrepreneurs were also analyzed from a communicational perspective. Media approaches characterize (potential) entrepreneurs as both targets of persuasive attempts (in social representation research) and as sources of persuasive attempts (in television show research).

Additionally, two other domains of entrepreneurial behavior seem particularly relevant for a social psychology of communication approach: the first concerns the study of role models' influence as antecedents of *entrepreneurial intention,* and the second concerns the study of the functioning and outcomes of *entrepreneurial mentoring* relationships. Why do these two areas deserve more communication-based research? We present the two most important reasons below:

▪ *Role models* have been repeatedly and consistently confirmed to intervene in the genesis of behavioral intentions, because they have the potential to enhance self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 2006). Yet research on role models' impact on entrepreneurial self-efficacy is still in its infancy.

▪ *Entrepreneurial mentoring* has been studied from a relational perspective, with mentoring functions and outcomes identified and assessed both qualitatively and quantitatively (Deakins et al., 1998; Kent et al., 2003; Sullivan, 2000; St-Jean and Audet, 2010; Wikholm et al., 2005). Radu Lefebvre and Redien-Collot (2013) were the first to study the functioning and outcomes of entrepreneurial mentoring from a communicational perspective, with the goal of identifying particular communicational strategies used by mentors in dyadic interaction and evaluating their effects at the mentee level.

Below we describe our choice of epistemological and methodological approach to study communication *about* and *for* entrepreneurs from a social psychology perspective. French social

psychology of communication strongly relies on the seminal work of Austin (1962), who emphasized a theory of communication conceptualized as a specific form of human action, with action characterized as intentional behavior (von Wright, 1971: 83-86). In this perspective, communicative activities emerge and organize as strategic intention-based behaviors of language-in-use (Allwood, 1977). In other words, "people use language to achieve goals" (Berger, 2008). Communication is also constitutive of the processes through which individuals elaborate personal and social identities and is crucial in developing, sustaining, and terminating relationships: "we do not relate and then talk, but we relate in talk" (Duncan 1967: 249).

The pragmatic philosophical and linguistic tradition distinguishes between *intended effects* ("illocutionary acts" in Austin's terms) and *achieved effects* ("perlocutionary acts," ibid.) of communicative actions. Achieved effects correspond to the impact and outcomes of communication on the audience, in terms of cognitions, emotions, and subsequent actions. Our epistemological position is that communication can be studied as an explanatory factor in its own right (Baxter and Braithwaite, 2008). We think that a better understanding of the "language games" (Wittgenstein, 1965) that entrepreneurs play before and throughout the start-up process could be of use in developing a theory of entrepreneurship as purposeful behavior, with media and interpersonal communication conceived as primarily a way of "doing something," *i.e.*, of accomplishing such goals as persuading, managing conflicts, regulating activities, providing support and assistance, convincing, alarming, edifying, and inspiring, which are perlocutionary acts (Searle, 1969: 25).

In the entrepreneurship literature, there is a need for more contributions connecting communication and entrepreneurship with the aim of better understanding both the socio-cognitive processes involved in the genesis of entrepreneurial behavior and the impact of entrepreneurial behavior and communication on internal and external stakeholders. One could usefully draw on individual-centered communication theories (Berger, 2008; Burleson and Rack, 2008; Dillard, 2008; Greene, 2008) to explore how entrepreneurs plan, produce, and process interpersonal and media messages. Discourse- or interaction-centered theories (Garfinkel, 1967; Goffman, 1970) could also be exploited to study the content, forms, and functions of interpersonal and media messages involving (potential) entrepreneurs. Finally, relation-centered communication theories (Duncan, 1967; Mongeau and Henningsen, 2008; Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson, 1967) can also clarify the role of communication in developing, sustaining, and terminating entrepreneurs' business and personal relationships.

Our research topics deal with communication and persuasion issues related to entrepreneurship. We thus decided to organize our research presentation in two main chapters, the first dedicated to potential and confirmed entrepreneurs as *targets* of persuasive attempts generated by media (press discourse) and interpersonal (entrepreneurial support and education) sources, the second dedicated to potential and confirmed entrepreneurs as *sources* of persuasive interpersonal communications directed towards various stakeholders such as business angels, clients, or employees in the context of pitch presentations, business model elaboration and team leadership. A third chapter is dedicated to current and future research projects.

CHAPTER ONE

(Potential) Entrepreneurs as Targets of Persuasive Media and Interpersonal Communications

I. PRESS DISCOURSE: THE SOCIAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ENTREPRENEURS AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN FRANCE

The entrepreneurial literature suggests that encouraging entrepreneurial behavior requires not only a legal, economic and political infrastructure, but also an "appropriate cognitive infrastructure" made up of positive social representations, attitudes and beliefs (Krueger, 1996), crucial to stimulating entrepreneurial career choices. Several authors have stressed the importance of media impact on entrepreneurial perceived desirability and feasibility (Baron, 1998; Nahapier and Goshal, 1998; Swedberg, 2000). Through framing, exposure, and interpretation, media discourse may play a fundamental role in shaping a representation of entrepreneurship as an attractive, accessible and realistic career option. Media do not impact venture creation directly, but they may impact people's beliefs about the desirability, appropriateness, and feasibility of entrepreneurship, thus potentially increasing or diminishing entrepreneurial intentions. Entrepreneurial intentions are thus mediated: social, cultural, economic and political environments shape individuals' perceptions, attitudes and beliefs. These cognitive structures then translate into intentions, which are expressed through behaviors (**Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008**).[1]

The study of the social representation of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in the French press highlights the discursive strategies that various social actors use to persuade their audience of the worthiness, predictability and trustworthiness of individuals and firms categorized as "entrepreneurial" (Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008). Since 2005, we have systematically explored the content of social representations of French entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship and questioned their potential impact. After a first study on the social representation of entrepreneurs in the French press from 2001 to 2005 (Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008), we focused on the social representation of entrepreneurial intuition in the French press from 2003 to 2012 (**Radu Lefebvre and O'Shea, 2013**[2]). We also analyzed the heroic metaphors of entrepreneurs in the French press from 2005 to 2011 (**Radu Lefebvre, Lefebvre and O'Shea, 2013**[3]).

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[1] RADU M., REDIEN-COLLOT R. (2008). The Social Representation of Entrepreneurs in the French Press: Desirable and Feasible Models? *International Small Business Journal,* 26(3): 259-298.
[2] RADU LEFEBVRE M., O'SHEA N. (2013). La représentation sociale de l'intuition entrepreneuriale dans la presse française. *Revue Internationale PME,* 26(3-4): 169-186.
[3] RADU LEFEBVRE M., LEFEBVRE V., O'SHEA N. (2013). Entrepreneurs: the last shamans? Heroic metaphors of entrepreneurs in the French press, *Third conference of management, spirituality & religion*, Lourdes, France.

From a methodological standpoint, we operated within an interpretive paradigm that conceptualizes meaning as "always contextually and temporally situated" (Cope, 2005: 169). We did discourse analysis to study the social representations of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship, a methodological approach widely used in media studies (Bell and Garrett, 1997; Billig, 1993) and applied social psychology (Bruner, 1991), which examine discourses in their social, economic and political contexts. Other disciplines such as linguistics approaches study texts *per se* in a more context-free perspective (Keenoy et al., 1997). Traditionally, scholars have used discourse analysis as a key method to investigate texts that directly or indirectly express fundamental values within a society and thus actively contribute to the construction and/or transformation of social identities (Maingueneau, 1991: 22-3). There are two main approaches in discourse analysis: analytical vs. integrative techniques. The first approach attempts to disarticulate texts to identify enunciations' implicit meaning, while the second re-articulates different texts within an intertextual network to situate meaning in its concrete social, political, economic, and cultural context. Both approaches are necessary, and complementary, and our intention was to articulate them in an attempt to link press discourse to its social and cognitive contexts. We thus conceptualized press discourse as action-oriented, situated, and socially constructed (Caron, 1983: 111–12). Our approach may be defined as "deconstructive psychosociology" (Gergen et al., 1992; Neisser and Fivus, 1994), our aim being to examine how the French press both reinforces and reifies social representations of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship that serve specific political and economic interests, while revealing significant "silences" and ideological oppositions within texts (entrepreneur vs. employee, reason vs. intuition, hero versus gambler, etc.).

We present the main issues and findings of our empirical investigations in the following sections.

1. *The potential impact of press discourse on entrepreneurial intentions*

Together with other forms of public communication, media communications play "a constitutive role in the construction of reality, the only reality that we ever know and that we live in" (Moscovici, 1976: 26–7): their activity consists in shaping, conveying, and legitimizing a certain version of reality. Media have thus been acknowledged as "definers of reality" with "self-fulfilling potency" (Berger and Luckman, 1971: 145). In other words, the social representations conveyed by the media both reflect and affect public perceptions and evaluations of what is commonly seen as desirable and feasible in terms of social practices (Habermas, 1984; Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008). As structures of socially shaped and shared knowledge, social representations have both a descriptive and normative function: they tell individuals how things are and concomitantly say how things should be and how individuals should behave to be consistent with general values, norms, and social expectations (Ljunggren and Alsos, 2001; Sperber, 2000). Interpersonal and media communications allow individuals to express their thoughts and feelings in the social world, and to convert these subjective experiences into a common reified reality, collectively shared and transformed within a linguistic form (Searle, 1998: 84). Social representations are thus embodied in discursive practices, within a complex dynamics of exteriorization, objectification and internalization of the social universe through language (Berger and Luckman, 1971: 40–60; Fletcher, 2005: 569–71; Johansson, 2004: 273–93; Wilson and Riach, 2005: 103-4). Within the consensual reality through which the social world is created and experienced, the press discourse participates in the diffusion and transformation of entrepreneurial culture at the local and national levels.

Two processes are involved in the creation of a representation: 1) "objectification," through which a figurative core is elaborated, and 2) its social anchoring. By executing a process of objectification of the entrepreneur's representation, the French press diminishes the complexity of the described phenomenon to facilitate its appropriation by readers. To objectify a representation, the media proceeds in three steps (Radu and Redien-Collot, 2008): 1) they select information according to cultural norms; 2) they shape out a figurative core; and 3) they naturalize the figurative core that is endowed with specific properties and characteristics. The figurative core then becomes recognizable and is seen by the audience as a reflection of "reality." Through the process of anchoring, the social representation and its object are socially embedded. This process entails different aspects: 1) the emergence of meaning (the represented object is endowed with a specific signification by the public); 2) through this signification, the public conveys its own

social and cultural identity; and 3) the function of the representation (its content not only *reflects*, but also *shapes* social interactions).

The entrepreneurship literature (Bird, 1992; Katz and Gartner, 1988; Krueger and Carsrud, 1993; Shapero and Sokol, 1982; Tkachev and Kolvereid, 1999) theorizes venture creation as a planned and hence intentional behavior. Intentions are the most accurate predictor of actual behavior in specific contexts. The theoretical basis for predicting entrepreneurial intentions is rooted in Shapero's (Shapero and Sokol, 1982) "entrepreneurial event" model and in Ajzen's (1985) more general "theory of planned behavior." These models explain entrepreneurial intentions as the joint result of desirability and feasibility beliefs. Desirability consists in the perception that behavioral outcomes are socially and personally desirable (Krueger and Brazeal, 1994), while feasibility consists in the perception that the behavior is within the realm of the individual's competence (Bandura, 1977). The theory of planned behavior presents intentions as cognitive constructs shaped over time as the combined effect of three factors: the attitude towards the behavior, derived from perceptions of the behavior's consequences and the value ascribed to those consequences; the subjective norm (awareness of social standards and pressure concerning behavioral expectations and the individual's intention to act according to these expectations); the perceived behavioral control (outcome expectations, which consist in the individual's perception about the ease or difficulty of a specific behavior, and self-efficacy beliefs, which consist in the individual's perception about her/his personal ability to successfully perform the respective behavior – the capacity to control the outcomes, cf. Bandura, 1986).

Desirability and feasibility perceptions are *learned* (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) and strongly *influenced* by cultural and social factors (Shapero and Sokol, 1982). Through indirect incentives, such as the presentation of role models and eulogistic articles on start-up success (Autio et al., 1997), media may effectively encourage potential entrepreneurs to engage in venture creation. Shapero (1975, 1982) emphasizes that perceived desirability and feasibility partly originate in previous exposure to direct or indirect entrepreneurial activity. To be effective, this exposure should be both "quantitatively important" and "qualitatively positive." We will now assess whether the French press discourse satisfies these two criteria.

1.1. The social representation of entrepreneurs in the French press (2001-2005)

Radu and Redien-Collot (2008) conducted an extensive discourse analysis of the French press from 2001 to 2005. We analyzed 962 articles published from 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2005 (national and regional newspapers, magazines, specialized press, newsletters, news press agencies, and Internet news). We retrieved all full-text articles containing the

keywords "entrepreneur" or "entrepreneurship" in their titles. Our analysis indicated that from 2001 to 2005 entrepreneurship increasingly became a key object of public discourse. Following a sharp decrease in the number of entrepreneurs from 1972 to 1998, 2001 was a turning point in France. As Fayolle (2004) noted, entrepreneurial intentions increased threefold between 1991 and 2001 in the French population. From 2001 to 2005, coverage of entrepreneurship in the French press more than doubled: the number of titles containing the keyword "entrepreneur" increased from 114 in 2001 to 239 in 2005. However, this progression was neither homogeneous nor linear. For instance, the national press cited the keyword 'entrepreneur' 75 times in 2001, 109 times in 2003, and only 49/48 times in 2004/2005. In contrast, the regional press systematically increased the number of articles with a focus on entrepreneurs: cited only 3 times in 2001, in 2005 there were 106 occurrences of the keyword 'entrepreneur' in regional press titles. The diversity of the sub-topics also increased. Before the law Dutreil I (2003), sub-topics were, ranked in order of importance: 1) advice and information about the start-up process; 2) business creation barometers; 3) entrepreneurship in different French regions; 4) entrepreneurship policies; 5) education and entrepreneurship; 6) celebration of the economic and social utility of the entrepreneur; 7) female entrepreneurship; and 8) ethnic entrepreneurship. After Dutreil I, new topics appeared, such as: 1) entrepreneurship in Europe; 2) business creation abroad; 3) social entrepreneurship; and 4) portraits and interviews of politicians supporting entrepreneurship. The number of titles containing the keyword "entrepreneurship" was smaller: only 39 occurrences in five years.

1.2. Trapped between two contrastive "others": the employee and the CEO

From 2001 to 2005, entrepreneurs are highly praised as key economic and social agents, vital actors for the development of French society, especially in the national newspapers. At the same time, entrepreneurship is depicted as an individual adventure beyond a mere quest for power and money. In several articles, entrepreneurs are portrayed as a "miraculous solution" to the difficulties of globalization and unemployment. The regularity of the growth of employment generated by small and medium sized businesses is thus perceived as a helping hand given to an economy shaken by successive waves of restructuring in big corporations. Small business owners and local entrepreneurs are promoted by the national and regional press to allay fears of globalization. In doing so, the French press presents entrepreneurs as pretexts, but never approaches them as individuals. Their existence is always related to a problematic other: the employee or the CEO. The entrepreneur is either an interesting alternative for the employee who has difficulties finding a job, or the good twin of the powerful big corporation CEO. The

entrepreneur has no real autonomy in the French press discourse: he stands for a clear dialectic solution to the traditional Marxist dichotomy of the employee and the boss, an optimistic way out for a society sickened by capitalism. The restricted legitimacy of entrepreneurs in the French press portrays them as stereotypically as either nasty big bosses or defeated unemployed people. In other words, they are described as 'contrastive subjects' to reassure audiences of the potential dangers of neo-capitalism. We perceive an obvious contradiction between the political message that entrusts entrepreneurs with a grand social and economic mission, and the more relaxed message that invites people to approach entrepreneurship as an experiment that may result in failure and that is primarily meant to help people learn about themselves, the market, and the realm of entrepreneurship. The reader is trapped in this contradiction that has been neurotically recurrent from 2001 to 2005.

Entrepreneurs are portrayed as ordinary individuals who capitalize on their own skills and who invest time and effort to fulfill their dreams. At the same time, French journals disregard other long-established entrepreneurial qualities, perhaps because they are not linked to current French values and norms. Thus, they do not explore the entrepreneurs' need for accomplishment, locus of control or reputation. The figurative core of the entrepreneur's social representation as conveyed by the French press depicts the typical entrepreneur as being male (only 5% of articles deal with female entrepreneurship), between ages 30 and 40 (most interviewees), strongly attached to his region (newspapers cover entrepreneurship in different regions of France extensively), not quite mobile and not quite internationally focused on his career or his entrepreneurial projects. He knows how to create a personal network (friends and family), but lacks the ability to build professional networks and interact with clients, suppliers and entrepreneurial networks. More generally, entrepreneurial teams are rarely mentioned: can we therefore conclude that the entrepreneur is quite individualistic – or rather that entrepreneurial teams are not orthodox enough according to the criteria of the press discourse? The articles we analyzed do not mention initiatives of young entrepreneurs belonging to entrepreneurial families; there are no articles about family business, except one that deals with firms located in Italy. Interestingly, in that article, the family business is described as exotic and almost unethical.

1.3. The potential impact of the press discourse on entrepreneurial desirability and feasibility

Why would someone engage in an entrepreneurial process? This is the first question the French press could ask, in that one of its implicit objectives seems to be the enhancement of the perceived desirability of entrepreneurship as a career choice. According to most articles, the main

reason why entrepreneurship is considered attractive is "freedom." The second reason, much less explicitly quoted in our corpus, is "happiness." Not very often mentioned, yet potentially persuasive, is the "sense-making" and the sense-giving motivation – the desire to give meaning to one's own life and transform personal dreams and aspirations into economic realities The French press illustrates five different types of entrepreneurial freedom: freedom as a prerequisite of creative behavior, freedom as a means to achieve self-fulfillment, freedom as a means to express and to develop an inner passion, freedom as recklessness (entrepreneurs are sometimes described as irresponsible individuals), and freedom as a prerequisite of a resourceful life. As the entrepreneurial quest for freedom may lead entrepreneurs into the realm of irrationality or anarchy, many articles underline the constraints that entrepreneurs encounter, and warn them to properly delineate their perimeter of action. In this context, entrepreneurs must distrust inspiration, improvisation, and serendipity.

Eighty percent of the articles we studied focused on entrepreneurial feasibility, in an attempt to demonstrate the ease and speed of start-up procedures. The French press emphasizes, both quantitatively and qualitatively, two major solutions for potential entrepreneurs: academic curricula with a major in entrepreneurship, and institutional actors, such as incubators and business nurseries dedicated to the development of entrepreneurial competences and networks. The networks and institutions engaged in entrepreneurship development mentioned most often are the French Chambers of Commerce and their venture creation facilities, while specialized European and international networks are quite absent. One third of the articles we examined focused on the institutional support available for entrepreneurial activity. Although there is a clear sign that key players (the government and the financial and legal systems) approve of and support self-employment, successful entrepreneurs do not seem to be always valued: at times they are portrayed as exploiters of their respective communities. Krueger (1996) argues that if new ventures are perceived as harmful in their community, this is likely to "reduce perceptions of desirability, thus intentions and thus potential." As for the rewards entrepreneurs receive in exchange for their efforts, intrinsic rewards are often stressed, while extrinsic rewards such as wealth or social prestige are very rarely mentioned. Could this be because French society regards the search for autonomy, freedom of choice, and self-fulfillment through self-employment as being legitimate, whereas the ambitious search for success, money, and power are not openly recognized as socially desirable?

One major means of enhancing entrepreneurial self-efficacy is to provide credible role models for critical behaviors. Yet little is done by the French press to portray diverse and credible models, to illustrate the obstacles to venture creation, and to show how successful entrepreneurs

have learned to overcome them. Research emphasizes the importance of credible and attractive role models to encourage people with different backgrounds, ages, and ethnic origins to start up their own businesses. These models are invariably successful entrepreneurs who are similar in some way to potential entrepreneurs – either they live in the same community, they are the same age or have the same profession (Krueger and Brazeal, 1994). It is thus important that young French people and potential entrepreneurs be exposed to role models that are based on social reality and that are varied enough to allow identification. However, female models are still too rare, minority models are extremely hard to find, very young or very old entrepreneurs are completely absent, as well as those with unusual personalities and profiles – original, marginal, or nonconformist entrepreneurs.

2. Heroic metaphors of entrepreneurs in the French press (2005-2011)

For several decades, entrepreneurs have been depicted as major triggers of economic growth and innovation. Creators of new organizations (Gartner, 1988: 62), entrepreneurs emerge as idealized public characters because of their unique capacity to take risks, overcome obstacles and accomplish the impossible. In times of economic crisis, media and politics look for a "hero" able to find somewhat miraculous solutions to poverty and unemployment (Whelan and O'Gorman, 2007). One of these modern heroes is "the entrepreneur," a generic notion that designates an individual endowed with exceptional and distinctive characteristics, such as vision (Ashcroft, Holden and Low, 2009; Witt, 2007), intuition (Allinson, Chell and Hayes, 2000), leadership (Hmielesky and Ensley, 2007; Todorovic and Schlosser, 2007), perseverance (Markman, Baron and Balkin, 2005) and charisma (Hooper and Kearins, 2007; Yusuf, 2011). According to Cooney (2005: 226), one of the major myths of entrepreneurship is that of the entrepreneur "as lonely hero, battling against the storms of economic, government, social and other environmental forces." In developed countries, the media recurrently portray entrepreneurs as strong, brave and powerful individuals (Hyrsky, 1999), personified through action-oriented heroic metaphors such as "warrior, superman, explorer, mother, marathon runner, lion, whirlwind, magnet, captain, even God" (Koiranen, 1995). The entrepreneurship literature acknowledges the risks of depicting entrepreneurs as heroic individuals (Anderson and Warren, 2011; Claire, 2012; Malach-Pines et al., 2005), without examining the underlying significance of the heroization of entrepreneurs in current public discourse. We therefore know little about the superhuman

archetypes that media use to characterize entrepreneurs. Are they conveyed as Gods, shamans, kings or prophets? We also know little about the kinds of "miracles" entrepreneurs supposedly accomplish. Can they see the future, make daydreams come true, make money from nothing, convert adversity into happiness, etc.?

A metaphor is the application of a word or phrase to an object or concept it does not literally denote to suggest comparison with another object or concept. People think in metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Gentner and Jeziorski, 1993), and metaphors "create realities, guide future action, and reinforce experiential coherence" (Klagge, 1997: 76). In short, metaphors provide insights into how individuals perceive their own reality (Drakopoulou Dodd, 2002). According to Edelman (1977, p. 16-17), metaphors call on "mythical cognitive structures," enabling individuals to "create realities, guide future action and reinforce experiential coherence" (Nicholson and Anderson, ibid.). As key elements that shape social representations, in turn embodied in discursive practices, public metaphors of entrepreneurs participate in the objectification and internalization of the social universe through language (Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2002). The investigation of heroic metaphors of entrepreneurs entails examining the spiritual underpinnings of entrepreneurial social representations. Accordingly, "the symbol, the myth and the image are of the very substance of the spiritual life" (Eliade, 1991: 11).

Radu Lefebvre, Lefebvre and O'Shea (2013) sought to examine the heroic metaphors that the French press brings into play when portraying entrepreneurs. Our aim was to explore the shifts and changes in the metaphoric social representation of entrepreneurs in the French press between 2005 and 2011, our main hypothesis being that after 2008 and the beginning of the economic and financial crisis, entrepreneurs were increasingly depicted as "spiritual visionaries" who "create and utilize powerful visions" that they convey "with authority, eloquence and depth of insight," to provide meaning and inspiration (Karakas, 2009: 19). We conducted a discourse analysis of articles drawn from the French press from 2005 to 2011, with the aim of comparing the heroic metaphors of entrepreneurs three years before and three years after the economic and financial crisis of 2008. Articles were identified in the Lexis Nexis database, which provides extensive coverage of the French press. We first retrieved all full-text articles containing the keywords "entrepreneur" or "entrepreneurship" in their titles (1006 articles). Two of the authors read the entire press corpus to select only those articles containing at least one metaphor related to entrepreneurs. We thus selected 273 articles containing metaphors for further discourse analysis. Second, we analyzed these articles with Nvivo software, which enabled us to identify and classify a total of 898 metaphors for entrepreneurs. We classified the French press metaphors into 22 categories based on previous research on entrepreneurial metaphors (Drakopoulou-Dodd, 2002;

Hyrsky, 1999; Koiranen, 1995). On the basis of our own empirical findings we organized these categories into six larger groups to facilitate interpretation.

2.1. Entrepreneurs as exceptional human beings

Our findings revealed that French entrepreneurs are metaphorically depicted as mostly "superheroes" and "miracle makers" (50.67% of articles, see Table 1). Twenty-six percent of the total number or articles containing metaphors depict entrepreneurs as exceptional human beings (supermen, survivors, warriors, champions), able to deliver high levels of performance (serial entrepreneurs) and exceedingly eager to launch new projects, learn new things and meet new people (voracious). Twenty-four percent of the total number of articles containing metaphors emphasize entrepreneurs as prophets, saviors, and shamans, or even Gods. They are similar to The Elect of God myth, whereby one individual may positively change the course of humankind by his sacrifice. The metaphor most often used to depict entrepreneurs is that of the Savior (15.92% of all metaphors).

Meta categori	Categories of metaphors	Number of metaphors	Percentage of total number of articles	Number of articles	Percentage of total number of articles
BAMBI	Baby or Child	67	63.81%	105	11.69%
	Victim	38	36.19%		
BOSS	Builder	32	25.81%	124	13.81%
	King	75	60.48%		
	Mother	17	13.71%		
HIP & COOL	Star	43	44.33%	97	10.80%
	Trendsetter	54	55.67%		
MIRACLE MAKER	Prophet	8	3.62%	221	24.61%
	The Elect of God	10	4.52%		
	Savior	**143**	64.71%		
	God	19	8.60%		
	Shaman	41	18.55%		
PIONEER	Artist	11	9.40%	117	13.03%
	Explorer	40	34.19%		
	Gambler	16	13.68%		
	Iconoclast	50	42.74%		
SUPERHERO	Voracious	17	7.26%	234	26.06%
	Champion	29	12.39%		
	Serial Entrepreneu	21	8.97%		
	Superman	66	28.21%		
	Survivor	11	4.70%		
	Warrior	90	38.46%		

Table 1. Entrepreneur Metaphors in the French press (2005-2011)

Entrepreneurs are depicted as supermen: "a tireless worker – he never took time off for holidays and began his working day at 7:30 a.m. on the dot – had a phenomenal memory "(Les Echos, 16 November 2011); "Naguib Sawiris works 18 hours a day, lives in the high-rise where he has his business. Whatever time of the day or night you send him a presentation, he answers within the hour. I've never seen anything like it!" (Le Figaro, 2 November 2010). Their body is different and better than ours: they have "the ability to move mountains" (L'Entreprise, 1 July 2011), "it's not blood that flows through my veins, it's diesel" (L'Entreprise, 1 July 2011). As such, their inherent needs and desires seem to exceed those of ordinary human beings: they are "bulimic. Having already created Cashstore and then Malinea, Catherine Barba is now embarking on a new adventure" (Le Figaro, 7 November 2011); "He has a voracious appetite that he hides behind a seemingly relaxed façade, like most well brought-up people" (Les Echos, 29 June 2010); "Appetite of an ogre "; "this ogre of modern times"(L'Entreprise, 1 July 2011).

They are genuinely perceived as exceptional, and their capacity to surpass problems and deal with obstacles is also celebrated as incredibly remarkable. Entrepreneurs are impressive "survivors": "the entrepreneurs of his generation sold or lost their businesses. He alone is still there" (L'Entreprise, 1 July 2011); "Since 2000, Singapore has an official award called 'the Phoenix prize.' Referring to the mythological figure, the authorities decided to show their gratitude to the entrepreneurs who, after an initial failure, decided to persevere and eventually succeed" (Les Echos, 15 September 2006).

Because of their outstanding physical and mental capacities, entrepreneurs are portrayed as business champions: "A real entrepreneur is like a top athlete in management" (L'Expansion, 1 April 2009); "Without overstepping the bounds of modesty, his main objective: 'to be among the best in the world'" (L'Entreprise, 1 November 2006). Champions, but in the service of the overall society and economy, entrepreneurs are discursively constructed as saviors: "Entrepreneurs of the heart " (Les Echos, 7 December 2007); "The entrepreneur is a creator of wealth and social justice" (Les Echos, 4 July 2006); "Entrepreneurs, drivers of growth and employment" (Les Echos, 18 October 2011); "Twenty "unknown heroes" of all those who are fighting around the world to try to change it" (Les Echos, 4 July 2006). When faced with obstacles, they fight as warriors, with courage and conviction: "A minimum required: The rage of winning" (L'Entreprise, 1 December 2006); "Self-entrepreneurs won the battle" (La Tribune, 7 December 2010); "Being a boss, is an everyday fight" (L'Entreprise, 1 December 2006); "A new conquest" (Le Figaro Magazine, 9 December 2008); "He was eager to win more important fights" (La Tribune, 30 November 2009). Saving the world requires a good understanding of future trends and risks, this is why entrepreneurs also seem to have the gift of prophecy: "The world has lost a visionary" (Le Figaro,

7 October 2011); "He can see what's far ahead" (L'Entreprise, 1 October 2010); "Social entrepreneurs are ahead of tomorrow's world" (La Croix, 2 February 2011).

Behind these heroic metaphors one may find some more mythical characters, such as the shaman, the God and The Elect of God. French entrepreneurs are increasingly depicted as "shamanic leaders"; shamanism is defined as "a body of techniques and activities that supposedly enable its practitioners to access information that is not ordinarily attainable by members of the social group that gave them privileged status" (Krippner, 2002: 962). This information is collected and transformed by the shaman to serve the community (Rock and Krippner, 2007; Walsh, 1989). As shamans, entrepreneurs are: "in empathy with the environment, it's natural for him to analyze the problems society is facing and to try to find solutions" (La Croix, 1 July 2011); "The entrepreneur and its corollary, entrepreneurship (…) resonate in public discourse and in the media as a chant destined to ward off the ills provoked by the recession" (Les Echos, 9 November 2011); "A transformative force in society" (La Croix, 1 July 2011); and "Energy booster for my 315 employees" (L'Entreprise, 1 June 2008). Moreover, entrepreneurs are pictured as modern Gods: "A demigod that will revolutionize the world" (Le Figaro, 29 January 2007); "They all want to reinvent the world" (La Croix, 25 July 2005); "The immortal Pierre Bergé" (Le Figaro Magazine, 30 October 2009); "A mythical boss, elevated to the level of a guru" (Le Figaro, 7 October 2011); "The master of the world" (L'Entreprise, 1 July 2011), able to "make gold out of wheat" (La Tribune, 23 January 2010). Are they a personification of the Elect of God? "Being an entrepreneur is not a given for everyone" (Le Figaro Magazine, 6 July 2009); "Not everyone can become an entrepreneur" (L'Express, 9 July 2009); "A born individual entrepreneur" (L'Entreprise, 1 March 2008); "It's the motivation individuals have to outdo themselves, to do something great with their lives. This desire is particularly strong in entrepreneurs. You could even say that it is part of their DNA" (L'Entreprise, 1 January 2007).

2.2. Entrepreneurs as powerful and self-determining human beings

Almost 27% of the articles portray entrepreneurs as kings, mothers, builders and pioneers. These metaphors point to a powerful individual, sometimes in charge of many employees and organizations, and whose mission is to protect them and take care of them like a mother. Entrepreneurs are kings in charge of "an empire with more than 200,000 employees, 2,000 subsidiaries and 160 billion francs (more than 24 billion euros)" (Les Echos, 16 November 2011); "He was the sole manager, did not have an Executive Committee, or strategic meetings. He used the divide and conquer strategy, dealing individually with collaborators who often had to compete

with one another" (Les Echos, 16 November 2011); "They exercise an influence that goes way beyond the boundaries of their company" (L'Entreprise, 1 April 2005). As kings, their vocation is that of building empires and creating new worlds: "I love everything that is big. I love taking on challenges that require construction, it's something that really motivates me" (Le Figaro, 5 December 2011); "We are already building the Russian Silicon Valley here!" (La Croix, 6 September 2011). As kings, their attitude has to be that of a mother: "To create a company, you just need to announce the activity at the town hall, like for a birth" (Les Echos, 24 August 2005); "They were looking for someone who would take over Wolffkran and who would manage it like a family firm, by pampering it and helping it grow" (L'Entreprise, 1 June 2008); "On the eve of the birth of their baby, they have already chosen its name" (L'Express, 1 June 2006).

However, this parental, nurturing character is challenged by a contrastive view of entrepreneurs as solitary and individualistic pioneers, interested in exploring new territories, and discovering new products, new services, and new markets: "The creation of a company is like a journey" (Les Echos, 2 February 2010); "A pioneer with the spirit of the West" (La Croix, 1 November 2008); "We need to recreate the climate that encourages a spirit of perpetual adventure" (Le Figaro Magazine, 29 December 2009).

Powerful and self-determined, entrepreneurs are also depicted as hip and cool individuals, with a star attitude, trendsetter potential and public artist passion: "Net-setter" (La Tribune, 23 January 2010) ; "Celebrate the entrepreneurs as we celebrate the music festival" (Le Figaro Magazine, 17 November 2009); "She's the star of her village" (Le Figaro, 30 January 2006); "Golden boy" (Le Figaro, 19 August 2008); "All fired up " (L'Entreprise, 1 October 2006); "Entrepreneurs have a lot in common with artists. These two categories of human beings live out their passion through their job and believe that the value of an individual is measured through what he or she has accomplished" (L'Entreprise, 1 January 2007).

2.3. The dark side of entrepreneurs

Being a pioneer sometimes requires an iconoclastic attitude toward current habits and norms: "He alone is the real revolutionary, the only madman, the biggest rebel in the family. It has always been him and I never really saw that and I never realized that the drunken parties that I still wallow in reflect a docile obedience to the world market" (Les Echos, 29 June 2010); he is "a free man… A taste for transgression too, quite prominent in fact" (La Tribune, 3 June 2008); we thus have to "train people to be more daring and not be afraid to break out of the mold" (L'Entreprise, 1 July 2011). The risk of being an iconoclast is that of taking immoderate risks from the press

discourse perspective, in other words, being a gambler: "One million euros. That's the price to pay if you want to play the game" (L'Entreprise, 1 October 2006); "It was a risky bet but we were confident in ourselves" (L'Entreprise, 11 July 2011); "The gamble he took was in fact a stroke of genius" (L'Entreprise, 1 December 2009); "Gamble on capturing the market " (L'Entreprise, 1 November 2011); "Create a new company, and, you never know, it might be your jackpot" (Courrier International, 9 September 2010).

This immoderate risk-taking behavior transforms entrepreneurs into potential victims: "He created a psychological unit for 'unemployed bosses'" (La Croix, 6 October 2009); "The 3D Cycle: bankruptcy, divorce, depression. Some commit suicide, but nobody talks about it" (La Croix, 6 October 2009); "The ruin of your business may lead to that of your family" (L'Entreprise, 1 June 2008). This is why entrepreneurs have to be protected through an appropriate legal environment and business support institutions, like babies or? children that need nurturing care: "At the nursery of self-entrepreneurs" (La Tribune, 23 February 2010); "Entrepreneurs sometimes have trouble cutting the umbilical cord" (Les Echos, 30 October 2006); "150 euros for baby-entrepreneurs" (Le Figaro, 26 June 2006); "Hervé Novelli, State Secretary for SMEs, is amazed at such a miracle and watches over his brood like a mother hen" (La Tribune, 23 February 2010).

3. The social representation of entrepreneurial intuition in the French press (2003-2012)

Intuition is an ambivalent notion in the management and entrepreneurship literature, sometimes presented as essential to those who take decisions in an uncertain environment (Harper, 1988; Kickul, Gundry, Barbosa and Whitcanack, 2009) and other times criticized as being an unreliable and uncontrollable cognitive process (Bonabeau, 2003). **Radu and O'Shea (2013)** explored the social representation of entrepreneurial intuition in the French press. They posited that perceived trust in their own intuitions might increase or decrease among entrepreneurs based on how the public discourse encourages or discourages the use of intuition. We analyzed 700 articles published between August 5, 2003 and August 5, 2012 in French newspapers and magazines (Lexis Nexis databases). We selected those articles using the keywords "intuition," "flair," "instinct" and "entrepreneur"/"entrepreneurship." Our objectives were to identify the contexts of occurrence of the term "intuition," to identify the type of evaluations associated with the use of intuition in entrepreneurial contexts, to identify those who speak about intuition and

how they elaborate their discourse on this item, and to identify the occurrences of the term "intuition" in relation to the different stages of the entrepreneurial process.

According to Epstein (1994, 2010), intuition is "a feeling of knowing without knowing that we know." Sinclair and Ashkanasy (2005: 357) describe intuition as "non-sequential information processing, which includes both cognitive and affective components, resulting in the production of knowledge that is not based on conscious processes." As Bruner (1961) noted, intuition is a cognitive ability allowing individuals to generate plausible conclusions without using analytical steps that would help them evaluate the validity of their conclusions. In short, intuition is a process based on implicit learning from experience, with information stored in the individual's long-term memory, and allowing people to formulate ideas, intentions, and solutions when confronted with a situation or problem that requires rapid reactions. In the field of business, intuition functions as a set of articulated cognitions stored in the long-term memory in the form of "habits" or "schemata" (Simon, 1987). The reliability of intuitive responses depends on the expertise of the individual, as behavioral patterns are formed over time through multiple learning experiences. When faced with a new situation, experienced professionals can rapidly recognize the different environmental stimuli and thus quickly analyze and categorize the situation, link it with schemata already available in their long-term memory, and produce a quick, intuitive, automatically generated response.

The entrepreneurship literature recently emphasized the role of intuition in opportunity identification (Allison, Chell and Hayes, 2000; Baron and Ensley, 2006; Dutta and Crossan, 2005), and the use and outcomes of intuition for novice and experienced entrepreneurs (Blume and Covin, 2011; Kahneman and Klein, 2009; Sadler-Smith, 2010). Entrepreneurs use their intuition more often than managers (Hodgkinson et al., 2009), maybe because entrepreneurial decisions are particularly risky and made under conditions of high uncertainty (Shane, 2003).

Our analysis indicated that the total number of occurrences gradually increased between 2007 and 2010, and in 2011, an election year, we recorded growth four times higher than in 2010. In the electoral context, the use of intuition associated with entrepreneurship behavior may signal a need for economic and social "heroes," endowed with "exceptional" and "mysterious" capacities, particularly useful in the midst of a global economic crisis. Intuition, flair and instinct are primarily evoked when speaking of entrepreneurial success (34% of articles). These terms are mainly used in profiles (43% of articles), interviews and stories of entrepreneurs (26% of articles). Much more rarely, intuition is highlighted when it comes to entrepreneurial failure (9% of articles). The terms are positively evaluated (65% of articles), and the effectiveness of the use of intuition in the entrepreneurial decision making process is underlined (47% of articles). Consistent

with the literature, intuition is connected with "expert" entrepreneurs (55% of articles), and occurs only marginally with reference to novice entrepreneurs (7% of articles) to indicate that for novices, the use of intuition is risky and usually leads to failure. Its ambivalence is explicitly highlighted by 13% of the articles, which emphasized the "irrational" and "unpredictable" outcomes resulting from the use of intuition. In relation to the different stages of the entrepreneurial process, intuition, flair and instinct are generally associated with the notion of "market" (37% of articles) and much less with the concepts of "opportunity" (9% of articles) or "resources" (13% of articles). Whereas the entrepreneurial literature highlights the role of intuition in the discovery of entrepreneurial opportunities, the French press rarely mentions the word "opportunity."
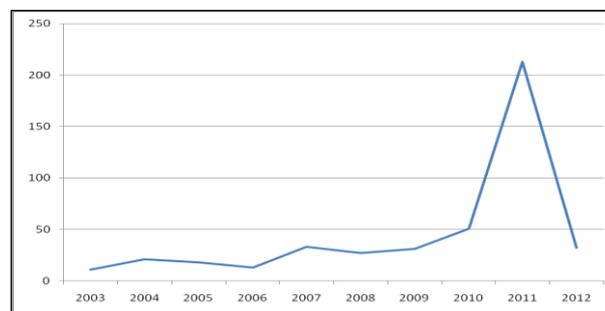
Figure 1. Number of occurrences of the term "intuition"

Who speaks of intuition in the French press? Intuition appears as a phenomenon that "only happens to others" (68% of articles speak about "he" or "she" as a subject of intuitive decision making). What are the possible reasons for this reluctance to publicly speak about one's own intuitions as an entrepreneur? We believe that this silence is symptomatic of a particular social representation of intuition in the French public sphere. Intuition appears as a multifaceted and contradictory object, both useful for detecting opportunities and new markets, and dangerous for those who do not have enough experience in business creation or unpredictable in its consequences ("a crazy bet"). On the one hand, intuition, flair and instinct are presented as success factors that enable entrepreneurs to understand market trends, detect opportunities and mobilize scarce resources. On the other hand, intuition, flair and instinct are portrayed as irrational factors of creativity phenomena and a source of boldness, associated with a sense of "clairvoyance." The French press acknowledges entrepreneurs' right to "listen to their intuitions" and to "let them express them" because these intuitions may foster impressive successes in business. The press discourse also draws attention to "a proper use of intuition" and it highlights the need to validate one's intuitions through a more rigorous and analytical investigation of reality. Beyond the representation of intuition as a process and an outcome requiring rational validation, intuition also appears in some articles as a stand-alone mysterious phenomenon, uncontrollable, endowed with

almost magical properties. In sum, entrepreneurial intuition is depicted as a partly secret phenomenon for audiences and protagonists, an intimate phenomenon that is difficult to state in public space, which explains the few occurrences of "I" when talking about intuition.

When we compared the word "reason" associated with entrepreneurship (more than 3,000 annual occurrences), intuition amounts to more than 200 occurrences in 2011, while recording a very low average over the entire corpus (25 to 30 articles per year). We are still very far from the legitimacy granted to intuition in the entrepreneurial literature. The social representation of intuition in the French press rarely mentions the learning processes and multiple past experiences leading to the formulation of an intuitive judgment. The image projected is rather that of "an intuition without a past." The fact that experienced entrepreneurs tend to attribute their success stories party to intuition seems to add credibility to value of the notion of intuition, within "entrepreneurial expertise." Further research could explore the perceived role of intuition in different stages of the entrepreneurial process, and examine how entrepreneurs discursively articulate the evocation of intuition and reason when speaking about their business decisions.

II. SENSITIZATION CAMPAIGNS: THE IMPACT OF ROLE MODELS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION AND SELF-EFFICACY

Among the antecedents of entrepreneurial intention, self-efficacy has been emphasized as a critical factor (Barbosa, Gerhardt, and Kickul, 2007; Boissin, Chollet, and Emin, 2009; Boyd and Vozikis, 1994; Drnovsek and Glas, 2002; Krueger and Brazeal, 1994; Zhao, Seibert and Hills, 2005). Efficacy judgments influence behavior and goal attainment, and exert a decisive impact on the power of entrepreneurial intentions and the likelihood that intentions will consequently translate into actions (McGee et al., 2009). Acquired gradually though experience and learning, self-efficacy affects the level and content of personal aspirations, goals and decisions that individuals undertake during their lifetime (Bandura, 2001). The relationship of self-efficacy and entrepreneurship is best demonstrated in situations involving risk and uncertainty, such as career choice (Chen et al., 2001). According to Bandura (1971), self-efficacy is acquired gradually in four ways: mastery experiences, modeling or observational learning, social persuasion and emotional arousal (judgments of personal physiological states). While the contribution of modeling to entrepreneurial self-efficacy has received strong support, there is less evidence of the contribution of social persuasion processes and emotional arousal to enhance entrepreneurial self-efficacy. As for the two other sources of self-efficacy – social persuasion and emotional arousal, social persuasion has been known to temporarily raise self-efficacy beliefs, particularly when the source of verbal persuasion is perceived as credible, honest and expert (Gist and Mitchell, 1992). Also, evidence exists that perceptions of physiological states may affect self-efficacy; notably, anxiety and stress lower self-efficacy beliefs (Boyd and Vozikis, 1994).

To summarize, among the self-efficacy sources, modeling may be a particularly relevant resource for increasing entrepreneurial intentions in potential entrepreneurs. Indeed, exposure to entrepreneurial role models has been identified as a cornerstone of learning and career development (Boyd and Vozidis, 1994; Chen, Green and Crick, 1998). The contribution of role models to new venture creation is documented both by career development (Gibson, 2004) and the entrepreneurship literature (Bosma et al., 2011; Douglas and Shepherd, 2001; Kirkwood, 2007). According to Bandura's social learning theory (2001), learning can occur not only through direct experience, but also through the observation of others, referred to as models. Modeling is "one of the most powerful means of transmitting values, attitudes, and patterns of thought and behavior"

(Bandura, 1986: 47). The process involved in these effects is vicarious learning or learning through observation (Bandura, 2001; Krueger and Brazeal, 1994; Sosik and Godshalk, 2000). Vicarious learning allows individuals to develop generalized beliefs about the consequences of particular behaviors (outcome expectations) and to assess their own ability to produce similar results in similar contexts (self-efficacy beliefs). Drawing on the concepts of "role" and "modeling," the term "role models" implies that individuals tend to identify with people whom they perceive as inspirational and similar (Bell, 1970), and they observe them to learn new behaviors, skills and norms (Bandura, 1971). Role models provide learning, motivation and inspiration, and help individuals to define their self-concept (Gibson, 2004: 149), mainly when role models are evaluated as credible, expert, trustworthy and/or prestigious (Gist and Mitchell, 1992).

Parental, networking and media role models may influence entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Van Auken et al., 2006) and entrepreneurial intentions (Ajzen, 1985; Boissin et al., 2010; Engle et al., 2010; Gibson, 2004; McGee et al., 2009; Mueller and Conway Dato-On, 2008). According to Scott and Twomey (1988), repeated exposure to role models triggers entrepreneurial intentions effectively, and Scherer, Adams, Carley, and Wiebe (1989) proved that the impact of role models on entrepreneurial career choice is mediated by self-efficacy beliefs. Role models thus strengthen self-efficacy beliefs (*i.e.,* people's beliefs about their ability to successfully complete a specific action to achieve a desired outcome) and behavioral intentions. The influence of role models on entrepreneurial self-efficacy (Drnovsek and Erikson, 2005; Mueller and Conway Dato-On, 2008) is not only related to learning entrepreneurial behaviors and becoming motivated to behave in similar ways, but also to developing an entrepreneurial identity and to translating imagined possibilities of "who could I become" and "what could I accomplish" into enacted reality (Rae, 2000: 149). Observational learning can either enhance or reduce individuals' aspirations of entering an entrepreneurial career as they evaluate their chances of personal success (Zhao, Seibert and Hills, 2005). If the potential outcomes of a particular behavior exemplified by a role model are anticipated to be rewarding, the probability of the individual's engaging in this behavior is higher than if the expected outcomes are aversive (Bandura, 1971: 241). The impact of a role model increases when he/she is perceived as similar in terms of personal characteristics and skills (Wohlford, Lochman, and Barry, 2004), values and aspirations (Filstad, 2004). This impact may be even stronger if the role model effectively appeals to the observers' self-concept (Markus and Kitayama, 1991). Entrepreneurial role models allow individuals to materialize their visions of what they could, should, or want to be, in the form of "desired identity images" (Schlenker, 1985). Associated with approval, guilt, and worthiness, the self-relevance of a role model increases when

it exemplifies a key role-identity (Auken, Fry, and Stephens, 2006). Role models' narratives thus evoke "the desire to bring oneself closer to what one should or would ideally like to be" (Banaji and Prentice, 1994: 299).

Role models may be proximal individuals, but also celebrities, fictional characters or historical figures, because social comparison does not require personal contact but rather identification and motivation to become "like the other" (Aronson, 2004; Steyaert and Bouwen, 1997; Wilson, Kickul and Marlino, 2007; Wood and VanderZee, 1997). Available role models (Bandura, 1986) can thus contribute to the elaboration of a "portfolio of role models" (Ibarra, 1999) that individuals select according to professional situations and objectives. While the influence of real life role models in enhancing the desirability and feasibility beliefs of potential entrepreneurs has long been established in the academic literature (Bosma et al., 2011), we still know very little about the impact of symbolic or fictional role models on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intentions. A number of descriptive studies underlined the significance of direct role models, i.e. parents or mentors, on the decision to start a business (Auken, Fry, and Stephens, 2006). However, the importance of *symbolic or fictional role models,* such as media or sensitization campaigns, entrepreneurs' testimonials and narratives, seems to remain underestimated, and their actual effects on motivation, intention and behavior warrant deeper examination (Steyaert and Bouwen, 1997; Wilson, Kickul and Marlino, 2007).

1. The impact of entrepreneurial role models as moderated by "ideal" vs. "ought-self" identifications

Radu and Loué (2008)[4] measured the effects of exposure to role models' narratives appealing to the desire of either self-achievement or self-commitment as motivators to engage in an entrepreneurial project while still at university and to start a business after graduation. According to the self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), the self-concept is composed of three distinct cognitive structures: the "actual self," which comprises the characteristics individuals believe they really possess, the "ideal self," which consists of the attributes individuals would like to possess, and the "ought self," which includes the traits individuals think they should possess because of a moral obligation or duty to do so. In this perspective, the "ideal" and the "ought" selves function as powerful standards for personal development, career choices, and goal setting. While several studies have provided evidence about the self-concept's relevance in persuasive

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[4] RADU M., LOUE C. (2008). Motivational impact of role models as moderated by "ideal" vs. "ought self-guides" identifications. *Journal of Enterprising Culture*, 16(4): 441-465.

contexts (Knowles and Linn, 2004; Reed and Norman, 2003), we know little about how it may enhance or diminish the impact of role models in entrepreneurship. Prior research has demonstrated that matching a message to an individual's self-concept enhances persuasion, by triggering an identification process with the role model (Grier and Deshpande, 2001; Wheeler, Petty, and Bizer, 2005). Yet no prior research has explored which aspect of the self-concept intervenes in the processing of symbolic role model-related information. This article is the result of our attempt to cast more light on the impact of two different role model narratives about entrepreneurial success on the self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions of a student sample, as moderated by "ideal" versus "ought" self-representation activation.

When exposed to entrepreneurial role models, individuals regulate their own thoughts, feelings, and behavioral intentions with respect to the ideal of ought self-image that the model exemplifies. Concretely, potential entrepreneurs have ideal goals that represent aspirations and wishes, but also goals that represent duties and obligations that should be met. Entrepreneurial role models may appeal to one of these two possible selves to enhance career self-efficacy beliefs and to develop behavioral intentions. Depending on whether an "ideal" or an "ought" role model is used as a standard against which to compare the actual self, different emotional and motivational reactions may result. An additional factor that mediates the comparison between oneself and the ideal/ought role model is the importance of the social domain where the comparison is assessed. In most important domains ideal self-images play a central role. In less important domains, ought self-images are more influential (Bordero and Francis, 1999: 352). When it comes to communicative settings, the importance of a social domain is operationalized through the notion of "involvement," *i.e.*, the "personal relevance given to an object" (Petty and Cacioppo, 1990: 367). There are two types of involvement: personal involvement, related to the personal interests of the receiver; and situational involvement, influenced by situational factors that arise when making decisions on career preferences, for instance. The topic of a persuasive message can have personal or situational importance if it is self-relevant, that is when it concerns outcomes, ideas, values, and end states that are significant to the receiver. In sum, exposure to an entrepreneurial role model who exemplifies an ideal self-image may be more effective for students in high-involvement settings. Conversely, exposure to an entrepreneurial role model who projects an ought self-image may be more effective for students in low-involvement settings. Our premise was that presenting students with a message that matches their level of involvement and their career aspirations in terms of acquiring a desired self-image has a positive impact on their self-efficacy beliefs and entrepreneurial intentions.

We recruited a sample of 44 French students in entrepreneurship (both sexes, ages 20-22) for an experimental study of whether their exposure to specific role models and their level of situational involvement would influence a message's impact on their self-efficacy and their behavioral intentions to undertake an entrepreneurial project while still at school and to start-up a business after graduation. Participants first read an introductory presentation, which invited them to test "the effectiveness of a new entrepreneurship awareness campaign." We induced high situational involvement in half of the participants by telling them that they are invited to take part in a televised debate and to go to a cocktail party attended by several famous public figures. The other half was simply thanked for their participation in the study, thus inducing a low situational involvement in these subjects. All the participants were then exposed to a print message consisting in a short narrative attributed to a similar role model (a young graduate of the same program as the participants) proudly speaking about his success as an entrepreneur. Half of the subjects were invited to identify with a role model speaking about his motivation to become an entrepreneur in terms of "self-achievement" and "striving to attain an ideal," while the other half read the same success story in which the same role model spoke about his motivation to become an entrepreneur in terms of "responsibility" and "striving to preserve a family heritage" (i.e., a family business). After exposure, all the participants completed a thought-listing task, followed by a questionnaire where they rated the message's seriousness and optimism, its narrative credibility and inspiring potential, and evaluated their own self-efficacy to initiate a project while still in the university, and to mobilize resources in order to reach this goal, as well as their intention to start a business after graduation. Data were analyzed through an analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure, whereas responses to the thought-listing task and to open questions were qualitatively analyzed through content analysis. Our research had two main methodological limitations: we did not assess the self-concept of students prior to the experiment, and our sample size was relatively small.

Our main finding was the strong positive impact of the role model who embodied the ideal self-guide on overall message evaluation, self-efficacy beliefs and entrepreneurial intention, especially for highly involved subjects, who felt consistently inspired and motivated by this symbolic model. Conversely, the impact of the role model who embodied the ought self-guide was rather negative, particularly with low-involved subjects, for whom this model's story was too "depressing" even though it was an entrepreneurial success story. Students clearly seem to generally prefer idealized similar role models. Results indicated that the message conveying the "self-achievement role model" was perceived as globally more optimistic than the message conveying the "commitment role model" ($p<0.09$), with highly involved subjects rating the two different messages as almost equally optimistic. Low-involved exposed to the "commitment role

model" rated this message as significantly more alarming than high-involved subjects (p<0.006). In the low involvement scenario, subjects rated the "commitment role model" narrative as more disturbing than the "self-achievement role model" story (p<0.09). An unexpected result was generated by highly involved subjects, who evaluated the "self-achievement role model" as more demanding than the "commitment role model" (p<0.07). The "self-achievement role model" had a more positive effect on self-efficacy beliefs to initiate an entrepreneurial project while still attending university than did the "commitment role model" (p< 0.005). The "self-achievement role model" narrative also had a favorable impact on self-efficacy to mobilize friends, relatives, and colleagues while undertaking an entrepreneurial project, for both low-involved and highly involved subjects (p< 0.05). Students exposed to the "self-achievement role model" message felt ready to get involved in an entrepreneurial project "this year," whereas those exposed to the "commitment role model" message estimated themselves as more likely to do it "in three years from now" (p<0.00009). Highly involved subjects felt more confident to set up an entrepreneurial project than low-involved subjects (p<0.01). Participants evaluated their ability to successfully complete an entrepreneurial project positively, with the exception of the low-involved subjects exposed to the "commitment role model" story (p < 0.02). The "self-achievement role model" story was more influential in triggering positive entrepreneurial intentions than the "commitment role model" message (p<0.04), for both highly involved and low involved subjects.

Our findings have practical implications for sensitization campaigns and entrepreneurial education in terms of moving towards a more context-related and student-centered role-modeling pedagogy, with professors and journalists being prepared to deal with the potential cognitive, emotional, and behavioral impact of the role models they bring to public attention. Models to which we expose potential entrepreneurs should be selected or excluded more deliberately. For instance, when making this kind of decision one could rely on the criteria of observers' self-concept orientation (ideal vs. ought-self motivations), and on the audience's level of involvement in entrepreneurial topics (high vs. low-involvement).

2. The impact of positive and negative role models on students' self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention

Numerous studies have shown that direct exposure to relatives, mentors or friends who are entrepreneurs increases the likelihood that a subject will aspire to become an entrepreneur (Douglas and Shepherd, 2001; Kirkwood, 2007). Statistical studies carried out in several countries show that exposure to role models has a positive effect on between 35% and 70% of subjects – depending on the countries in question – in terms of setting up a company. Apart from these descriptive surveys, little research has been carried out on the impact of symbolic role models on entrepreneurial attitudes and intentions, even if the number of stories about entrepreneurs in the media has been growing for years (Auken, Fry and Stephens, 2006; Wilson, Kickul and Marlino, 2007). Such stories are often positive in tone, soliciting emulation, or at least admiration, among readers and viewers (Steyaert and Bouwen, 1997). Nevertheless, stories about the failures of former employees can also, in certain situations, pique the interest of potential entrepreneurs and encourage them to set up their own businesses.

Radu and Laviolette (2011[5]) and Laviolette, Radu Lefebvre and Brunel (2012, 2014)[6] tested the impact of fictional positive and negative role models' testimonials on self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention in an educational context. Our premise was that stories about errors and successes may alternatively inspire potential entrepreneurs, at different times and in different situations (Lockwood, 2006, 2004). Individuals build their "possible selves" both by imitating inspirational and attractive others (learning from example), and by rejecting or escaping undesirable attributes and behaviors (learning how to avoid). According to Cross and Markus (1991: 231), possible selves are cognitive elements of the self-concept that illustrate "what we could become, what we would like to become and what we are afraid of becoming." Positive role models are hence "admired and sought out for possible emulation" (Gibson, 2004: 144), whereas negative role models are examples of "how not to behave in a particular context" (ibid.). Depending on the context and their personal goals, potential entrepreneurs may thus be effectively influenced by both positive and negative role models (Stapel and Koomen, 2001). Negative role models can provide opportunities to develop awareness of potential errors to be avoided to prevent negative outcomes or punishments (Bandura, 1986) illustrated by the anti-model (Gibson, 2004;

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[5] RADU LEFEBVRE M., LAVIOLETTE E.-M., (2011). L'impact des modèles de rôle positifs et négatifs selon l'activation d'un but de promotion vs. prévention. In P Castel, M.F. Lacassagne, E. Sales-Wuillemin (Eds.), *Psychologie sociale, communication et langage* (217-237). Brussels: De Boeck Université.
[6] LAVIOLETTE, RADU LEFEBVRE M., BRUNEL, O. (2012). The impact of story bound entrepreneurial role models on self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research*, 18(6): 720-742.
BRUNEL O., LAVIOLETTE E.-M., RADU LEFEBVRE M. (Forthcoming 2014). Modèles de rôle et persuasion verbale: quel impact sur l'auto-efficacité et l'intention entrepreneuriale des étudiants? *Revue internationale PME*.

Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda, 2002). Higgins (1987) suggests that both kinds of objectives can be activated by manipulating situational and communicational variables, including positive and negative testimonials that can be characterized as framing variables.

2.1. The impact of same- and different- sex positive and negative symbolic role models

In the field of persuasion psychology, the question of the impact of negative role models on self-efficacy and behavioral intention has rarely been studied. A long tradition of research going back to learning psychology, notably Bandura's theory of vicarious learning (1971), reinforced the tendency to focus on detailed analyses of the impact of positive role models in a context in which the impact of negative models was regarded as being slight or nonexistent in terms of changing attitudes or behaviors. However, emphasizing narratives of success rather than failure is not necessarily the most effective strategy to use when the objective is to encourage change (Higgins, 1998). Depending on the context and the goals sought – either promotion or prevention[7] - individuals can be influenced by a message featuring a successful model or by a message highlighting the failure of a counter-model (Stapel and Koomen, 2001). While an individual with a promotion goal – for example, a desire to become an established entrepreneur – might well be open to the testimonial of a subject who had become a successful entrepreneur, an individual motivated by a prevention goal – for example, to avoid unemployment – may be more receptive to the testimonial of a subject who had been fired from his or her job at an existing enterprise (Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda, 2002). Building on an experimental study involving 98 undergraduate students enrolled in an entrepreneurship program, **Radu Lefebvre and Laviolette (2011)** demonstrated that the choice of an entrepreneurial career can be motivated either by promotion or prevention goals. Students may wish to undertake an entrepreneurial career because they seek self-fulfillment or they may decide to become entrepreneurs because they want to escape the limitations and constraints of employee status. Participants were exposed to a sensitization message including either a success story (a young graduate who had become a successful entrepreneur), or a story of failure (a young graduate who is now unemployed after an unsuccessful period as an employee). Before reading the message aloud, we presented a set of instructions that served to prime different goals in the participants. Half the subjects read a set of instructions inducing a promotion goal underlining the advantages young people generally associate with entrepreneurial success (high social status, freedom, self-fulfillment), while the other half read a set of instructions inducing a prevention goal underlining the disadvantages that

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[7] Having a promotion goal consists of wanting to achieve a desirable state or result. Having a prevention goal consists of wanting to avoid an undesirable state or result.

young people generally associate with being an employee (low social status, limited freedom, routine). These messages were attributed either to a successful male role model, an unsuccessful male role model, a successful female role model, or an unsuccessful female role model, to measure the impact of the message on the students' attitudes, self-efficacy beliefs, and entrepreneurial intention. To facilitate identification with the model, the testimonial placed an emphasis on pathos, using a substantial number of nouns and adjectives with emotional connotations – "worry," "sad," "pride," "delighted." The result of the testimonial was expressed either in the form of a promise, or in terms of a warning ("more common than you might think"). Overall, the testimonials featured a first person narrative within a positive framework (focusing on advantages) or a negative one (focusing on disadvantages). The experimental study thus had a 2 (primed goal: promotion or prevention) x 2 (model type: positive or negative) x 2 (model gender: female or male) between-participant design. Data were analyzed through an analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical procedure.

The main hypothesis of our study was that positive role models may be more effective in terms of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions for observers with promotion goals, whereas negative role models may be more effective for observers with prevention goals. Therefore, models of failure may be more effective than models of success in situations in which the aim is to ensure that students avoid making errors. Recent studies in the psychology of persuasion suggest that individuals can be effectively influenced by both positive and negative role models, depending not only on the context and the situation (Stapel and Koomen, 2001) but also on their personal goals. In other words, for a subject whose intention is to achieve a desirable result, such as becoming a successful entrepreneur, a positive role model may prove effective. In contrast, for a subject seeking to avoid an undesirable situation – loss of money or reputation, for example – a negative role model could prove useful to the degree that it would enable him or her to develop an awareness of potential errors best avoided so as not to fail in the same way as the counter-model (Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda, 2002). According to Carver and Scheier (1998), the impact of role models depends on the goals of the observers to whom they are exposed. Such goals can take the form of pursuing a desirable goal or of avoiding an undesirable one, with subjects thus pursing goals or "anti-goals" (idem.). From a cognitive perspective, pursuing desirable goals involves the use of approaching strategies, to gradually diminish the distance between the current situation and the desired goal. By comparison, avoiding undesirable results involves deploying avoidance strategies to increase the distance between the current situation and the situation to be avoided (Carver, Sutton and Scheier, 2000). Consequently, Lockwood et al. (2004) argue that positive role models can be used to encourage observers to opt for productive behaviors involving an "additive

strategy," while negative role models can be used to avoid potentially counter-productive behaviors by means of a "subtractive strategy." To summarize, observers may be motivated by role models featuring strategies that are congruent with their own goals and less likely to be influenced by role models that run counter to those goals (Lockwood, Jordan and Kunda, 2002).

Additionally, in entrepreneurial contexts evidence exists that perceived similarity with the role model is a central moderating variable in terms of self-efficacy beliefs relative to setting up a business (Gupta et al., 2008, 2009; Mueller and Conway Dato-On, 2008). The more a role model is perceived as similar, the greater the probability that the observer will produce imitative behaviors (Wilson et al., 2009; Scott, 2009). This may be particularly important for female (potential) entrepreneurs (Boissin et al., 2011). Indeed, numerous studies suggest that the lack of female role models in traditionally male careers is a symbolic obstacle for women thinking of embarking on a less conventional career path (Quimby and DeSantis, 2006). Kourilsky and Walstad (1998) and Stevenson (1990) suggest that entrepreneurship is a "male construct," an idea shared by Hearn and Parkin (1988), who note that leadership is also a "masculine quality" to which attributes seen as masculine by Western subjects are associated – assertiveness, competitiveness and control. The absence of female role models in the fields of business and entrepreneurship was underlined by Brush (1997), who showed that only 10% of Harvard Business Cases featured women. Men and women generally decide to embark on careers that traditionally correspond to their gender (Buunk and Van der Laan, 2002). Nevertheless, attitudes and behaviors of young students can be modified by repeated exposure to less conventional role models, either real or imagined (Oppedisano and Laird, 2006). Female role models may encourage young women to question social representations of entrepreneurship as an eminently masculine occupation and stimulate their intention to explore the option for themselves. In contrast, young men exposed to a sensitization message about enterprise creation consider gender similarity to be less important. In their study of business mentoring relationships, Sosik and Godshalk (2000) found that women were likely to identify with and imitate female mentors, whereas men are just as likely to identify with female mentors as with male ones. Of course, the stories attributed to male and female role models should be taken into account, because the same model can have different impacts depending on whether their story is one of success or failure.

Our results partially confirmed *the correspondence hypothesis* between subjects' aims (promotion or prevention), and positive or negative role models. When the coherence between the participants' goals and symbolic role models is respected, the sensitization message is seen as more credible, more stimulating and more sincere. Similarly, subjects' self-efficacy beliefs were reinforced when a successful model is presented within the context of a promotion goal and,

respectively, a failure model is presented within the framework of a prevention goal. *The gender-matching hypothesis* between the role model and the participants was confirmed only for certain dependent variables. Female role models boosted the young women's self-efficacy beliefs more than male role models, but only for participants primed with a promotion goal. Further, as predicted by our hypotheses, the young men in the sample were equally sensitive to male and female role models. In fact, they sometimes expressed a preference for female role models in prevention goal situations, and, respectively, for male models in promotion goal situations.

Both the female and male participants reported that the positive role model's testimonial was more optimistic than the testimonial attributed to the negative role model ($p<.0000001$). Unexpectedly, female students regarded the commentaries attributed to male role models, be they positive or negative, as significantly more optimistic than those attributed to female role models ($p<.03$). One unexpected result was that female subjects regarded the testimonial of the male role model as more credible and stimulating than the same testimonial attributed to a female role model ($p<.05$), whereas men regarded the testimonial as equally credible and stimulating regardless of whether it was attributed to a male or a female role model. Moreover, in evaluations of the honesty of the testimonials, subjects expressed a preference for female role models. While women assessed the testimonials of both genders as equally honest, men evaluated the messages attributed to female role models as significantly more honest than those attributed to male role models ($p<.02$). This single main effect was moderated by the content of the testimonials: success stories were perceived as more honest when they were being told by men, while stories of failure were judged to be more honest when they were told by women. Is this a symptom of still deeply rooted cultural stereotypes, in which professional success is associated with men, while women are perceived as being more likely to fail?

Positive testimonials reinforced self-efficacy beliefs, with a positive result producing a more favorable impact than a negative one ($p<.05$). Cultural representations of entrepreneurial careers seem to have influenced both male and female subjects. Both female and male respondents showed a *tendency* to declare more self-confidence in engaging in an entrepreneurial project after exposure to the young *man's testimonial* ($p<.09$). Nonetheless, this main effect must be analyzed carefully because the interaction effects indicate a more complex pattern of results. Interaction effects strongly confirm the hypothesis that there is a correspondence between role models and participants' goals. Subjects with a promotion goal reported increased self-efficacy beliefs in setting up a company after having heard the testimonial of a successful role model ($p<.02$). By comparison, subjects with a prevention goal evaluated their self-efficacy beliefs in a more favorable light after reading the testimonial of the counter-model ($p<.06$). The testimonial

attributed to the positive female role model significantly reinforced the self-efficacy beliefs of female participants primed with a promotion goal: all the women exposed to this message stated that they were capable of initiating an entrepreneurial project, whereas the women exposed to the same message delivered by a male role model had a less pronounced belief in their self-efficacy ($p<.04$). Male participants primed with a promotion goal stated that their self-efficacy beliefs had risen after having been exposed to the testimonial of a male role model ($p<.01$), while male participants primed with a prevention goal stated that that their self-efficacy beliefs had been strengthened after reading the testimonial attributed to a female role model ($p<.03$). A single main effect indicates that male students tended to report a more favorable behavioral intention to set up a business than the female subjects ($p<.08$). The analysis of interaction effects shows that female participants expressed a more positive behavioral intention when primed with a promotion goal ($p<.01$), while male participants declared similar types of intentions when primed with promotion or prevention goals. Surprisingly, male students claimed that their behavioral intentions became more favorable after having been exposed to a negative rather than to a positive role model ($p<.02$).

Our experimental study largely confirms the hypothesis that there is a correspondence between subjects' goals and the type of role models to which they are exposed, with positive role models encountering more success with subjects with promotion goals, and counter-models proving more persuasive for subjects with prevention goals. Regarding the question of participants' perceived similarity with the role model, the social comparison tradition emphasizes the notion that gender similarity is a positive persuasive factor. Our experimental study suggests that a more prudent view of this issue is advisable: while female participants declared that their self-efficacy beliefs were reinforced after having been exposed to female role models, their attitudes towards male role models were significantly more positive. The open-minded approach of male participants is worth noting: their attitudes, self-efficacy and behavioral intentions were more influenced by their own goals (promotion or prevention) and the type of testimonial to which they were exposed (positive or negative) than by the gender of the role model. Considering gender theory, it is thus debatable whether female students prefer feminine entrepreneurial role models. One reason may be the "male-gendered heroism" in management and entrepreneurship, and the tendency of both women and men to admire masculine entrepreneurial figures and to choose models that best fit traditional career gender stereotypes. Given that the entrepreneurial career is organized around a cognitive and cultural scheme that embodies the most typical features of the concept around a "masculine ideal," it is thus probable that entrepreneurial role models are evaluated on the basis of their similarity with the concept "prototype." Educators may make a

major contribution by challenging these well-established schemes and finding new ways to develop the entrepreneurial spirit in students. We think that entrepreneurship research has much to gain from investigating the consequences of these propositions in the entrepreneurial context, and in analyzing their practical implications for entrepreneurial education.

2.2. The impact of same-gender positive and negative symbolic role models

Laviolette, Radu Lefebvre and Brunel (2012) tested a structural model in which the impact of role models on self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention was conceptualized as a cognitive and affective five-step process. To be effective, a sensitization entrepreneurial message must first generate identification between the observer and the fictional role model. Second, once the identification stage is secured, it is necessary to ensure that the observer holds a favorable attitude toward the model. Third, if the attitude toward the model is positive, there is a need to check whether the message generates a strong emotional arousal. Fourth, if there is strong emotional arousal, the observer may experience increased self-efficacy beliefs. Fifth, if the level of self-efficacy beliefs is high, entrepreneurial intention may also be reinforced.
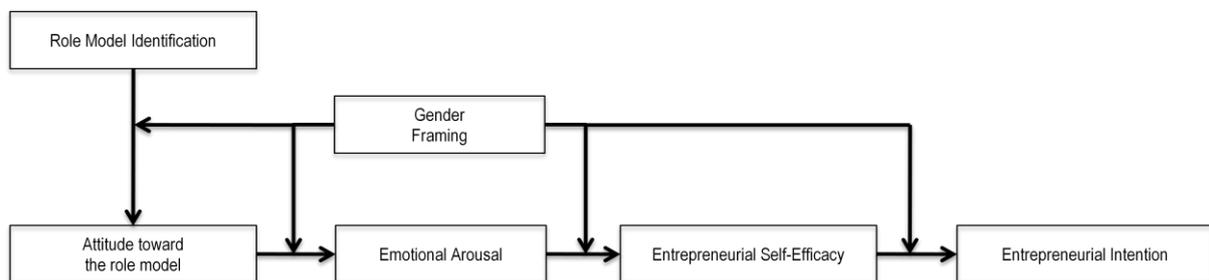
Figure 2. The impact of role models on entrepreneurial intention: a structural model

In social psychology, the impact of negative role models on self-efficacy and behavioral intention has rarely been studied. A long tradition of research going back to learning psychology (Bandura's theory of vicarious learning, 1971) reinforced the tendency to focus on detailed analyses of the impact of positive role models, whereas the impact of negative models was regarded as being slight or non-existent in terms of changing attitudes and intentions. However, emphasizing narratives of success rather than failure is not necessarily the most effective strategy to use when the objective is to encourage change (Higgins, 1998). Individuals can be influenced by a message featuring a successful model or by a message highlighting the failure of a counter-model (Stapel and Koomen, 2001; Stapel and Marx, 2006). Models of failure may be more effective than models of success in situations in which the aim is to avoid an undesirable state or

result, such as entrepreneurial failure at an early stage. From a cognitive standpoint, the key variable of this impact seems to be identification with the role model, which may consequently influence attitude toward the role model.

Identification is encouraged by perceived similarity in terms of personal characteristics and skills, including age, gender, field of competence (Wheeler, Petty and Bizer, 2005; Wohlford, Lochman and Barry, 2004), values and aspirations (Filstad, 2004). The more a role model is perceived as being similar, the greater the probability that the observer will produce imitative behaviors (Wilson et al., 2009; Scott, 2009). Research indicates that perceived similarity is a key moderating variable of self-efficacy concerning the start of a new business (Gupta et al., 2008, 2009; Mueller and Conway Dato-On, 2008). Entrepreneurs tend to have role models of the same gender (Bosma et al., 2011). Gender similarity may be a particularly influential factor for potential female entrepreneurs (Murrell and Zagenczyk, 2006; Quimby and DeSantis, 2006; Wilson, Kickul and Marlino, 2007). Men and women generally decide to embark on careers that traditionally correspond to their gender (Buunk and Gibbons, 2007; Buunk and Van der Laan, 2002). Research has shown that women tend to restrict their professional choice to a greater degree than men due to the low level of self-efficacy that they express regarding careers such as management and enterprise creation, viewed as "masculine" (Chowdury and Endres, 2005; Wilson, Kickful and Marlino, 2007). However, students' attitudes and behaviors can be modified by repeated exposure to less conventional role models, either real or imagined (Bird and Brush, 2002; Oppedisano and Laird, 2006).

We carried out an experimental study on 276 French students enrolled in a management and entrepreneurship curriculum in the spring of 2011. Participants were 152 female and 124 male students with a major or a minor in entrepreneurship. Participants were exposed to either a positive or a negative same-gender role model. The success story was attributed to a young graduate who had swiftly become an established entrepreneur, whereas a young graduate who failed as an established entrepreneur after graduation narrated an unsuccessful story. The experiment had a 2 (model type: positive or negative) x 2 (model gender: female or male) between-participant design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions. After exposure to the role model testimonial, participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire that measured the impact of the print message. We assessed attitude toward the role model, role model identification, emotional arousal, entrepreneurial self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention.

To test our hypotheses and the structural model, we used the structural equation method that enabled us to analyze several groups simultaneously. Results indicate that the model explains

37% of attitude toward the role model, 56% of emotional arousal, 4% of entrepreneurial self-efficacy and 16% of entrepreneurial intention. To test the two moderating hypotheses, we performed a multi-group analysis. Message framing moderated all the relationships among the variables. A successful entrepreneurial story reinforces the relationships between role model identification and attitude toward the role model, that between emotional arousal and self-efficacy, and that between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention. A failure testimonial reinforces only the relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention. Gender had no impact on the relationship between attitude toward the model and emotional arousal, but it did moderate all the other relationships of the model. Moreover, the female role model generated a stronger impact on women's entrepreneurial intentions than the male role model did for male participants.

Entrepreneurial education may play a significant role in developing positive self-efficacy beliefs, through a systematic effort to develop the main sources of self-efficacy, notably modeling, social persuasion and emotional arousal (Bandura, 2006). Typically, entrepreneurial education consists in case studies and meetings with guest entrepreneurs, which offer a prime opportunity to enhance self-efficacy through social comparison feedback. Following exposure to role models, persuasive discussions with professors and professionals in educational programs can also contribute to consolidating self-efficacy beliefs while reducing stress levels and anxiety (social persuasion and emotional arousal regulation). Entrepreneurship education could therefore move towards a more interactive role modeling pedagogy.

3. Professors' interventions after exposure to entrepreneurial role models: mixed effects on self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions

In an educational context, exposure to entrepreneurial role models is often accompanied by additional introductory or conclusive messages from teachers and tutors (Mellor et al., 2006). These messages may consist in encouragements and recommendations regarding the best strategies to succeed as an entrepreneur. They may also highlight pitfalls and prevent students from choosing counter-productive behaviors. Professors usually use role models' testimonials when introducing students to new activities or skills, and in assessment situations to provide an illustration of the desired behavior or strategy to further implement in specific contexts to reach a particular goal (Margolis and McCabe, 2006). Professors' encouragement and recommendations allow students to understand the meaning of the model's testimonial and help them to integrate the model's experience in their personal representation about desirable future behaviors. To be able to fulfill this function, students must perceive their professors as credible, honest and expert (Gist and Mitchell, ibid.). According to Bandura et al. (2001), verbal persuasion provided by credible sources may generally produce a positive impact on the target's self-efficacy.

Laviolette, Brunel and Radu Lefebvre (2014) tested a structural model linking exposure to entrepreneurial role models and students' entrepreneurial intention. Our aim was to measure the impact of positive and negative entrepreneurial role models and to examine the effects of verbal persuasion from a teaching staff member (the professor in charge of the school incubator) on self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention. Previous research on various types of targets indicated that the effect of verbal persuasion on self-efficacy is rather limited compared with modeling. Yet this impact was assessed as significant when a young audience is involved (Bandura, 1997). More vulnerable than adults to other people's opinions and advice, children, teenagers and students seem to be more sensitive to their professors' feedback and encouragements regarding their career choices and related behaviors. Moreover, Zeldin et al. (2000) found that young women were particularly likely to listen carefully to their teachers and tutors' recommendations about occupations viewed as masculine or "a male domain," such as entrepreneurship.

We conducted experimental research in the spring of 2011 with 276 students (152 young women and 124 young men), aged 20 to 22, enrolled in a Bachelor's program in management and entrepreneurship in a Paris business school. Students read a message attributed to a same-gender graduate from their school to strengthen perceived similarity between themselves and the model. The message had a positive or a negative framing: two versions of the same story were elaborated

whereby the graduate described either her/his professional achievements as an entrepreneur (positive framing) or, respectively, her/his entrepreneurial failure (negative framing). About 10 seconds after role model exposure (to limit distraction), half of the participants were then exposed to a message of encouragement provided by the professor in charge of the school incubator. This short message of encouragement conveyed the idea that anyone could become a successful entrepreneur after graduation through hard work and determination. The choice of this source was motivated by his credibility among students; we previously tested his perceived credibility on a sample of 103 Bachelor students.

Findings indicated that our assumptions concerning the moderating role of encouragement on students' entrepreneurial intention were rejected. The structural model we tested indicated that the relationship between attitude toward the message and the students' emotional arousal after message exposure, as well as the relationship between emotional arousal and self-efficacy, were *less* significant when the role model's testimonial was followed by the professor's encouragement. In addition, verbal persuasion negatively impacted attitude toward the message ($p<0.001$) and emotional arousal ($p<0.002$). However, interestingly, verbal persuasion produced different effects depending on the students' gender. Its impact was positive on female students, and negative on male students ($p<0.05$). Of course, this contrastive effect may conceivably be due to a distraction factor induced by the professor's message presented immediately after the exposure to the role model's message. However, the pattern of results that varied according to students' gender prompted us to seek an alternative explanation.

Brehm's reactance theory (1966) may explain why an encouragement message generated a negative effect on male students. Specifically, we attempted to understand why in this situation encouragement discouraged male students rather than providing them with hope and strength. Reactance is an individual motivation whose purpose is to restore one's feeling of personal freedom when confronted with a situation of choice restriction or deprivation. According to Brehm (ibid.), the intensity of reactance reactions varies according to the perceived importance of the choice domain, and the existence of choice alternatives. One of the experiments conducted by Brehm (ibid.) demonstrated that students exposed to a message about a pedagogical change, attributed to either a professor or a colleague, reacted positively to the student's message while they rejected the same message where the source was a professor. Brehm (ibid.) analyzed these results as triggered by an identification process between oneself and the student source, whereas the professor was perceived as an out-group member and a threat to one's freedom of choice. In our case, students were initially exposed to a message delivered by a person with whom they identified (a young graduate). Yet once a member of the school staff intervened in this

relationship, he actually reduced the perceived freedom of interpretation of the message by the students. His arguments were evidently favorable to entrepreneurship, yet they produced a reaction of psychological reactance in male students. Male students tried to restore their choice autonomy by rejecting his recommendations. Unlike women, men are more concerned with the desire to express a high social status by showing their independence of opinion (Eagly, 1978). Unlike men, women are more affected by relationships with others and they search for harmony (Eagly, ibid.). The professor's encouragement may have reinforced female students' confidence about the desirability of an entrepreneurial career by providing a feeling of social agreement regarding entrepreneurship.

4. Practical implications

Potential entrepreneurs are exposed daily to a multitude of role models, either real or symbolic, which vary widely in terms of their profiles, discourses and behavioral strategies. However, research in the field of social comparison indicates that individuals do not compare themselves to all models in every situation; subjects are likely to actively *select* the models to which they want to compare themselves depending on their own goals, their level of personal or situational involvement, and their motivation and capacity for processing information (Buunk and Gibbons, 2007; Gibson, 2004; Stapel and Marx, 2006).

Entrepreneurial education can play a significant role in developing positive self-efficacy beliefs, through a systematic effort to develop the main sources of self-efficacy: mastery experience, modeling, social persuasion, and judgments about internal states (Bandura, 2006). "Learning by doing" activities provide significant opportunities for strengthening entrepreneurial self-confidence through repeated performance accomplishments either individually or in group contexts (mastery experiences). Case studies and meetings with guest entrepreneurs also offer opportunities to enhance self-efficacy through social comparison with successful entrepreneurial role models, who convey effective strategies for managing critical situations and allow students to infer the amount of learning and effort required to reach similar results (vicarious experience). Positive feedback and persuasive discussions with professors and professionals in educational programs can also increase self-efficacy beliefs while reducing stress levels and anxiety (social persuasion and emotional arousal regulation). Typically, management education includes the use of guest speakers and case studies, but such models may clearly be insufficient for an entrepreneurial curriculum, because interaction is often limited to enable effective personal comparison and enhanced self-efficacy. Ideally, entrepreneurship education should develop a

variety of meaningful phases of apprenticeships whereby students learn through observation and practice. Entrepreneurship education could thus move towards a more interactive role modeling pedagogy, with professors and instructors proving key guidance. First, they could deliberately select or exclude the models they put forward for student observation. For instance, they could orient their decisions based on the criteria of students' goal orientation and group gender-composition. Second, professors and instructors are catalysts of the sense-giving process the students apply when exposed to entrepreneurial role models. Teachers could thus overtly try to better understand the cognitive and cultural context of students' exposure to these models. In other words, what goals are students pursuing when they observe these role models? Are they willing to undertake an entrepreneurial career because they seek self-fulfillment (promotion goal), or are they willing to embark on an entrepreneurial career simply because they want to escape employee status, because they are afraid of its limitations and constraints (prevention goal)? Also, we might profitably raise the issue of the gender matching topic between students and models. Is it more effective for both learning and motivation to rely on same- or on different-gender role models and in what context? We could also question the overall predominance of positive models in entrepreneurial education and more deeply explore the learning value of negative models. Management education systematically puts forward glorious examples of individual and organizational success and ignores dismal examples of personal failure. However, entrepreneurship relates to such varied and complex situations that the "one best way" approach of management education may not always be the most effective in enhancing self-efficacy beliefs and triggering entrepreneurial intentions.

Additionally, our research indicates that professor's interventions after exposure to entrepreneurial role models may generate different positive or negative effects on female and male students. Female students would probably benefit from this encouragement message, which favorably affects their self-efficacy and attitude toward the role message testimonial, while male students may reject both the professor's message and the role model's testimonial because of a psychological reactance reaction. This suggests the limits of persuasion in an educational context. Other communicational strategies should be used to avoid reactance and to strengthen students' self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intentions. Radu Lefebvre and Redien-Collot (2013), for instance, suggest that commitment and critical communication may be favorable to nascent entrepreneurs who are trying to launch a business: commitment is directed toward reinforcing the target's willingness to engage in an entrepreneurial career, through incentives to present and defend one's business project in front of friends, family and potential partners. Commitment strategies may increase the target's identification with entrepreneurial role models and his/her

desire to behave like an entrepreneur. Another communicational strategy that professors may use in entrepreneurship contexts is critical communication, which focuses on the analysis and evaluation of business projects, to provide improvement recommendations. Exposure to entrepreneurial role models may thus be an occasion for professors to provide both a critical analysis of the entrepreneurial process and an emphasis on the benefits and challenges of the entrepreneurial career.

III. ENTREPRENEURIAL MENTORING: COMMUNICATION AND RELATIONSHIP OUTCOMES AT THE MENTEE LEVEL

For the last twenty years, various mentoring programs have been implemented all over the world to foster business launching, fundraising, and business growth (Hackett and Dilts, 2004; McAdam and Marlow, 2007; Messeghem and Sammut, 2013; Chabaud, Messeghem and Sammut, 2013). Entrepreneurial mentoring usually brings together experienced and novice or younger entrepreneurs to build a favorable relationship for the mentee's personal development and the progress of his/her enterprise (Sullivan and Kolb, 1995). Kram (1983; 1985) advances that mentors help mentees by offering career-related advice, exposure, protection, acceptance, confirmation, and encouragement. Previous research indicates that mentoring interventions at the start-up level are beneficial to the survival and growth of young enterprises (Deakins et al., 1998; Sullivan, 2000), through increasing self-confidence, managerial skills (St-Jean and Audet, 2010; Wikholm et al., 2005) and the "ability to act as an entrepreneur" (Kent, Dennis, and Tanton, 2003). Wanberg (2003) distinguishes between proximal and distal effects of mentoring relationships, with learning, social networking and relationship satisfaction envisioned as proximal outcomes, while enterprise outcomes can be considered as distal effects.

In the entrepreneurship literature, a growing number of empirical studies are dedicated to studying the functioning and outcomes of mentoring relationships and programs (Carré et al., 2012; Chabaud et al., 2011; Cloet and Vernazobres, 2012; Crompton, 2012; Gravells, 2006; Radu Lefebvre and Redien-Collot, 2013; St-Jean and Audet, 2013). Learning is acknowledged as the main outcome of mentoring relationships, regardless of the context (Barrett, 2006; Crocitto et al., 2005. D'Abate and Eddy, 2008; Gordon and Brobeck, 2010; Hezlett, 2005; Lankau and Scandura, 2002; Ozgen and Baron, 2007; St-Jean and Audet, 2012; St-Jean and Audet, 2012; St. Jean and Jacquemin, 2012; Sullivan, 2000; Ucbasaran and al., 2008). Authors have emphasized cognitive learning (identification of opportunities, clarifying the business vision, skill development, etc.) and emotional learning (reduction of doubt and loneliness, better sense of self-efficiency, setting more ambitious goals, etc.) as potential outcomes of mentoring relationships at the mentee level. The learning hypothesis may elucidate the ways in which a mentoring relationship generates positive effects on the mentee's enterprise in terms of growth and development (Floren, 2003; Hezlett, 2005; Priyanto and Sandjojo, 2005). However, the distal effects of mentoring are difficult to

identify and measure because they may become apparent after the end of the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring has been acknowledged as a primary mode of knowledge transmission and acquisition (Fielden and Hunt, 2011; Johnson, 2002; Merriam and Mohamad, 2000). Yet, "more than a simple exchange of information and accomplishment of ability" (Kalbfleisch, 2002: 64), mentoring may also support transformative experiential learning (Lee, 2007: 334). Entrepreneurial mentoring is depicted as a trigger of reflexivity and identity transformation (McAdam and Marlow 2007) that is a "reflection-in-action" dyadic relationship (Schön, 1983) whereby mentors employ various communicational strategies to influence both mentees and their enterprises. Communication and mentoring scholars are increasingly committed to studying mentoring communication in terms of message creation, transmission, and impact (Burleson and Samter, 1985; Cavendish 2007; Goldsmith and MacGeorge, 2000; Kalbfleisch and Davies, 1993; Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter, 2005). However, little research in entrepreneurship literature is dedicated to the study of mentoring communicative actions emphasized as strategic and goal-focused (Jablin 2001) as well as context-specific behaviors (Hunt and Michael, 1983). More research is needed to understand and measure the communicational processes and outcomes of entrepreneurial mentoring relationships (Cavendish, 2007).

Radu, Redien-Collot and O'Shea (2010)[8], **Radu Lefebvre and Redien-Collot (2010, 2013)**[9]**, and Radu Lefebvre, Lefebvre and Redien-Collot (2014)**[10] used a communicational and relational approach to study the functioning and outcomes of entrepreneurial mentoring dyads. Indeed, according to Hill, Bahniuk, and Dobos (1989: 15), mentoring may be conceptualized as a dyadic "communication relationship" consisting in "verbal (and nonverbal) behaviors intended to provide or seek help" (Burleson and MacGeorge 2002: 384). When engaged in dyadic mentoring communication, mentors elaborate and convey supportive messages depicted as "specific lines of communicative behavior enacted by one party with the intent of benefiting or helping another" (ibid.: 386). Mentors thus need to continuously adjust their communications to meet the needs of their mentees, which demands a "deep understanding of their own communication styles and a willingness to objectively observe the behavior of the mentee" (Rowley 1999).

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[8] RADU M., REDIEN-COLLOT R., O'SHEA N. (2010). The impact of formal mentoring on wisdom acquisition and transmission: a dialogical and relational phenomenon. *EGOS*, Lisbon, Portugal.
[9] RADU LEFEBVRE M., REDIEN-COLLOT R. (2013). How to do things with words: the discursive dimension of experiential learning in entrepreneurial mentoring dyads. *Journal of Small Business Management,* 51(3): 370-393.
RADU M., REDIEN-COLLOT R. (2010). Le discours de l'accompagnement en quête d'impact. Pour une modélisation de la communication en situation d'accompagnement entrepreneurial. *Gestion 2000*, 3: 43-56.
[10] RADU LEFEBVRE M., LEFEBVRE V., REDIEN-COLLOT R. (2014). Mentorat entrepreneurial et communication: quelles stratégies pour convaincre? *Entreprendre et Innover* (21): 19-29.

1. Formal entrepreneurial mentoring in the context of fast-growing firms: relationship functioning and outcomes at the mentee level

Radu, Redien-Collot and O'Shea (2010) did longitudinal field research to study the functioning and perceived outcomes of 40 mentoring dyads enrolled in a formal 12- to 18-month French entrepreneurial mentoring program led by the Institute of Entrepreneurial Mentoring (Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry), over a period of three years. We did participant observation of official and informal events organized by the Institute, and we conducted extensive interviews with mentors, mentees and program coordinators. The aim of this exploratory research was to identify and characterize the main phases of mentoring relationships and their associated perceived outcomes at the mentee level. Based on our findings, we elaborated a stochastic four-stage grounded model of formal mentoring functioning in a fast-growing firm context. The mentoring dyads we studied experienced these four relational phases at various times and durations.

1. The social categorization phase. Throughout their first meetings, mentors and mentees evaluate each other according to social categories (sex, age, profession, experience, personality, etc.). In matching the 40 dyads, the Institute generally considered the respective knowledge base, experience, level of commitment and value systems deemed essential for successful interactions. Exceptions to this rule generated a feeling of frustration that confirmed the necessity to preserve a significant gap in age and similar professional trajectory. The selection process enabled the generation of a complementary relationship, responding to the needs and aspirations of more than 50% of both mentors and mentees in terms of age difference. There was a higher degree of divergence regarding sectors of activities for the first two groups, with a more balanced ratio for cohort 3. Of the 40 dyads, 38 of them completed their trajectories through to the end of the program. Those that left did so for mismatching reasons at the outset.

2. The role modeling phase. Once they interact on a regular basis, mentors start being viewed as successful "*role models*" (Bandura, 2000, 2006) providing mentees with concrete illustrations about appropriate behaviors in specific work-contexts. They thus convey practical guidance for professional identity reinforcement and/or development (Ensher, 2003). Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) and the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971) predict more perceived similarity and identification in same-gender relationships. Moreover, gender matching of mentor and mentee was especially important for women (cf. also Quimby and DeSantis, 2006). The analysis of mentor and mentee verbatim demonstrated an extremely strong and sometimes

visceral attachment to reciprocal understanding and acceptance of the other in order to pursue and reinforce the mentoring relationship. Utterances by the mentees highlighted the human qualities, character, skills and value systems associated with mentor inputs, considered indispensable for implementing their contributions. Mentor verbatim focused on the practical considerations of providing concrete solutions to mentees' questions, coupled with a generalized expression of modesty about the nature and value of their contributions. Within the context of this relational phase, networking was particularly acknowledged by mentees as a key outcome of the mentoring relationship.

Data collected through interviews and observations also highlighted some of the contradictory effects generated by the role model status attributed to mentors. Two mentors appeared to take their roles too seriously, interfering with mentees' decision-making strategies, and creating unhealthy dependency tendencies that required intervention by the program coordinators. These examples highlight the potential pitfalls faced by participants and coordinators of the mentoring relationship, particularly regarding the often delicate balance of power, care and responsibility that needed to be established and maintained to enable both members of the dyad to reach their objectives.

3. The learning phase. Chouke and Armstrong (1998) found that entrepreneurs rate mentoring as one of their main learning sources, even more influential than higher education studies. Mentees may enhance their business and managerial knowledge, competitive know-how and commercial awareness (Edwards and Muir, 2005; Hegarty and Styles, 2008; Wikholm et al., 2005), and may learn more about individual differences and how to deal with complex relationships (Audet, Boucher, and Couteret, 2006). Mentoring relationships generate successful learning processes when the two partners trust and respect each other, and establish an interaction based on "reciprocal altruism," with both partners committed to sharing experiences and trying to understand the other's point of view. Several variables were identified as intervening factors in the mentoring learning process: frequency and duration of meetings, commitment to the relationship, oral communication skills, the mentor's empathy and familiarity with the mentee's business environment, and the mentee's openness to change and receptiveness to counseling (Audet, Boucher, and Couteret, 2006).

Twenty-six dyads pinpointed examples of learning impacts due to the mentoring relationship and to corresponding changes and transformations in mentee companies. Fourteen mentees considered that the real-life extensive experience base, developed by mentors through the management of their own companies, helped them to re-position their vision of how to instigate change and improvement in company practice. Some mentees designed and implemented

strategies and decisions that had already been tried and tested by their mentors. Eleven dyads estimated that the relationship helped mentee firms save time with strategic business development. In most of these cases, the mentees estimated that they had gained 12 months. A similar number pinpointed the positive impact on growth acceleration, without however providing concrete supporting figures. For the 14 dyads that did not express any learning added value, the reasons appear to lie in difficulties encountered in mismatching, perceptions of lack of involvement either of mentee or mentor in the process, incorrect perception of roles in the process and corresponding lack of commitment or other company problems due to the crisis.

4. The wisdom phase. The "clash of minds" (Hegarty and Styles, 2008) that sometimes occurs in entrepreneurial mentoring relationships may provide protagonists with the opportunity to promote, protect or revise values, while trying to express their entrepreneurial vision, or to articulate their understanding of the meaning and purpose of their business as a social and economic actor. We characterized this fourth phase of the mentoring relationship as the wisdom stage, with wisdom defined as "tacit knowledge used for balancing interests" (Sternberg, 1998). Wisdom cannot be taught but is acquired indirectly through experience and dialogue: "wisdom is probably best developed through role modeling and through the incorporation of dialectical thinking into one's processing problems" (Sternberg, 1998: 353). One of the key issues of mentoring would thus be to increase mentees' awareness of their own fallibility, inviting them to reflect more deeply on the motivations and consequences of their behavior and choices, as well as on the limits of their knowledge (Hegarty and Styles, 2008). The wisdom phase occurred when the two protagonists started thinking and discussing reflectively or dialectically, realizing that truth is relative and evolves in a historical context (Pascual-Leone, 1990). Less than a third of the mentoring dyads successfully negotiated the passage to the stage where wisdom can be acquired and transmitted. During this phase, mentees particularly acknowledged one perceived outcome of the mentoring relationship: the ability to maintain a healthy distance when making judgments and decisions about company strategy. Nine mentees highlighted the contribution made by mentors in terms of the alternative, long-term view they brought to on-going company development strategies. They pointed out that the combination of distance and flexibility has helped them revise decisions that could have been detrimental to their firms.

Drawing on Noddings's work on the ethics of care (1986), Goldstein revealed a major connection between caring relationships and the co-construction of knowledge (1999; see also Lavoie, De Koninck, and Blondeau, 2006). Mentoring, like other caring relationships, is constitutively asymmetrical, in the sense that one member of the dyad requires support, and the other admits to being able to provide it. However, the notion of asymmetry in a dialogical relation

may be inverted, according to Levinas (1979; 1988), for whom the other is always "my master and my teacher" (ibid.: 11); the other, because he/she needs me, invests me with *responsibility"* (ibid.). Levinas characterized care as the development of a sense of responsibility toward others and otherness. "Caring for other" consists in giving and receiving advice to increase mutual trust and self-confidence, which may sometimes generate direct social control of the mentor over the mentee. "Caring for otherness" implies more in-depth conversations about personal experiences, feelings and opinions, to increase mutual recognition and understanding of the uniqueness of the mentee as a distinctive and singular human being. Levinas maintains that caring relationships (1979; 1988) may be analyzed either as social and psychosocial interactions, or as ontological encounters. The notion of otherness belongs to the second approach. Even though it is embedded in experience and social exchanges, otherness engages the human being at an existential level: it is an answer – always problematic – to our ontological "loneliness" (Heidegger, 1996). We categorize the first three phases of the mentoring relationship as dealing with the "care for other" issues, whereas the last phase may present the two protagonists with a "care for otherness" challenge.

2. The impact of mentors' communicational strategies on mentees and their enterprises

Radu Lefebvre and Redien-Collot (2010, 2013) conducted a two-stage longitudinal field study between 2005 and 2010 in a major business school incubator in the Paris area, France. We studied 50 mentoring dyads of confirmed entrepreneurs and student entrepreneurs participating in an experiential learning program aimed at developing both entrepreneurial skills and self-reflection, and at securing business launching and fundraising. We developed a two-stage mixed methods research design. First (2005-2008), we did qualitative research with participant observation and semi-structured interviews to identify the communicational strategies most frequently employed by mentors in counselling interactions. Results indicated that mentors use four main communicational strategies to influence their mentees' behavior: persuasion, engagement, criticism, and provocation. In the second research phase (2008-2010), we did quantitative research with self-administrated questionnaires to measure the effective impact of mentors' communication at individual and enterprise levels. At the individual level, we measured the impact of communicational strategies in terms of commitment, compliance or resistance. At the enterprise level, we measured the impact of communicational strategies on business launching

and fundraising. Fifty dyads of mentors and graduate student nascent entrepreneurs participated in research phases 1 and 2, representing a total of 100 individuals – 35 female and 65 male participants (50 mentors and 50 nascent entrepreneurs).

2.1. Mentors' communication strategies

According to St-Jean (2011), mentors fulfil nine main functions in entrepreneurial business support contexts: psychological functions ("reflector," "reassurance," "motivation," "confidant"), career-related functions ("integration," "information support," "confrontation," "guide"), and role model function ("model"). Each function involves specific communicative actions, such as providing guidance and direction, integration and motivation when engaged in consensual mentoring interactions and, conversely, providing critical feedback, shock and surprise when engaged in conflictual mentoring interactions. Providing guidance and direction is a persuasion strategy (Bandura, 2006). Integration and motivation are classic engagement strategies (Gaillard Giordani, 2005; Joule, Girandola, and Bernard, 2007; Lewin, 1947). Providing critical feedback may be qualified as a critical strategy (Habermas, 1987; Maesschalk, 1994) aiming to change the protégé's social representations of the market and his/her business project. Challenging, providing shock and surprise may be conceptualized under the umbrella of provocative strategies (Bakhtin, 1982; Ducrot and Carel, 1999; Jankélévitch, 1964) intended to change nascent entrepreneurs' self-representation.

To formulate a taxonomy of communicational strategies in entrepreneurial support situations, we divided speech acts into four categories, as suggested by prior research on influence tactics (Yukl and Tracy, 1992) and influence goals (Dillard, 2008). We labeled these communicational strategies as persuasion, commitment, criticism, and provocation. Persuasion focuses on changing the business project's form and content to enhance its perceived coherence with commonly shared norms and social expectations. While using persuasion, mentors aim to increase the entrepreneur's ability to adjust to social expectations concerning business viability, feasibility, and business added value. Engagement focuses on increasing the nascent entrepreneur's involvement in her/his business project and contributes to the construction of entrepreneurial social identity. While using engagement, mentors aim to increase the nascent entrepreneur's ability to demonstrate willingness to take responsibility for her/his business, and to carry out requested actions to launch, finance, and develop the business. Criticism focuses on screening and explaining business project errors and omissions, and advising about alternative solutions. While using criticism, mentors aim to increase the nascent entrepreneur's ability to

assess the viability, feasibility, and added value of her/his business project. Provocation focuses on challenging the protégé's taken-for-granted personal and professional objectives, and self-image. Through provocation, mentors aim to increase the nascent entrepreneur's ability to question personal beliefs, representations, and self-image. Persuasion and engagement thus aim to increase the nascent entrepreneurs' ability to demonstrate the validity and feasibility of business projects, along with their personal credibility as reliable and consistent entrepreneurs. In contrast, criticism and provocation are employed to convince nascent entrepreneurs to step back from, and reassess, their business projects.

We discovered that engagement was prevalent in business concept elaboration sessions, as well as in business meetings simulations, and in development plan preparation contexts. Persuasion was mostly used in business model elaboration sessions and in fundraising training. Criticism mainly occurred in business model and business plan preparation meetings, and in fundraising training. Provocation was primarily employed in business meeting simulations.

2.2. The outcomes of entrepreneurial mentoring

Yukl and Tracey (1992) assert that interpersonal communications may generate three types of outcomes at the individual level: compliance, commitment, and resistance. Compliance occurs when an individual accepts to do a requested action without modifying her/his underlying attitudes and beliefs. Internalization, or commitment, occurs when an individual agrees internally with the reasons for carrying out a requested action, because of a change in underlying attitudes and beliefs (Falbe and Yukl, ibid.: 639-640). Resistance occurs when an individual rejects a requested action (Knowles and Linn, 2004). When adopting consensual communicational strategies such as providing guidance and direction (persuasion), or motivation and integration (engagement), mentors may trigger compliance and commitment in their mentees. Conversely, when using conflictual communicational strategies such as challenging and providing critical feedback (criticism), or providing shock and surprise (provocation), there is a risk of triggering resistance (see also Hjorth, 2011). However, conflictual communicational strategies can be achieved at the discursive level by using both verbal aggression (Wrench and Punyanunt-Carter, 2005), or humor and irony (Wrench and Richmond 2004), which may generate either positive or negative reactions.

Several positive outcomes of mentoring relationships at the enterprise level were acknowledged. However, according to Chao et al. (1992) and Wanberg, Welsh and Hezlett (2003), these effects may be difficult to assess because they are rarely instantaneous, and they may become more apparent a year or more after the end of the mentoring relationship. The business

school incubator we researched aimed at improving the business launching rate and the fundraising results of student entrepreneurs' new enterprises at the end of the incubation, we thus focused on measuring the impact of mentoring communication on these two outcomes.

The most cited moderating variables of mentoring relationships include individual differences in personal involvement (Wang, Tomlinson, and Noe, 2010), personality characteristics (Turban and Lee, 2007) and gender (Levesque et al., 2005; McKeen and Bujaki, 2007), as well as relational differences in trust (Echterhoff et al., 2008). Indeed, gender composition of mentoring dyads is a key factor of mentoring relationships and outcomes (Levesque et al., 2005; O'Neill and Blake-Beard, 2002; Ragins and Cotton, 1999; Ragins, 1997). Ragins and McFarlin (1990) identified decreased reports of social interaction for female mentees in cross-gender mentoring relationships. Sosik and Godshalk (2000) discovered that women were more likely to identify with and emulate female mentors, whereas men reported less role modeling of same- than cross-gender mentors. The role of trust is also particularly important in formal mentoring relationships (Pratt and Dirks, 2007; Rymer, 2002; Wang, Tomlinson, and Noe, 2010). According to Lewicki and Bunker (1995), the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship is enhanced when mentors and mentees trust each other, with trust conceptualized as "the extent to which a person is confident in, and willing to act on the basis of, the words, actions, and decisions of another" (McAllister, 1995: 25).

Results indicated that persuasion generated compliance (p<.04), and engagement produced commitment (p<0.3). Criticism and provocation generated compliance, commitment, and resistance. Personal involvement and gender were positively correlated with compliance (.54) and commitment (.63), and negatively correlated with resistance (-.66). High personal involvement and trust positively correlated with compliance responses to criticism and provocation (correlation coefficient of .48; p<.05), whereas low levels of personal involvement and trust were positively correlated with resistance responses (correlation coefficient of .42; p<.05). Gender was positively correlated with resistance responses to provocation (correlation coefficient of .35). Female nascent entrepreneurs exhibited higher resistance responses to provocation (mean=4.5) than did male nascent entrepreneurs (4.2).

Engagement accounted for a significant proportion of variance in business launching (β = .56, p<.05). Provocation represented a very significant part of variance in fundraising (β = .81, p<.0001). Gender was negatively correlated with fundraising (β= -1.12, p<.006), with women less able to raise money at the end of the incubation process than men. Trust and personal involvement were both positively correlated with fundraising (β = .52, p<.004 and β = .64, p<.001).

3. Practical implications

Kalbfleisch (2002: 67) noted that mentoring relationships are often studied as "static entities, not as relationships enacted by human beings"; in other words as evolving interactions changing and developing over time according to the objectives and the context of the relationship. From a social influence perspective, mentoring relationships are initiated and evolve toward both "human as well as pragmatic" (ibid.: 69) objectives. In terms of communication, entrepreneurial mentoring is a form of "institutional talk" associated with "advice giving" or "providing guidance" (Gaik, 1992: 276), and orienting protagonists towards "specialized institutional goals and identities" (Muntigl, 2010: 219). The initiation, structure and functioning of mentoring relationships, along with their outcomes, thus vary according to their context of occurrence (Bisk, 2002). In natural settings, informal mentoring relationships are spontaneously initiated, with goals and mutual expectations evolving and adapting over time to the needs of protagonists (Allen, Eby, and Lentz, 2006), whereas formal mentoring occurring in entrepreneurship support organizations is a structured relationship, organized and planned by a third institutional actor (Tötterman and Sten, 2005).

To consolidate the effectiveness of mentoring relationships, there is a need to better train mentors in oral communication techniques, along with sensitizing managers of incubators and business support programs and organizations to the role of mentoring communication and relationships in achieving successful business launching, fundraising and business growth.

CHAPTER TWO

(Potential) Entrepreneurs as Sources of Persuasive Interpersonal Communications

I. PITCH COMMUNICATIONS: THE IMPACT OF ENTREPRENEURS' PRESENTATIONS ON BUSINESS ANGELS' INVESTMENT DECISIONS

The business pitch is a face-to-face interaction between entrepreneurs and business angels designed to allow entrepreneurs (the pitcher) to convince business angels (the catcher) to invest financial resources in a new enterprise (Pollack, Rutherford and Nagy, 2002). It typically takes business angels[11] around six minutes (Mason and Rogers, 1997) to reach an investment decision in a pitch context. In recent decades, there has been a growing trend in business angel networks to invite entrepreneurs to deliver oral presentations at an early pre-contact stage of the investment decision-making process (Mason and Harrison, 2003). The objective of these oral presentations is to persuade business angels that there is an investment opportunity that they may examine in greater depth in a subsequent confidential meeting with the entrepreneur (Clark, 2008). Clark demonstrated that the entrepreneur's perceived personal characteristics, social competences and communicational skills play a major role in influencing business angels' decisions in the context of pitch presentations because business angels draw inferences from an entrepreneur's appearance, communication and conduct to evaluate the investment opportunity. However, little research has been conducted to examine the impact of pitch presentations on investment-related decisions.

Radu Lefebvre, Lefebvre and Delécolle (2013)[12] conducted an exploratory online survey of 91 French and German business angels between September 2012 and April 2013. The sample comprised 14.3% German business angels and 85.7% French business angels. 89.8% of the angels were male. Average age was 58, the youngest was 27 and the oldest was 75. They were business angels for 6.11 years on average, with an average of 7.83 different business projects funded over time, and an average investment of €30,486 per project. We asked open-ended and closed-ended questions to assess the importance of the entrepreneur's and the entrepreneurial team's perceived trustworthiness, integrity, concern, competence, reliability, commitment, determination, and expertise (components of trust judgment, cf. Elliott, Hodge and Sedor, 2012; Fuller, Serva, Benamati et al., 2007), as well as the importance of the business project's perceived relevance, feasibility and sustainability in shaping positive investment decisions. We additionally assessed

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[11] Business angels are "private individuals who invest their own funds into a venture in which they have no family connections" (Kelly and Hay, 2003: 287). Although financial motivation is not absent (Lahti, 2011), business angels decide to invest time, money, knowledge, expertise and to provide access to their networks (Mitter and Kraus, 2011) mainly because of the pleasure and enthusiasm of participating in a new entrepreneurial adventure and because of the desire to provide moral support to an entrepreneur and his/her team (Harrison and Mason 2007).

[12] RADU LEFEBVRE M., LEFEBVRE, V., DELECOLLE T. (2013). Trust at first sight? The impact of entrepreneurs' pitch presentations on business angels' investment decisions in France and Germany, **Babson Conference**, Lyon, France.

the role of presentational criteria relative to the entrepreneur's appearance and perceived similarity, communicational strategies and conduct during the pitch. The investment criteria related to the management team and the business project evaluation were then statistically compared to identify significant differences between French and German business angels' practices.

Communicational pitch norms and behavior as well as business angels' evaluation criteria may vary according to the cultural context (Brettel, 2002). Business angels make investment decisions that vary according to their background, preferences, interests, and culture (Van Osnabrugge and Robinson, 2000; Mason and Stark, 2004). Several empirical studies have looked at business angels' market and practices in France (Certhoux and Perrin, 2010; Redis, 2006) and Germany (Brettel, 2002; Duffner, Schmid and Zimmermann, 2009; Stedler and Peters, 2003). However, comparative research on these topics is scant. Our main finding was that French business angels make positive investment decisions when they *trust* the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial team, whereas German business angels decide to invest when they perceive the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial team as *similar* in terms of background and experience. Both French and German business angels acknowledged the importance of communicational strategies and conduct during the pitch in shaping favorable inferences concerning the overall quality and growth potential of the business project.

1. Building trust through effective pitch communications

Characterized as "a psychological state in which one accepts vulnerability based on positive expectations regarding the intentions or behaviors of others" (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer, 1998), trust is the most cited moderating factor to explain business angels' investment decisions (Alaszewski and Coxon, 2009; Zacharakis and Shepherd, 2001). Several individual and interpersonal factors contribute to trust consolidation or destruction (Maxwell 2011). At the beginning of the investment relationship, the level of trust depends on the individual's personality and predisposition to trust others (Colquitt, Scott and LePine, 2007; Lewicki, Tomlinson and Gillespie, 2006). The initial trust assessment may be enhanced or diminished by the entrepreneurs' reputation and institutional affiliation (Dasgupta, 2000) and on the basis of referral sources, that is external credible sources who know the entrepreneur and can provide additional information and recommendations to contribute to the entrepreneurs' perceived professional legitimacy (Paul, Whitham and Wyper, 2007; Sørheim, 2003). The first face-to-face interaction between business

angels and entrepreneurs is of vital importance because the entrepreneur's physical appearance (Grégoire, de Koning and Oviatt, 2008), perceived similarity (Berggren and Fili, 2008; Franke, Gruber, Harhoff and Henkel, 2006), and communication and conduct (Clark, 2008) reinforce or reduce the initial trust assessment, as do investors' expectations concerning the nature of their future investment relationship.

When attending a pitch presentation, business angels use heuristics to assess the behavior of the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial team and subsequently decide whether or not to trust the management team and consequently to consider investing in the new enterprise (Maxwell, Jeffrey and Levesque, 2011). They use behavioral cues to automatically classify entrepreneurs' conduct during the pitch into one of three categories: desirable behaviors that reinforce and strengthen the initial trust assessment, disruptive behaviors that damage the initial trust assessment, and, respectively, disappointing behaviors that completely destroy or violate the initial trust assessment. The behavioral cues used by business angels to infer trust judgments are mostly related to the entrepreneurs' speech, appearance and conduct during the pitch. Mishra (1996) found that when individuals face a stressful and highly involving situation, they tend to display more of such behavioral cues because of the increased difficulty in controlling one's emotions and managing impressions under stress.

According to Maxwell (2011), business angels' form their trust inferences on the basis of four complementary trust dimensions: trustworthiness, capability, trusting behavior and the communication of the entrepreneurial team. Each of these dimensions corresponds to specific behavioral manifestations and cues that business angels rapidly identify and interpret to decide whether or not to trust a managerial team (Dibben, 2000). The entrepreneur's trustworthiness is thus assessed on the basis of perceived consistency (Gabarro, 1978), benevolence (Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, 1995) and integrity (Lewicki, Tomlinson and Gillespie, 2006). The entrepreneur's capability is evaluated based on perceived competence or skills (Gabarro, 1978), experience (Amit, Glosten and Muller, 1990), and judgment (Rosen and Jerdee, 1977). The entrepreneur's trusting behavior or openness is assessed based on that person's capacity to demonstrate disclosure (Currall and Judge, 1995), reliance and receptiveness (Levie and Gimmon, 2008). Finally, the entrepreneur's communication is evaluated based on perceived accuracy (Rotter, 1980) explanation (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard and Werner, 1998) and openness (Sapienza and Korsgaard, 1996).

2. Impression management in a pitch context

Entrepreneurs use rhetoric and impression management when first interacting with business angels to reflect "assertiveness, confidence, expertise, and concern" (Yusuf, 2011: 379). Impression management consists in the "presentation of self" Goffman (1959) through a systematic and purposive behavioral self-management of personal conduct, communication and physical appearance to "obtain valuated and desirable outcomes" (Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley and Gilstrap, 2008: 1084). Evidence exists that the greater the entrepreneurs' ability to effectively interact with potential resource providers, the greater their financial success (Baron and Markman, 2003: 41; see also Clark, 2008). Specifically, the perceived expressiveness of entrepreneurs' emotions in interpersonal interaction is a predictor of the financial success of new enterprises (ibid.). Entrepreneurs' ability to manage impressions in business situations appropriately is acknowledged as "social competence" (ibid.). The entrepreneurs' communication style and actual delivery of the business plan during the pitch is a major trigger of trust inferences (Nagy, Pollack, Rutherford and Lohrke, 2012); business angels rely on verbal and non-verbal behavioral cues to assess the management team's credibility, legitimacy and commitment (Bird and Schjoedt 2009: 342).

The entrepreneur's performance in a pitch context is interpreted by investors as an indicator of the capacity to create a viable and sustainable enterprise (Anderson and Warren, 2011) and as a behavioral manifestation of underlying personality characteristics (Peeters and Lievens, 2006). Business angels cannot know in advance if the business will succeed; they can only rely on the entrepreneurs' performance and information to draw inferences concerning their trustworthiness to help them decide whether or not to invest in a business "that is both real and yet unreal" (Anderson, 2005: 14). The pitch provides "order and familiarity" to "an ongoing unknowable, unpredictable streaming experience" (Weick, Sutcliffe and Obstfeld, 2005: 410) and highlights a value proposition through an attractive and believable narrative that can persuade investors to commit resources to a new enterprise. This is why business pitches aim to "cue plausibility and build confidence that the enterprise can succeed" (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001: 551).

Smith and Anderson (2004: 126) argue that successful entrepreneurs are "effective raconteurs," or, in Roddick's (2000: 4) terms, "every entrepreneur is a great storyteller." In face-to-face business interactions, entrepreneurs manipulate both the content and the form of their presentation to best match the perceived expectations of their audience (Wry, Lounsbury and Glynn, 2011), storytelling being conceptualized as a "poetic elaboration on facts" whereby the

entrepreneur may "exaggerate, omit, draw connections where none are apparent" (Gabriel, 2004: 75). Entrepreneurs tend to hide or downplay information perceived as potentially threatening for their self-presentation and put forward information perceived as supportive of favorable impressions (Gardner and Martinko, 1988). The tactics of self-presentation used by entrepreneurs may consist in verbal behaviors (self-promotion, self-description, entitlements, exemplification, etc.) and non-verbal behaviors (facial expressions, body position, tone of voice, etc.), as well as in the manipulation of artifactual displays, such as make-up, clothing, and settings (Kleinmann and Klehe, 2010).

During a business pitch, which is a role-governed situation, investors quickly categorize entrepreneurs according to "person prototypes" or stereotypes through a prototype-matching process whereby entrepreneurs try to manage their public image so as to conform to prototypic characteristics of the role they are playing (Miller, 2012). The person prototypes are culturally shared and automatically applied in first impression interactions to facilitate social categorization (Roberts, 2005). Because "negative impressions tend to be more salient and memorable than positive ones" (Elsbach, 2003: 2), business angels are searching for similarity in terms of social category, background and values between themselves and the entrepreneurial team. Research indicates that perceived similarity in terms of professional experience and background can contribute to generating favorable trust judgments (Carter and Van Auken, 1992; Franke, Gruber, Harhoff and Henkel, 2006). Perceived similarity with the entrepreneur provides business angels with a reassuring feeling of "fit" or congruence, therefore favorably contributing to the investment decision (Chen, Yao and Kotha, 2009; Harvey, 2001). Schneider (1969) noted that the perceived congruence between an actor's behavior and the audience's expectations positively impacts the audience's inferences and evaluation of the actor's performance and worth. Of course, certain personal characteristics, such as gender, age, and race, inherently limit the range of public images that can be projected during a pitch (Jones and Wortman, 1973). Additionally, high physical attractiveness and high status or power are more successful in conveying positive impressions of sociability, warmth and self-confidence than low physical attractiveness, low status or power (Gurevitch, 1984; Kleincke, 1975).

Even though presentational factors strongly influence the business angels' post-pitch intentions (Clark, 2008), investors seem to be unaware or reluctant to acknowledge the impact of entrepreneurs' conduct and communication on their investment decisions.

3. Evaluation criteria triggering trust inferences in a pitch context

The verbatim collected from the open-ended questions indicate that both French and German business angels mostly provided entrepreneur-related criteria to explain their trust assessment process in a pitch context. The most cited evaluation criteria related to the management team are persuasiveness, credibility, and team composition. Business angels stressed that "the rigor and credibility of the team are crucial," as well as "an entrepreneur able to persuade an audience," "a team that knows exactly how to make the product and knows the buyers," and "relevant management team, with complementary skills," "a credible team," "a convincing management team." A business angel mentioned ed the importance of the emotional impact of the pitch: "I need to feel empathy with the team." Other important criteria spontaneously cited as generating trust inferences are the entrepreneur's conduct and communicational skills, personality, leadership and trustworthiness. "The team factor is of enormous importance: I need to feel confident that the start-up team is capable and trustworthy in the long term," "the entrepreneur and/or the entrepreneurial team must inspire confidence."

The foremost French business angels' entrepreneur-related evaluation criterion is *persuasiveness*, whereas German business angels put forward entrepreneur *credibility* as the main factor involved in the trust assessment process occurring in business pitch meetings. Persuasiveness was characterized as the ability of the pitcher to present a business proposition clearly and convincingly. Credibility assessment seemed to rely on perceived *similarity*, with German business angels highlighting the importance of similar industry/market experience and similar professional background between themselves and the entrepreneur. Both French and German business angels acknowledged the importance of impression management in producing positive trust inferences. The quality of entrepreneurs' conduct, communication and self-presentation were explicitly emphasized: "I appreciate a qualitative and clear presentation," "The presentation's quality and style are essential to me," "I need to understand the project (which is rather rare)," "I'm looking for simple and clear business presentations about the team's objectives and resources," "A concise executive summary," and "The major issue is to understand the entrepreneur's presentation about the project, the product, and the market. If I don't understand what the project is about, I won't go further with it. Even a complex product, service or technique can be exposed in a simple and clear way."

Additionally, French and German business angels stressed several business project-related evaluation criteria contributing to trust assessment in a pitch context. The most cited ones were the

feeling that there is an opportunity behind the project, followed by perceived feasibility, commercialization, financial forecasts, innovation, idea protection and business model. Few business angels spontaneously underlined the importance of the expected performance, profitability and return on investment. Moreover, few participants acknowledged the importance of an exit strategy for their final investment decision. To summarize, opportunity (business concept, innovation) and feasibility factors (finance, business model, commercialization, idea protection) came first, whereas performance considerations seemed to be of minor importance. Business angels emphasized the fact that they were looking for "a previously unaddressed, big problem," "a true innovation and a market demand," "a capacity to compete on the market," "sustainable, protectable and expandable market place, realistic financials, sensible valuation, clear deal structure, legals in place and tax advantages fully considered." Both French and German business angels acknowledged the importance of impression management in producing positive trust inferences when focusing on business project-related factors: "I must understand the strategy and the clients' needs"; "I appreciate the relevance and realism of commercial strategy"; "I like when the financial approach is prudent and the financial previsions understandable and reasonable"; "I need to understand the business model and the product"; and "I like when I feel that the market analysis is credible and when the strategy elaborated to address the market seams relevant." To summarize, impression management is the major source of entrepreneurial team and business project-related trust inferences: "I evaluate what I see: the entrepreneur's behavior during the pitch, the persuasiveness (understanding and coherence) of his/her presentation, the clarity of his/her speech. If I like these three factors, I feel that I can trust the team and I may thus consider making an investment in the enterprise."

4. Practical and Theoretical Implications

This research has several practical implications for business support and policy-making. By enhancing our understanding of the presentational factors that shape investment decisions, we can develop better educational and training programs for novice entrepreneurs, along with better public information for "virgin investors" (business angels who have not yet completed their first deal) and business angel networks. Entrepreneurship education and training both in universities and business incubators could highlight communication behavior more explicitly as a strategic challenge for attracting potential stakeholders. We know that, from a rhetorical standpoint, entrepreneurs need to effectively combine logos, ethos and pathos in their business pitch. Logos

concerns the clarity and structure of the narrative and the reasoning entrepreneurs put forward to persuade investors that the new enterprise is worth financing. Absence of logos may create an impression of superficiality and lack of rigor. Ethos is about the perceived image of the entrepreneur from business angels' viewpoint. To enhance one's chances of getting positive post-presentations intentions, it is fundamental to appropriately manipulate ethos cues to create an impression of integrity, trust and credibility. Absence of ethos may generate skepticism. Pathos concerns the emotional impact of the presentation on the audience, which is why entrepreneurs "need to understand what motivates the audience to anger or calm, what irritates them or leads them to stupor, what enlivens them or arouses their sympathy" (Holt and Macpherson, 2010: 26). Absence of pathos may trigger resentment. We should thus help entrepreneurs to develop their social competence to increase the understandability and persuasiveness of their business presentations. According to Baron and Markman (2000: 110), there are four social skills highly involved in entrepreneurial success that one can enhance through appropriate training and assistance: social perception, persuasion and social influence, social adaptability and impression management. Videotaping and evaluating "elevator pitches," practice in negotiating funding, and body language training can help entrepreneurs attract relevant resources for their enterprise. Informing entrepreneurs and business angels about persuasiveness and similarity issues would be of much importance, given that perceived similarity relies on proximity factors that may be personal, professional or geographical in nature and that contribute to creating a feeling of "common ground" in investors. Business angels could be trained to enhance their awareness of personal biases in a pitch context and to better self-monitor their decision process.

Attracting human, social, financial, physical, technology, and organizational resources is perhaps "the greatest challenge faced by entrepreneurs" (Brush, Greene and Hart, 2001: 71). To gain access to relevant resources, "some resources (e.g., social) are leveraged to obtain others (e.g., financial)" (ibid: 75). Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial teams thus engage in impression management to project an image of credibility and success that will encourage potential resource providers to commit resources to the enterprise (Yusuf, 2011: 374). The entrepreneur's projected image, as well as his/her persuasion and conduct during face-to-face interactions, are crucial for convincing business angels to take positive investment decisions (Clark, 2008; Maxwell and Lévesque, 2010). During pitch presentations, business angels observe the behaviors of the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial team to assess the investment opportunity (Mason and Harrison, 2003). The entrepreneurs' conduct and communication are then used as sources of inference to evaluate the overall quality of the project and that of the management team (Clark, 2008; Goel and Karri, 2006; Gregoire, de Koning and Oviatt, 2008; Paliszkiewicz, 2011; Paul et

al., 2007). Business angels formulate trust inferences on the basis of the perceived relevance, feasibility and sustainability of the business project, and by evaluating the perceived credibility, reliability, and pugnacity of the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial team (Alaszewski and Coxon, 2009; Kelly and Hay, 2003; Desbrières and Broye, 2000; Sudek, 2006). Entrepreneurs' capacity to manage impressions effectively impacts business angels' trust inferences and may thus trigger positive investment decisions (Mason and Harrison, 2002; Redis, 2006; Zacharakis and Shepherd, 2001). From a communicational standpoint, entrepreneurs engage in a dramaturgical performance (Goffman, 1959) designed to convince business angels that they are competent, trustworthy and engaged actors, which confers credibility and legitimacy on the new enterprise (Yusuf, 2011: 378). From a discursive standpoint, entrepreneurs use sensemaking devices such as stories to present their business plans during pitch presentations (Loundsbury and Glynn, 2001). "Narrative sensemaking" (O'Connor, 2002) enables entrepreneurs to convey an appropriate self-image to potential investors, with persuasion envisioned as a decisive entrepreneurial social competence (Holt and Macpherson, 2010) that allows them to "talk and act 'as if' equivocal events are non-equivocal" (Gartner et al., 1992: 17). Nonetheless, business angels are not always aware of using specific behavioral cues to make choices, and entrepreneurs do not always know how to prepare a pitch to increase their chances of success. More empirical research is needed to fully understand the individual, inter-individual and discursive factors moderating the impact of pitch presentations on trust inferences and business angels' investment decisions.

Quantitative research could be conducted to test structural models linking communicational and impression management variables to trust assessment, and to investment decision. Structural model equations may additionally contribute to the identification of moderating effects of business angels' gender, age, and experience on trust assessment and investment decisions in a pitch context. Moreover, quantitative research with experimental designs could also test the impact of other contextual factors (such as the audience's characteristics and number, size of the meeting room, provision of previous referral information, etc.) on trust assessment and investment decisions. More exploratory qualitative research is also necessary with verbal protocol analysis to understand how business angels make inferences in a pitch situation. Qualitative research with participant observation and semi-structured interviews could clarify the specific behavioral cues that business angels rely on when making trust inferences, and what evaluation criteria they mobilize based on these behavioral cues to make trust assessments in a real-time setting.

II. ENTREPRENEURS AS DESIGNERS: RHETORIC AND AESTHETICS AT THE CORE OF BUSINESS MODELING NARRATIVES

Laviolette, Lefebvre and Radu Lefebvre (2013, 2014[13]) explored the notion of business models conceptualized as design forms, that is structured, coherent and attractive representations of future ventures. The content and structure of business models is genuinely discursive, because business models are formulated as narratives about potential desirable futures and shared in persuasive communication interactions and contexts. Our premise was that business models are generated, evaluated and negotiated according to aesthetic and rhetorical criteria. The aim of our conceptual papers was to investigate the links between design, aesthetics and rhetoric in the development and evaluation of business models in order to formulate several propositions for business modeling training in the context of entrepreneurship education.

Simon (1996) was the first to conceptualize organizations as artifacts and to highlight the artificial nature of the firm. Business, as well as engineering, medicine, architecture and painting, are artifactual phenomena and objects "concerned not with the necessary but with the contingent – not with how things are but with how they might be – in short, with design.'' (Simon, 1981: xi). According to Simon (1996: 6), artifactual phenomena and objects share four main characteristics: they are synthesized or fabricated by human beings, they may imitate nature but are not natural, they have functions, goals and adapt to their environment, and they are often described in intentional terms, as genuinely teleological (Sarasvathy, 2003). Design involves systems that do not yet exist or new states of already existing systems. In this context, the key challenge for designers is that of making these systems function and adapt to their environment, while keeping in mind that each situation is unique and that their mission is to elaborate both those purposes along with solutions that fit the situation (Romme, 2003). Design can be defined as a solution-focused approach (Banathy et al., 1996) because designers think that a problem can be fully understood only by designing an ideal solution that will provide purpose and infuse values in the design process: "the solution informs them as to what the real problem is" (Banathy et al., 1996: 20).

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[13] LAVIOLETTE, M., LEFEBVRE, V., RADU LEFEBVRE, M. (2014). *Business Modeling as Design Thinking: Implications for Entrepreneurship Education.* **ICSB**, Dublin, Ireland.
LAVIOLETTE, M., LEFEBVRE, V., RADU LEFEBVRE, M. (2013). Calling beauty to chase the beast: the role of aesthetics in the elaboration and evaluation of entrepreneurial business models, *EGOS Conference*, Montréal, Canada.

According to Sarasvathy (2003), entrepreneurship can be characterized as a "science of the artificial" or an "artifactual science" (Sarasvathy, 2013), dealing with "what can be rather than with what is or what ought to be" (Sarasvathy, 2013: 85). The notion of design concerns objects or systems that do not yet exist (Romme, 2003), with new ventures analyzed as the outcomes of a "motivated and negotiated" design (Sarasvathy, 2004: 522) generated by entrepreneurs in interaction with their stakeholders. New ventures as design outcomes are not merely the results of adaptive attempts, even though the "public acceptability" of design is crucial (Galle, 2011: 93). Rather, they are built through the founder's negotiation processes with the firm's environment (Sarasvathy, 2003: 217). New ventures are thus intersubjectively elaborated and evaluated according to rhetoric and aesthetical criteria, with entrepreneurs "enacting" the value proposition of their business in a "model" further "exposed" to assessors (Morris et al, 2012; Weick, 2002). Discourse is the medium of these negotiations (Romme, 2003).Business model elaboration and generation may be viewed as a design process leading to the creation of a new venture. Before the launching and implementation of future businesses, venture projects are first shared, evaluated and negotiated with various stakeholders such as business angels, potential business partners— suppliers and distributors—, and future employees. The venture as design is therefore exposed to the public eye and assessed in the form of a business model and/or a business plan to convey desirability and feasibility cues that may consequently trigger positive financial, commercial and reputational outcomes for the venture and its entrepreneurial team. In other words, the entrepreneur and the entrepreneurial team are confronted with a key issue: mobilizing major business actors to secure their willingness to support the future firm. For entrepreneurs as design professionals "language is not a medium for representing the world, but for intervening in it" (Argyris et al., 1985). This is mainly achieved through oral speech and written discourse that one may study as rhetorical attempts to persuade a protagonist or an audience. As Venkataraman et al. (2013: 164-165) noted, "intersubjective interaction is core to an artifactual conception of entrepreneurship"; narratives infuse artifacts with "meaning and value." However, if aesthetics seems to be important in such entrepreneurial design experience (Morris et al, 2012), aesthetic criteria are not always explicitly acknowledged in entrepreneurship research in connection with firms as design theories, maybe because they challenge common representations of business as a profit-based activity (Colas, 2005; Hjorth, 2008; Hjorth and Steyaert, 2009).

Sarasvathy et al. (2008: 334, 338) contend that entrepreneurs face three design issues: the unpredictability of the future, which makes it impossible for entrepreneurs "to calculate probabilities for future consequences," the absence of pre-existing goals or goal ambiguity, and environmental isotropy, which means that it is impossible for entrepreneurs to know "what

elements of the environment to pay attention to and what to ignore." Entrepreneurs as designers therefore have several alternatives to deal with these design issues (Sarasvathy et al., 2008):

- planning approaches may allow them to design organizations favorably positioned for the future albeit relying on predictive techniques within an environment perceived as beyond one's control and predictable,
- adaptive approaches may allow them to build flexible organizations that can respond to environmental changes within an environment perceived as unpredictable,
- visionary approaches may allow them to design organizations that will impose their vision of the future, within an environment perceived as predictable and malleable,
- effective transformation approaches will allow them to build organizations in concert with others, thus building a viable future out of current means within an environment perceived as contingent on human action.

Design thinking is closest to the last alternative in that participation and involvement in decision making and implementation of ideas and solutions are the core component of design. In other words, the design of entrepreneurial ventures is not mainly an issue of adaptation to the external environment but mainly about negotiating with and shaping it (Sarasvathy, 2003: 217). The entrepreneur as designer and effectuator will thus use such techniques as improvisation, bracketing, enactment and lobbying to reshape his/her environment while building and running an organization. What suggestions could help entrepreneurs deal more effectively with these design issues? First, according to Sarasvathy (2003: 218), "our designs are contingent on our imagination" and one can build a variety of artifacts by focusing on what one can do. Second, one should avoid the use of prediction and use the effectual logic of control. Third, one should view contingencies as "opportunities to be exploited." Fourth, one should design complex organizational systems with both interdependent and independent components to strengthen their sustainability. Scholars also recommend enlisting those who are concerned by the future artifact in the elaboration of the solution from the outset, because this will foster acceptance and commitment (Vennix, 1996). Given that participation is about initiating and managing dialogue with one's community, discourse is thus becoming the major "medium for intervention" of design professionals (Romme, 2003: 563). In Galle's words (2011: 87), design consists in creating "realizable artifacts in such a way as to anticipate and justify what they will mean to others."

Entrepreneurs must use their imagination to transform opportunities in firms, which are artifacts endowed with individual and social meaning. This can be accomplished through the process of "metaphorical projection" (Sarasvathy, 2004), which enables entrepreneurs to attribute new meanings to their offer by means of storytelling. One of the major tools of entrepreneurship design is thus the business model. Business models were conceptualized as a "system" (Zott and Amit, 2010), an "architecture" (Timmers, 1998), a "narrative" (Mangematin et al., 2003), a coherent "model" (Chesbrough and Rosenbloom, 2002), or "a series of expectations" (Downing, 2005). Key drivers of value creation (Mahadevan, 2000), performance (Zott and Amit, 2007) and

legitimation (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001) of new ventures, business models are a configuration of interconnected elements. Their interdependence refers to a systemic organization (Meyer, Tsui and Hinings, 1993). This dynamic consistency among interrelated components (Demil and Lecocq, 2010) was analyzed through a rational approach elaborated by the entrepreneur to gain a competitive advantage (Goethals, 2011). However, empirical research indicates that entrepreneurs design business models based on their beliefs and representations of the expectations of customers, employees and stakeholders (Vera-Munoz et al., 2007).

Sarasvathy (2004: 526) argues that new venture design involves "as much semantic categorization and metaphorical projection (if not more) as it does information processing and problem solving," with entrepreneurs designing business models of future firms that are mainly stories (Lounsburry and Glynn, 2001). In Kateb's words (2006: 395),"the quest for meaning is satisfied by comprehensive and aesthetically compelling fictions or stories." Among the criteria that entrepreneurs use when building business models, aesthetic notions such as those of symmetry, attractiveness, and coherence play a major role in the building of what one may call "an aesthetics of imperfection" (Gioia, 1988: 55). According to Colas (2005: 79, 84), entrepreneurs engage in a creative process resulting in an "artistic artifact" that aims to "discover" and "correct" the existing world, that is to "reveal the beauty of the world" and to transform the world along with our world vision. When evaluating business models, business angels and venture capitalists also use norms and standards related to aesthetic judgments to assess the originality, persuasiveness, and realism of business models (Maxwell, Jeffrey, and Lévesque, 2011). The aesthetic impact of aesthetic stimuli such as logos, brand names, products, advertising, and architecture equally influence non-aesthetic evaluations (Bauerly and Liu, 2008). "Aesthetics, loosely defined as the appreciation of beauty, subsumes both ethics and economics within a holistic justificatory mechanism for business decisions" (Dobson, 2007: 41). Concretely, the design of future ventures and its evaluation are "affected by a sense of proportion, flow, and rhythm" (Kersten, 2008: 195) whereby rhetoric and aesthetic imagination both contribute to the delivery of an entrepreneurial vision encapsulated within a business model.

1. Business model elaboration

Business model elaboration is an ongoing design process where both entrepreneurs and their artifacts (the firm) are enacted. This process involves both objective and subjective transformations. The objective transformation of various resources into a firm through the effect

of the entrepreneurs' imagination can be qualified as prototyping. It covers the process by which entrepreneurs turn their ideas into prototypes. The subjective transformation consists in the progressive modification of the designer's thoughts, feelings and/or behavior through the very act of creating new artifacts. We call this process self-modeling.

Prototyping consists in building concrete artifacts with different levels of resolution, with the aim of testing ideas in design teams, but also with customers and users (Lidell et al., 2011). Entrepreneurs first design prototypes of their new venture at a low resolution level, with business models expressed in terms of rough financial estimates, sketches or paper models of products, and storyboards of services. A higher level of resolution is reached when entrepreneurs develop their prototype following market testing (user feedback, financial data, competition benchmarking, etc.). In addition to their effort to build concrete practical and economical artifacts, entrepreneurs may also be engaged in an effort to summarize and magnify their new venture as an aesthetic artifact by expressing a certain style. One of the main outcomes of business model elaboration is the progressive building of a specific "style" of the new enterprise that is its "DNA" or its "raison d'être." Acting as designers, entrepreneurs thus endow their business model with a specific style resulting from a balance among practical, economical and aesthetic values: "the grander the style the greater the initiatory impact of the firm: the more powerful the firm's being" (Dobson, 2010).

Self-modeling. Entrepreneurial artifacts generated throughout the startup process also infer and potentially shape the entrepreneur's personal identity (Smith and Woodworth, 2012). Previous research indicates that when individuals engage in an entrepreneurial activity, the associated learning process is most likely to produce changes in the individuals' lifestyle, tastes, and cultural habits (Downing, 2005; Smith and Woodworth, 2012). We characterize this change process as self-modeling, and we think it is a natural consequence of engaging in a business model activity. This self-transformation can vary according to many individual and enterprise variables, such as the level of personal involvement, the age and sex of the entrepreneur, the economic sector, and the country. This view is coherent with a particular ontological conception of aesthetics that highlights the idea that entrepreneurs and their ventures engage in mutual transformation. In this perspective, human life is emphasized as a "work of art" with individuals' life evolution conceptualized as a process of continuous and creative self-transformation, a ''sculpting of the self'' (Peters, 2005: 383).

2. Business model evaluation

Business model evaluation can be both formative and summative. Formative evaluation aims at shaping the prototype for refinement and enhancement in a nurturing context. For instance, entrepreneurs can gather feedback for their prototypes mostly from insiders (the entrepreneurs themselves and their supporters). Summative evaluation consists in testing the prototype to check for its potential impact on value creation in a challenging context. For instance, entrepreneurs can be challenged by exposing their prototypes to selected outsiders (potential stakeholders) to gather their feedback and suggestions. Whether the evaluation is formative or summative, it will probably be done according to the three major categories of business desirability, feasibility and viability criteria, according to the principles of design thinking developed by Brown (2009).

Desirability is often equated to the marketability of the prototype from an economic perspective, but it is actually a broader criterion that comprises the social, cultural and institutional acceptance of the prototype. How does the firm fit with the norms and values of the people to which the prototype is expected to appeal? This criterion is essential during the formative evaluation of the business model because the very fact of trying to deal with the questions raised by future users and stakeholders may enable entrepreneurs to creatively enhance the value proposition of their business model. This criterion is also of major importance during the summative evaluation of the business model. The interest of various stakeholders in a business model may be aroused only if it appears as desirable, that is attractive, persuasive and original. Several communication techniques may be used to test the desirability of the business model. However, given that time is often limited due to competition, short and effective communication techniques are preferable (pitch competitions).

The feasibility criterion relates to the technical/industrial norms of evaluation. This criterion aims at assessing the fit between the value proposition and the organization enacted to support it. The effectual side of the business model comes into play as evaluators judge the ability of the prototype to generate a feasible organization based on available resources. The prototypes developed are the artifacts, which convey a sense of the technical feasibility of the business model. What is usually expected here is the "proof of concept" (Montreuil, 2013). The business model must exhibit its structure or system of interconnected elements as well as its functionalities. In practice, this can be the description of the process by which a product is designed, manufactured or distributed in the form of a value chain. It can also be the product itself in the form of a beta-version of a website, application, physical product or description of the service, etc.

The viability criterion concerns the firm's capacity to generate revenues on a regular basis, and thus cover its costs and make profits. These issues are the usual questions that business investors expect entrepreneurs to answer when they present their business model and their financial forecasts. Even if rationality seems to be key to this criterion, research has demonstrated that entrepreneurs may be more convincing if they express their emotions while speaking about numbers. Evaluators such as business angels use their intuition and experience to make judgments and decision about the business' viability. In practice, entrepreneurs will exhibit figures and descriptors of the cost structure of their business, sales scenarios, break-even point tables, profitability tables, etc. This financial information is usually provided in the business plan.

3. Training students to design business models

In the field of design, *desirability testing* is a technique allowing people to identify and formulate their feelings when exposed to a designed object. The procedure consists in proposing a series of adjectives (positive, neutral or negative) to help a person describe his/her feelings with tools that are easy to manipulate, such as post-its . Usually, every single post-it can be used to express different wordings corresponding to potential feelings inspired by exposure to a prototype. After exposure, participants select a set of adjectives that better express their feelings. Once these feelings are recorded, participants are asked to orally present their contribution and explain their feelings to others. This technique can be used by entrepreneurs to test the desirability of their business model expressed in different tangible artifacts (product prototypes, development scenarios, etc.) with potential users but also with other stakeholders such as business partners. Once the team has gathered enough data on at least 25 people, they can measure the frequency of words generated by the participants, identify connections among them and synthesize the entire range of ideas in a short list. The result may be valuable feedback that can help entrepreneurs refine their prototypes and improve their business offer.

Pitching consists in an entrepreneur's making a captivating, short oral speech to persuade an audience composed of investors, business advisors and CEOs. Like artists, entrepreneurs are expected to convince the audience by executing a performance (oral, visual, etc.) that will convey information not only about the business itself but also about the people and the future "style" and "culture" of their business model. The pitch is a communication technique derived from cultural industries such as cinema where authors are regularly asked to tell a fictional story in a short speech or written paragraph to persuade potential producers about the interest and originality of

their idea. During pitches, entrepreneurs also express their business models in terms of various artifacts such as prototypes (simulated or tested versions of product or service, etc.) and the oral performance (videos, speech, scenarios, etc.). The pitch aims to attract attention and to invite stakeholders to engage in a dialogue to deepen other aspects of the business model. Whatever the type of oral presentation chosen for their business models, it aims at triggering emotional arousal in the audience, thus influencing investors' evaluation in a direction that increases the occurrence of aesthetic judgments as opposed to evaluations of written business plans. Such judgmental situations may be similar to a beauty contest situation, as described by Keynes (1936: 156), where a professional investor will not choose "those faces which he himself finds prettiest, but those which he thinks likeliest to catch the fancy of the other competitors" (Lanteri and Carabelli, 2011). In other words, Keynes suggests that in terms of decision-making, economic agents tend to imitate the prevailing norms or simply imitate others when asked to provide a public evaluation.

4. Practical implications

Aesthetic and rhetorical foundations of business modeling should be better acknowledged in entrepreneurship education. Further, pedagogical methods should be adapted to enhance students' ability to both elaborate and evaluate business models as design forms. A structured program could aim to improve students' ability to voluntary and explicitly build new ventures as artifacts. This program would start with introductory classes on aesthetics and design theory. Then, we could introduce rhetoric basics to help them develop their ability to tell the story of their venture and negotiate its meaning with potential stakeholders. Rhetoric may be very useful in supporting their efforts to identify effective arguments and examples that their audience might find the most persuasive. Introductory classes on qualitative research methodology such as semi-directed interviews and focus group dynamics may also be necessary to enhance entrepreneurs' capacity to gather evaluation and feedback from their stakeholders about their prototypes and business model. At the second stage, we may ask students to prototype their business ideas in interaction with students and professionals from different backgrounds such as arts, engineering, or mathematics to broaden their ability to synthesize information and transform it into the tangible form of a new product or service prototype. Evaluation training sessions with real business angels and business support professionals who will be willing to provide face to face feedback for students pitching their business ideas in a quasi-real evaluation environment could be organized. Mixing disciplines (business, art, and rhetoric) and bringing together students with different

backgrounds and evaluators/trainers with various forms of expertise may be a good solution for integrating design processes and criteria more openly in entrepreneurship education.

III. SMEs LEADERS' IMPACT ON THE EMERGENCE OF COLLECTIVE COGNITION AND COMPETENCE

In business contexts, both internal and external observers tend to make a recurrent attribution error, which consists in explaining success and failure as a function of individual leadership (Carland and Carland, 2012). The leadership literature has indirectly contributed to strengthening the view of leaders and enterprises as two autonomous entities with specific pathways and distinct impacts (Cogliser and Brigham, 2004). Yet recent entrepreneurship and group dynamics literature indicates that both leaders and businesses live and evolve through continuous interactions that trigger joint effects on SME performance (Kamm and Shuman, 1990; Yukl, 1999). One of the key missions of SME leaders is to systematically encourage and monitor the building of collective knowledge and memory, learning and shared practices to facilitate the emergence of collective cognition (Zaccaro, Rittman and Marks, 2001). Without collective cognition, SMEs may not be able to build "collective competence(s)," described as "the ability of a group to work together to achieve common goals" (Ruuska and Teigland, 2009: 324). However, we know little about the group dynamics that SMEs leaders initiate and coordinate from the very beginning of their business activity (Cooney, 2005; Kyrgidou and Hughes, 2010).

Radu Lefebvre (2011)[14] and **Redien-Collot and Radu Lefebvre (2014)**[15] argued that it is SME leaders' capacity to coordinate the genesis of collective cognition and competence that may help enhance organizational cohesiveness and employee involvement. This internal cohesion and commitment may consequently sustain the progressive emergence of one or several collective competence(s) that help the enterprise maintain its competitive advantage, while being able to adapt to changes and shocks in the external environment. We think that SME leadership hinges on moderating employees' collective cognition and action to help them manage resources strategically in pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities (Ireland et al., 2003).

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[15] REDIEN-COLLOT, R., RADU LEFEBVRE, M., (Forthcoming). SMEs' leaders: Building collective cognition and competences to trigger positive strategic outcomes. In K. Todorov, D. Smallbone (Eds.), *Handbook of Research on Strategic Management in Small and Medium Enterprises* (143-158). Hershey, PA, USA: IGI Publishing.

1. Building collective cognition and competence(s) in SMEs contexts

Radu Lefebvre (2011) emphasized the production of collective representations within the enterprise as a prerequisite for the emergence of collective competences that allow the enterprise to both promote and secure a competitive advantage and to effectively adapt to environmental changes. SME leaders and their teams also need to coordinate their individual representations of the enterprise to ensure that they are coherent and compatible with the pursuit of common business objectives. SME leaders thus moderate the genesis of collective knowledge and competence, and consequently increase the business' capacity to deal with internal and external strategic challenges.

SME leaders need to shape a strong and sound representation of the enterprise's goals, environment and identity, shared by both staff and managers. To transform this common representation into a vision, they have to reduce any *perceptual distance* between them and their teams concerning the definition of collective goals and means, and the evaluation of business outcomes. In SMEs characterized by a large perceptual distance between leaders and followers, collective cognition may be ineffective. The leader can diminish this perceptual distance by simply organizing internal meetings to co-construct the concrete production process solutions with the staff that would allow the enterprise to achieve the new strategic goals without losing reputation, clients and/or investors. In other words, the ability of a working group to effectively collect, store and combine useful external and internal information is negatively impacted when leaders and employees do not share the same image of reality, and perceive things in radically different ways. One of the major roles of SME leaders is to continuously reduce perceptual distances between themselves and their team to shape the information circulation and sharing within the enterprise and to ensure good coordination, integration and articulation of employees' cognitions, competences and behaviors.

Indeed, individuals perceive the world in different ways because of the complexity of social stimuli and because of the limited human capacity to simultaneously process all the available information in the environment (Wyer and Srull, 1986). This inevitably leads to inter-individual differences in terms of perceiving social stimuli, such as business collective goals, resources, skills and roles (Salam, Cox and Sims, 1997). According to Gibson, Cooper and Conger (2009), individual differences in life experience, personality, values or interests may enhance or diminish perceptual differences between a leader and his/her followers. Nonetheless, the leader's ability to coordinate people with different backgrounds and profiles is one of the main sources of

business competitive advantage: we know that collective creativity and adaptability is fostered when the team displays high levels of individual diversity in terms of skills and profiles. Perceptual differences between group members have a negative impact on business performance, but when perceptual differences exist between the leader and his/her followers this impact may be radical. Concretely, when perceptual differences are important within an enterprise, employees may need to invest much time and energy to regulate conflicts arising from differences in understanding and interpreting work-related social stimuli rather than jointly focusing on task performance. For instance, if employees and their leader do not perceive work objectives similarly, this will negatively impact priority identification and resource allocation, leading to adverse emotional reactions such as disappointment, frustration, and aggression (Atwater, Waldman and Brett, 2002). Moreover, doubt concerning the allocation and sharing of responsibilities within the enterprise may lead to a feeling of disempowerment among the employees, to limited autonomy and poor collective performance (Kirkman and Rosen, 1999). Strong internal perceptual differences are likely to slow or distort collective cognition processes, thus exerting a negative effect on business performance (Gibson, Cooper and Conger, 2009). According to Johnson (2009), collective cognition includes four basic types of group processes: information identification and gathering, interpersonal and group interaction, information evaluation, and common decision-making and formulation of action plans. In the information collection phase, the group gathers, selects and stores the information deemed necessary for future decisions and actions; in the interaction phase, the group brings together the available information that is collectively organized and prioritized. In the examination phase, the group interprets, evaluates and negotiates the meaning of information. In the final phase, the group decides which information to select and combine, and makes collective action plans accordingly. The speed and accuracy with which an enterprise passes through the four phases is a good indicator of overall group performance (Earley and Gibson, 2007).

The role of SME leaders is therefore crucial in reducing perceptual differences within the staff through effective communication consisting in the clear formulation and evaluation of work objectives, the unambiguous definition of employees' roles and responsibilities, and the lucid recognition and management of interpersonal conflicts. When perceptual differences are appropriately managed, SMEs may be able to elaborate collective cognition (Zaccaro et al., 2001), which entails acting collectively to accomplish their vision and strategic objectives (Gibson, 2001). SME leaders directly or indirectly participate in staff interactions, and their intervention may help or hinder the deployment of an effective collective cognition. When detecting differences of views leaders can contribute to mutual adjustments and understanding within the

enterprise. The concept of mutual understanding refers to individuals' metacognitive ability to represent the mental models of others and to actively adapt to the coexistence of different mental models (Huber and Lewis, 2010). A good mutual understanding within the enterprise, as well as with the leader, allows employees to anticipate others' decisions and actions, and to adjust personal behavior and communication accordingly. This improves knowledge circulation between individuals and promotes cooperative conduct instead of internal competition within the enterprise (Huber and Lewis, 2010). Leaders' ability to encourage, guide and support interaction among employees is likely to increase the consistency of shared mental models.

The articulation of individual perspectives and the progressive development of collective cognition are essential for the emergence of collective competence, characterized as "the ability of a group to work together to achieve a common goal" (Ruuska and Teigland, 2009: 324). According to Loufrani-Fedida and Angué (2006), there are a number of socio-cognitive processes leading to the emergence of a collective competence within an enterprise: the sharing of personal meanings and representations, the promotion of cooperative behaviors, collective learning, and interdisciplinary expertise focused on achieving business objectives. Leaders can facilitate the emergence of collective competence by developing collaborative tools and encouraging collective decision-making (Garel, 2003). Mutual trust, solidarity and an accurate understanding of various perspectives within the enterprise are key components of the ability to "improvise together" (Loufrani-Fedida and Angué, 2006). Cooren (2004) argues that the emergence of collective competence leads to a strong competitive advantage consisting in a distinctive capacity to mix routine and improvisation (cf. also Melkonian and Picq, 2010).

2. Strategic outcomes of collective competence(s) in SMEs

To identify changes in the business environment that may affect the firm's strategy, SME leaders have to develop a specific capacity to scan and analyze their market competitors and clients. They can consequently adjust their representation of their enterprise to the evolving environment and modify their strategy to capture new market opportunities and enhance the competitiveness of their business. SME leaders must also evaluate newness, that is assess the impact of environmental change on the internal business organization and functioning to be able to transform it accordingly. Finally, SME leaders have to enact the business transformation (Gartner, 2004), namely to effectively communicate about strategy change both inside and outside the enterprise, to help employees, clients, investors and competitors modify their representations

about the enterprise. **Redien-Collot and Radu Lefebvre (2014)** argued that these three strategic change processes require that three SME leaders apply major coordination processes: vision communication and transformation, business structure and process assessment, and internal and external business interactions.

How do SME leaders deal with these three issues? In some SMEs, leaders may have difficulties in articulating collective competences and strategic management in turbulent environments. In this case, leaders face the difficulty of identifying emerging trends and evolutions in the political, economic or social environment, which affects their ability to appropriately transform internal business processes. Other SME leaders may be able to identify environment changes, but they may be too attached to the initial business model and organizational design of their enterprise, which may become detrimental to the future development and transformation (Carr, 2002; Higgs, 2009). The fear of losing one's competitive advantage and clients may also explain why some SME leaders do not engage in coordination processes directed at strategic change management. These leaders and their employees may need individual and/or collective coaching and mentoring to overcome these cognitive obstacles. In other cases, SME leaders and employees spend considerable energy and attention adjusting their representation(s) of the environment and their enterprise, while trying to assess the structure, processes, business model and functioning of their enterprise. They then risk not properly maintaining and developing internal and external business interactions with business partners, investors, clients, etc. (Anderson & Ackerman, 2001). In this type of situation, SME leaders may engage in the coordination of internal and external business interactions by using classic communication tools (newsletters, website, press meetings, personnel meetings, etc.), with the help of a dedicated staff in charge of communication activities. SME leaders overcome these two pitfalls by adopting a bricolage leadership role. In other words, rather than trying to optimize the entire strategy coordination system, leaders and employees adopt a case-by-case non-systematic approach to adapt to environmental changes (Duymedjian and Rüling, 2010). SMEs that do not want or cannot see that external changes affect the internal business organization and functioning tend to choose a step-by-step adaptation process, without explicitly reformulating strategic goals. This may take the form of trying to limit transformation to certain sectors or business departments, or changing some business partners (suppliers, distributors).

Other SME leaders may voluntarily manage the three coordination processes mentioned above. However, they may face problems in selecting a specific order among the three. When SME leaders and their staff intermingle the different phases of the strategy coordination system, it is important to emphasize that they are frequently tempted to either quickly identify a major

external cause to explain the need for strategic change (Anderson and Ackerman, 2001) or to avoid any hasty assumption concerning the nature and structure of the future business transformation. For example, some SME leaders may be tempted to give priority to the preservation of interactions within and outside the enterprise even though they do not know what exactly has changed in their business structure and processes, and their discourse may thus sound somewhat odd to their stakeholders, who will expect them to provide evidence of the concrete strategic and business transformations and to indicate their external triggers. Erratic and disorganized strategy coordination processes may negatively impact work organization, as well as employees' motivation and commitment, and induce confusion about the strategy of the enterprise in the eyes of consumers, investors and business partners. At the same time, we think many SMEs adopt this approach because it gives them a feeling of autonomy and flexibility, whereas the strategy coordination system may demand much more rigorous and systematic thinking and behavior from both leaders and employees. As Rindova et al. (2009) observed, bricolage leaders tend to break free from their own perceptual gap, that is an environmental change that they reject or cannot take into account. They are consequently obliged to gradually deal with an organizational puzzle by initiating limited transformations that ultimately force them to design a new strategy and a new business structure.

The strategy coordination system may be implemented by SME leaders in a rigorous order: first, they mobilize their employees to scan the external environment and identify significant changes; second, they assess their business configuration and functioning; and finally, they decide together with their employees on what strategic and organizational changes to initiate to maintain a competitive advantage. To effectively manage the strategy coordination system, SME leaders need collective cognition and collective competence as a prerequisite for strategy coordination. Leaders may prioritize one coordination process or another to transform the employees' collective cognition and collective competences. In this interdependent perspective, the regulation of perceptual distances within the enterprise may influence the development of internal and external interactions. Additionally, collective cognition influences employees' capacity to adjust their business representation to new strategic goals. For instance, collective cognition may help SMEs identify why an offer is not adapted to a market that the enterprise successfully targeted in the past (Ruuska and Teigland, 2009). In this case, because the SME employees have developed mutual trust (Cooren, 2004), they can co-construct different kinds of strategic solutions that may allow the enterprise to either adopt an offensive marketing approach in its sector or to address new markets (ibid.).

We argued that SME leaders do not have to follow a pre-existing role portfolio to deal with strategic and managerial issues effectively. Rather, their specific contribution would be to moderate existing cognitions and interactions to enhance the collective ability to respond and anticipate market changes. In this perspective, solid collective routines are an indicator of an enterprise where perceptual differences give way to shared representations and identity. The capacity of collective improvisation may be an indicator of an enterprise where the two interactional spheres, strategic and the managerial, are preserved and helped to develop together.

3.   Implications

We need additional research to study the interaction of SME leaders and their employees from a communicational perspective. Rindova et al. (2009) pointed out the importance of language in the emergence of entrepreneurial identity and reputation. SME leaders and their employees adopt various communication styles and tactics that influence both team cognition and team performance. Additionally, qualitative research with case studies, semi-directed interviews and participant observation could be conducted to explore the role of individual and cultural variables such as gender norms in facilitating or impeding internal and external organizational coordination and interaction in SME contexts. Discourse analysis could provide interesting insights concerning the role of communication between leaders and employees, as well as between leaders and external stakeholders in the genesis of collective cognition and competence(s). More research is also needed to explore the cognitive and interactional aspects of SME leadership and its impact on business' ability to deal with environmental changes, to foster collective performance and to build a sustainable competitive advantage.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Projects

In June 2013, I launched the ***Chair of Family Entrepreneurship and Society*** at Audencia. The project originated from the joint effort of several local family businesses and political representatives to support the development and competitiveness of family firms from the Pays de la Loire region. I had the opportunity to fully design the research project and to shape the Chair's identity for four years (2013-2017). Together with a professor from the University of Nantes (Paulette Robic), I also supervised 2 PhD students on family entrepreneurship topics.

Two research projects were initiated and will be developed in the coming years:

1. **The social (self-)representation of family entrepreneurs in France**

   📖 RADU LEFEBVRE, M., LEFEBVRE, V. and CHAMPENOIS, C. (2014). *The social representation of family business in France: the family business owners-managers' perspective*. **IFERA**, Lappeenranta, Finland.

   📖 RADU LEFEBVRE, M., LEFEBVRE, V. and CHAMPENOIS, C. (2014). *Responsible Entrepreneurship: norm and/or ideal of French family businesses?* **ICSB**, Dublin, Ireland.

2. **Intra-family succession from the perspective of next generation members**

   📖 RADU LEFEBVRE, M. and LEFEBVRE, V. (2014). Fears and hopes of future family business leaders in France: role transition representations and perceived entrepreneurial preparedness. **IFERA**, Lappeenranta, Finland.

   📖 RADU LEFEBVRE, M. and LEFEBVRE, V. (2014). Four scenarios for the future of French family business succession (submitted, under evaluation, Futures).

In parallel, I conducted, together with French and Canadian colleagues, two research projects on one of my traditional topics:

3. **The impact of role models on entrepreneurial self-efficacy and intention**

   📖 St-JEAN, E., RADU LEFEBVRE, M. and MATHIEU, C. (2014). Mentorat et développement de l'auto-efficacité de l'entrepreneur novice: l'effet combiné des fonctions du mentor, de la similitude perçue et de l'orientation dans un but d'apprentissage du mentoré. **CIFPME**, Agadir, Morocco.

   📖 BRUNEL, O., LAVIOLETTE E.-M. AND RADU LEFEBVRE, M. (2013). Entrepreneurial Experience Transfer by Role Models: A Structural Model. **RENT**, Vilnius, Lithuania.

My objective for the next few years is to pursue my exploration of the relationship between communication and entrepreneurship, with a focus on (potential) entrepreneurs as targets and sources of persuasive attempts, while trying to develop a communicational approach within the emerging field of family entrepreneurship (Fayolle and Begin, 2009; Heck et al., 2008; Hjorth, 2011, Hoy and Sharma, 2010; Nordqvist and Melin, 2010).

I. THE SOCIAL (SELF)-REPRESENTATION OF FAMILY BUSINESS OWNER-MANAGERS: RESPONSIBLE ENTREPRENEURS?

What does it mean to be a family firm from the perspective of family business owner-managers? What are the major characteristics that family business owner-managers emphasize when speaking about their family firm? We define family firms as ventures managed/governed by the same family "with the intention to shape and pursue the vision of the business," and potentially sustainable across generations (Chua et al., 1999: 25). Family firms are the dominant form of enterprise worldwide; the vast majority of them are SMEs (Barnett and Kellermanns, 2006). The perceived distinctiveness of family firms has attracted a growing interest in family business research (Anderson and Reeb, 2003). Yet there is a lack of empirical studies focusing on the self-perception of family business owner-managers concerning the identity of their family firm in terms of "what are we?" "who are we?" and "what do we want to be?" (Balmer and Greyser, 2003).

In autumn 2013, we conducted a national survey of 297 family business owner-managers to explore their perceptions about their firms' core identity (**Radu Lefebvre, Lefebvre and Champenois, 2014[16]**). The sample was representative of French family firms in terms of size and economic sector distribution. We interviewed 206 first-generation, 60 second-generation, 21 third-generation, 7 fourth-generation, and 3 fifth-generation family business leaders and asked them to cite three key words that best describe their venture's distinctiveness. 789 key words were collected, of which only 5 were *not* value-related. We categorized them according to the ten universal values conceptualized by Schwartz (1992) and we did network data analysis to explore relations among the values. Benevolence was the most cited value to characterize French family firms. This value is one of the main features of responsible entrepreneurship as conceptualized by Doh and Stumpf (2005).

The notion of responsible leadership highlights a value-centered approach to organizational leadership, and conceptualized leadership as ''a moral, values-based, and thus normative phenomenon'' (Maak and Pless, 2006: 102) aiming at "achieving sustainable values creation and social change" (Pless, 2007: 438) for internal and external stakeholders. According to Hannafey

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[16] RADU LEFEBVRE, M., LEFEBVRE, V. and CHAMPENOIS, C. (2014). *The social representation of family business in France: the family business owners-managers' perspective.* **IFERA**, Lappeenranta, Finland.
RADU LEFEBVRE, M., LEFEBVRE, V. and CHAMPENOIS, C. (2014). *Responsible Entrepreneurship: norm and/or ideal of French family businesses?* **ICSB**, Dublin, Ireland.

(2003), Choi and Gray (2008), a responsible entrepreneur is characterized by fairness, honesty, and care about health and safety issues. Recent studies indicate that family firms may be better positioned and equipped for socially responsible behavior than nonfamily firms mainly because of their embeddedness in their local communities' values and interests. However, as Frederick (1994: 153) noted, the moral underpinnings of firms' social responsibility "are neither clear nor agreed upon." What does it mean for a family firm to be socially, economically, and/or environmentally "responsible"? Family business identities built in relation to social responsibility not only raise the issue of what constitutes social responsibility for these firms but also highlight their perceptions about what they think they need or should do as responsible entrepreneurs (Tregidga et al., 2013). Given that the academic literature on CSR discourses and practices in France is very recent (Berthoin Antal and Sobczak, 2007; Sobczak and Coelho Martins, 2010), this is the first research focusing on the self-perception of family business owner-managers as promoters and protectors of CSR-related values at the corporate level.

According to Vallester et al. (2012), family firms tend to convey a corporate image shaped on value-based attributes. When trying to highlight the most distinctive features of their corporate identity, family business leaders seem more prone than nonfamily companies to focus on the firm's distinctive values and relationships with key stakeholders than on the firm's offer of goods and services (Boissin and Guieu, 2009), within what Berrone et al. (2007: 37) characterized as a "corporate ethical identity" discourse defined as "the set of behaviors, communications, and stances that are representative of an organization's ethical attitudes and beliefs." Our main contribution is to provide empirical evidence of the major role of values in the self-perception and self-presentation of French family firms. We found that benevolence is the most cited value that family business owner-managers think as characteristic of their ventures, followed by tradition and security. Benevolence is a moral value related to relationships with proximal others. The idea of face-to-face or direct contact and relationship is thus crucial to the culture of French family firms, whereas tradition is mainly about respect for one's past, and security about the warmth, solidity and solidarity of family firms as organizations.

Siltaoja (2006: 94) argues that CSR is always "founded on some core values that the company represents," with values characterized as motivational constructs, "desirable trans-situational goals that vary in importance, and serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or other social entity" (Schwartz, 1994: 21). Koiranen (2002: 177) asserts that family business values designate "what is desirable for both family and business life," and he identified several major values of Finnish family firms based on family top executives' self-assessment. He discovered that these values were all moral values such as honesty, credibility, quality, working hard or obeying

the law, whereas economic values such as business profitability and growth performance scored rather low, as did social reputation values. Similar results were obtained by Dumas and Blodgett (1999), who analyzed 50 mission statements of family firms and identified their core values that were all, once again, moral values such as quality, commitment, social responsibility, respect and integrity. Duh et al. (2010: 478, 486) compared family and nonfamily firms and found that family firms convey "more core values with ethical content" than other firms, with "respect towards their stakeholders" being identified as a statistically significant distinctive core value of family firms that also underlined their willingness to preserve what they called "benevolence" towards employees and their well-being. According to Cullen et al. (2003), a benevolent climate is characterized by concern with the well-being of others both inside and outside the firm, which consequently generates a positive mood among employees and stakeholders that facilitates communication and information sharing, along with team-work behaviors. Six core corporate values of family firms persistent across cultures were identified by Schwartz (2005: 36): trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. The longitudinal study of Blodgett et al. (2011) comparing the mission statement content of two samples of family firms over a period of ten years indicated that the declared importance of some moral values such as respect, integrity, honesty, trust and social responsibility doubled or tripled over the years.

The values theory – which we draw on for our empirical data analysis – relies on empirical evidence in cross-cultural research that the structure of the human value system is universal (Schwartz, 1992, 1994). In this perspective, individuals differ only in their value priorities. The structure tested by Schwartz consists of ten main values (cf. Schwartz and Bardi, 2001: 1208):

- Power: "social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources";
- Achievement: "personal success through demonstrating competence according to social standards";
- Hedonism: "pleasure and sensuous gratification for oneself";
- Stimulation: "excitement, novelty and challenge in life";
- Self-direction: "independent thought and action-choosing, creating, exploring";
- Universalism: "understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people and for nature";
- Benevolence: "preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact";
- Tradition: "respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditional culture or religion provide the self";
- Conformity: "restraint of actions, inclinations and impulses likely to upset or harm others and violate social expectations or norms";
- Security: "safety, harmony and stability of society, of relationships and of self."

These values may be distinguished on the basis of their orientation towards the self or others. Some values favor individual self-enhancement. This category motivates the pursuit of personal interests such as happiness, pleasure, and success, while the second category motivates

the pursuit of others' well-being. These values may be differentiated along an additional criterion: innovativeness. Some values motivate individuals to preserve the status quo of existing norms and institutions, and privilege conservative behaviors, while others trigger a motivation to change the world and to behave in accordance with one's feelings and thoughts.

When invited to cite the three most distinctive characteristics of their family firms, participants spontaneously state value-related key words. Among the 297 participants, 135 cited benevolence as the most distinctive family business value, followed by tradition (118 participants) and security (100 participants). Only a minority of family business owner-managers stressed the role of power (25 participants), conformity (32 participants) and stimulation (33 participants). No significant correlation was identified among the participants' characteristics (generation, firm size and industry) and the values they referred to. Specifically, key words such as "proximity," "relationship," and "love" were categorized as benevolence-related characteristics, whereas occurrences such as "family," "respect for family values," "transmission," "patriarch," "unity," and "heritage" were classified as tradition-related characteristics. Key words such as "security," "stability," "confidence," "trustworthiness," and "honesty" were categorized as security-related characteristics, while we categorized as power-related characteristics occurrences such as "management," "role in the decision-making process," "ownership," and "responsibility." Key words such as "effort," "competitiveness," "work," and "success" were categorized as achievement-related characteristics, whereas occurrences such as "rigor," "temperance," "patience," and "prudence" were classified as conformity-related characteristics. "Conviviality" was categorized as a hedonism-related characteristic, while we classified "independence" and "autonomy" as self-direction characteristics. Finally, occurrences such as "fraternity," "broader future vision," and "global social responsibility" were categorized as universalism-related characteristics, while we classified "personal commitment," "dynamism," and "the motivation to fight for the firm" as stimulation-related characteristics.

To get some insight into the participants' social self-representation structure, we were also interested in checking if they systematically associated two or three values. Cluster analysis indicated that tradition is highly correlated with security, whereas benevolence is highly correlated with hedonism and tradition. Universalism is associated with both benevolence and tradition. Achievement is mostly associated with both benevolence and security. Participants thus highlighted the distinctiveness of their family businesses as consisting in *personal relationships* with employees, suppliers and distributors, allowing the enterprise to promote quality, authenticity and transparency towards its customers. The main characteristic of these personal relationships is

that they are infused with values such as trust, respect, love, solidarity, fraternity, proximity, rigor, and independence.

This study contributes in several ways to filling the research gap concerning both the self-perception of family business owner-managers and the explicit corporate values conveyed by family firms in their public discourse (as suggested by Balmer and Greyser, 2003 and Duh et al., 2010). Based on an in-depth empirical study using a representative sample, we unequivocally confirm that *values* lie at the core of corporate brand identity encapsulated by family business leaders − that is, an ideal vision of what their firm should be. Only 5 out of 789 keywords mentioned by the participants as distinctive features of their venture - that is, 0.6% - do *not* refer to values. This is in line with previous contributions putting forward a "corporate ethical identity" discourse specific to family firms (Berrone et al., 2007). The value system developed by Schwartz (1992, 1994, 1999) enabled us to specify these values and to identify the priority level of each value to family business leaders (the main values being benevolence, tradition and security). Benevolence is thus confirmed as a key core value (Duh et al., 2010) − even the most significant one for French owner-managers. We built on previous studies of family business values (Blodgett et al., 2011; Schwartz, 2005) by identifying additional values such as conviviality, security, rigor, and independence. Also, the order of priority in our sample is specific to the French population of family firm owner-managers because it highlights the particular importance of benevolence, tradition and security and the much lower importance of power, conformity and stimulation. More cross-national research would be necessary to identify family business values that may vary internationally. The very content of each value could also differ between countries or regions. For instance, French family business owner-managers understand benevolence as a mix of proximity, relationship and concern (see also the concept of proximity in SMEs cf. Torrès, 2007, 2006, 2003). Do family firms in other countries share the same understanding of the ten values conceptualized by Schwartz (1992, 1994, 1999)?

Our results demonstrate that French family business leaders perceive themselves (ideally or realistically) as responsible entrepreneurs above all, in the sense that they consider that benevolence, that is the preservation and enhancement of their stakeholders' welfare, is their most distinctive feature compared with nonfamily firms. This connects the studies of CSR in SMEs with studies of family business corporate identity: the identity of family business leaders is strongly rooted in moral values and is thus connected to corporate social responsibility. This finding invites us to further investigate this self-perception of family business leaders as responsible entrepreneurs to better understand the relation between responsibility discourse and practices in family firms. Our findings also indicated that, unlike business practices, family

business leaders' discourse on social responsibility does not focus on customer satisfaction (contrary to Chrisman and Archer, 1984) and does not vary with family business generation (contrary to Dyer, 1986) or with other variables such as industry sector. Instead, the major stakeholders of French family firms seem to be their employees, followed by family members. Nonetheless, this focus has the final goal of customer satisfaction. In other words, for our participants, economic performance and product/service quality rely on an internal organizational climate that builds on benevolence and respect for tradition, while providing work-related security.

We contribute to clarifying family-business goals and their conflicting potential as we demonstrate that goals – at least in their discursive dimensions – are clearly hierarchized in family business owner-managers' view, and this hierarchy is a way of managing potentially conflicting (family vs. business) goals. Benevolence directs the family firm's behavior towards an attitude of openness and flexibility towards its stakeholders, whereas tradition and security emphasize the importance of preserving the status quo to strengthen the sustainability of the firm. Achievement and self-direction build on these three core values of benevolence, tradition and security to generate economic performance. This is an important contribution to the family business values literature because it suggests the existence of a self-social representation of responsible entrepreneurship in which three core values related to the firm's social performance are the foundation of the firm's economic performance enabled by the achievement motivation and the self-direction orientation of the family firm.

We discovered that French family business leaders focus on ethical corporate identity and emphasize corporate social responsibility in their discourse, which has been shown to generate positive results for their venture (Balmer and Greyser, 2006). This opens an avenue for future research and invites further examination of how this discourse has emerged (especially, how it relates to the on-going institutionalization process of CSR in France, that is to the growing body of legal rules and professional norms imposed on firms regarding CSR) and to what extent this discourse reflects a strategic intentionality of owner-managers who seek to improve their customers' and employees' relationships or their economic venture performance through responsible corporate discourse.

II. INTRA-FAMILY SUCCESSION FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NEXT GENERATION MEMBERS

Recent surveys indicate that 64% of French family business owner-managers intend to pass on their enterprises to a family member, but only 26% of them succeed in organizing an effective succession process underpinned by a structured support system. Miller et al. (2013) maintain that difficult successions reveal the existence of a problematic relationship between the past and the future: successors may be tempted to either over glorify the family business' past, or to reject it completely, which would make them unable to effectively deal with ongoing business management and development. These difficulties are rooted in the cognitive and affective experiences of successors occurring before the family business transfer, during the pre-business socialization process (ibid.). **Radu Lefebvre and Lefebvre (2014)**[17] identified and characterized four alternative future scenarios of management role transfer in family businesses generated by a group of 14 next generation members attending a training workshop held in the west of France in August 2013.

Fourteen next generation participants were enrolled in a three-day session (9 men and 5 women, aged 18 to 25, future successors of French SME family businesses in the food, service, electronics and construction industries). Participants first identified several external trends that could significantly influence intra-family management role transition through 2035. Consensus was reached on four major social and demographical trends that were subsequently evaluated by the group to establish their degree of uncertainty and potential consequences on individuals, families and firms. Authors consequently used verbal data collected through participant observation and semi-directed interviews to identify the main aspects of the next generation members' cognitive and emotional experience when thinking about their future leadership role and to build four alternative and plausible future scenarios of management transfer in France 2035 (the Protector, the Reformer, the Opportunist, and the Rebel). These projected futures also provide access to the entrepreneurs' social representations of reality and may have the performative potential of self-fulfilling prophecies (Fuller and Loogma, 2009: 78).

Adopting a social constructivist approach, we conceptualize meaning generation as an intersubjective phenomenon, with next generation members' representations and beliefs emphasized as the result of situated social interaction and interpersonal communication. In this

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[17] RADU LEFEBVRE, M. and LEFEBVRE, V. (2014). Fears and hopes of future family business leaders in France: role transition representations and perceived entrepreneurial preparedness. *IFERA*, Lappeenranta, Finland.
RADU LEFEBVRE, M. and LEFEBVRE, V. (2014). Four scenarios for the future of French family business succession (submitted, under evaluation, Futures).

perspective, foresight is also conceptualized as a social activity consisting in the construction of meaning in context, with next generation participants engaging in the active production of alternative futures through dialogue and negotiation (ibid.). Montgomery (2008: 378) argues that the analysis of future scenarios allows researchers to understand the trends and challenges that social actors will face in the future, while revealing *unknown dimensions* of the social representation of the future perceived as less desirable by social actors with regard to social expectations, values and norms. The construction of what is desirable for next generation members is socially produced through direct or mediated social interaction with family members, business stakeholders and the overall local community. Perceived social desirability is strongly influenced by social discourses and interpersonal pressures to conform to social expectations, which thus increases the implicit and explicit demands to "obey the rules of the game." Social expectations are thus progressively internalized and consequently become personal desires and action triggers. However, next generation members evolve in a changing world, with social representations of family, work-life balance, and women's roles evolving and changing sometimes dramatically as compared with the recent past. Next generation individuals can find in this shifting environment a chance to make their own voice heard. Emotions, thoughts, and behaviors that are less conventional and potentially dangerous for the *status quo* may therefore surface in peer conversations. Our aim was to capture some of these new visions of family business succession from the perspective of next generation members. We used an interpretive approach (Nordqvist, Hall and Melin, 2009) to analyze verbal data because this methodological approach was adapted to our social constructivist perspective. Specifically, we think that the future is never experienced directly in the present, but rather through the mediation of symbols such as words and social representations or images conveyed through words (Fuller and Loogma, 2009: 72). Workshop conversations indicated that the next generation participants' relationship with the past, present and future of family firms is highly *ambivalent*. "At the crux of past decisions and future possibilities" (Anderson, 2013: 43), next generation participants are sitting "sometimes uncomfortably, between the past and the future" (ibid.). Dealing directly with the ambivalence of the next generation members is nevertheless imperative for securing the stability and development of family businesses (Lansber, 1998). The source of this ambivalence is what Anderson (2013) called the inherent "intergenerational bargains" that next generation individuals have to deal with while trying to negotiate with their perceived obligations to the past and their anticipated future responsibilities.

1. Role transition and entrepreneurial preparedness

Family business succession was conceptualized in terms of role transition, which refers to the "psychological, and (if relevant) physical movements between roles, including disengagement from one role (role exit) and engagement in another role (role entry)" (Ashforth, 2001: 3). The complexity and specificity of role distribution in family businesses makes this transition highly demanding and confusing in that family businesses are characterized by *weak role boundaries* (Hall, 2012: 3), with leaders playing both a family member role (parent) and one or several business roles (owner, manager). Successors also play at least two roles, that of a family member (child) and that of a future family business owner-manager. Because of the highly integrated social roles at the level of one individual, "disengaging from one role in favor of the other might be very difficult" for predecessors and successors (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000: 481), resulting in "role blurring and role spillover" (present when "moods, stress and thoughts generated through one role domain influences other domains," cf. (ibid.: 477). From the successor's perspective, the chances to experience an effective role transition as a family business leader will be maximized if the transition is perceived as voluntary, reversible and predictable (Hall, 2012: 7-8). In some business families, there are yet unspoken expectations that children should take over the role of owner-manager, which can be perceived by the successor as an "obligation" rather than a free choice. This can generate psychological resistance and impede role entry. In other business families, successors may be reluctant to assume the owner-manager role because they may perceive it as an irreversible choice, closing the doors to any other professional opportunities outside the family business career. This can delay the role entry of the next generation members in that the entry is perceived as a lifetime decision. In some family businesses, current leaders may be reluctant to exit their role or even to indicate a precise time when this will happen, which makes impossible to predict when the role transition will occur. This may trigger a loss of affective involvement by the potential successors in the family business life.

From a traditional standpoint, the period prior to joining a family enterprise can be characterized as anticipatory socialization (Jablin, 2001), which is a process starting during childhood. Socialization consists in "the inculcation of the skills and attitudes necessary for playing given social roles" (Mayer, 1970), with anticipatory socialization taking place during the pre-business stage of the succession process. During the pre-socialization phase, potential successors are progressively introduced to the family-firm environment, through more or less intense information, values and emotional transfer from the older to the next generation. Anticipatory socialization in family businesses aims to prepare the next generation members for

their future managerial roles, which can be conceptualized as a key ingredient of "entrepreneurial preparedness." Entrepreneurial preparedness is built throughout childhood, adolescence and early work-experiences, and consists in accumulating various kinds of knowledge of the business sector, competitors, and know-how, along with learning about leadership and management roles. Cultural exposure and family background are the most cited sources of entrepreneurial preparedness. The notion of intergenerational link indicates that children with entrepreneur parents are more prone to embrace an entrepreneurial career (Hackler et al., 2008; Fairlie and Robb, 1997). Entrepreneurial preparedness not only consists in retrospective and experience-based learning (Rae, 2000) but is also about developing one's future-oriented thinking with the aim of "creating a prospective reality".

In French family businesses, new long-term social and demographic trends are increasingly modifying the process of entrepreneurial socialization and the management role transition. Participants identified four major trends affecting the future of family business succession:

- the increased duration of academic education and the internationalization of academic curricula of next generation members,
- the desire to achieve a better work-life balance,
- the rising professional aspirations of women,
- longer life expectancies leading to a prolonged cohabitation of old and new family business managers.

These major social and demographic trends also trigger *four major uncertainties* related to the management role transfer from family business predecessors to successors. The first uncertainty that the next generation members acknowledged is the time of retirement of older managers. The participants explained that they currently did not know *when* and *if* their parent will retire from the family business top management. Any thinking and planning about the future thus becomes almost impossible (Matthews, Moore and Fialko, 1999). Next generation members choose various strategies to deal with this uncertainty, ranging from denial and avoidance to intense business training and involvement. The second role transition uncertainty is the choice of family business successor. In multigenerational family businesses, there are usually two or more candidates, which makes the choice of the future top manager one of the most difficult for the current leader and the family as a whole. This competitive positioning where one's performances and personality are systematically compared with those of one's siblings and cousins is emotionally demanding and can generate resentment, frustration and jealousy. Another uncertainty is related to management role content and execution. What are the various stakeholders' expectations concerning the future business successor? How will he/she achieve legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of employees, business partners and customers? What management style should entrepreneurs adopt to preserve the company's culture and values while behaving

consistently with their personality? The last major uncertainty is the issue of the next generation's freedom of choice and action once they decide to become leaders. Past generations were engaged in their family business for a lifetime, and their commitment was qualified as "unconditional." This position is, however, challenged by the next generations' desire to remain free and preserve their capacity to quit their function whenever they wish. The strong aspiration to self-determination is coupled with a feeling of uncertainty related to the effective capacity to defend one's freedom in the context of a family business: how can entrepreneurs avoid being trapped in a no-way-out situation (Kaye, 1996)?

2. Future scenarios

The analysis of the trends and uncertainties related to the management transfer from older to new family business generations allowed us to identify two social representations held by next generation members that can structure the future of French family business succession: the perceived source of leadership (destiny vs. professional choice) along with the anticipated mission of the future leader (business conservation vs. innovation).

The Protector. Being a family business leader is perceived as a question of destiny. Children born into family businesses are considered to be inherently endowed with a "sacred" mission, that of receiving, preserving, and transmitting the family business legacy to future generations. This legacy thus requires fidelity to tradition and a life-long commitment. Inheriting the business is an "enormous responsibility" (man) or a "magical gift, a Christmas gift" (woman). Management transfer is a gift that one cannot reject, and in this scenario next generation members do not really have the choice of role entry: "apart from major impediments (disease or death), I don't have the choice, I'll run the family business, I cannot say 'no, I don't want it', it's simply impossible" (women). The major desire of the Protector is to transmit the history and the values of the family business to next generations.

The Reformer. Being a family business leader is perceived as a question of destiny, but the context and content of the leadership role are negotiated with older generations. Successors conceive management transfer as a burden requiring intergenerational bargain before making a life-long commitment. Family business leadership is viewed as potentially closing the door to other professional opportunities, which can consequently trigger leadership role entry delay and hesitation. Yet once the leadership role is psychologically accepted and relationally negotiated, successors envision their mission as that of modernizing and developing the family business. The

major desire of Reformers is to transmit a better enterprise to next generations than the business passed down from their parents.

The Opportunist. Being a family business leader is perceived as a professional choice, and management transfer is considered a conditioned choice requiring the preservation of one's ability to maintain a precious work-life balance. Successors feel they are privileged to inherit the family business management, and they are aware of the social and economic advantages related to their leadership role. Yet they seem to be ready to accept the benefits of management transfer, and less prone to "pay the price of top management." They envision their mission as being just one component of an intergenerational chain, with no particular management ambitions. The Opportunist emphasizes several key preconditions for leadership role entry: personal well-being, knowledge transfer between older and new generations, and the preservation of work-life balance.

The Rebel. Being a family business leader is perceived as a professional choice to be avoided as much as possible because of its supposed risks of jeopardizing personal freedom. Successors first deny the possibility of becoming a family business leader some day. They decide to go far away from their family, or may travel abroad for several years, and invest time and energy in studying and/or working in areas that have nothing to do with the industry of their family firm. Their relationship with parents is complicated and ambivalent, in that successors took advantage of their family's financial support to develop their talents and potential, without being ready to "pay them back" for this financial assistance by committing to work for the firm. One day the Rebel may be obliged to return because of external unexpected events (death, accident). The Rebel is received as a savior: the "the prodigal son." Rebels defend their right to ask for a major precondition to their role entry: the possibility to quit the leadership role if they realize that this was a bad choice for them and the family.

The Reformer is arguably the baseline scenario because this future version is fuelled by two of the major trends in family businesses previously identified (more education for next generation members and more professionally ambitious women). This scenario takes into account the emotional ambiguity of future family business leaders when thinking about their leadership role in terms of intergenerational obligation, while feeling responsible for the family well-being and harmony. Once engaged in intergenerational bargains aimed at negotiating and modifying the leadership role content and/or expectations to better match his/her aspirations, the Reformer starts to rejuvenate the family enterprise. The worst case scenario is the Opportunist. The desire to preserve and cultivate a favorable work-life balance, which is one of the major family business trends today, may trigger a fundamentally conditioned engagement of next generation members in the process of management transfer. This scenario emphasizes a potential side effect of the

legitimate search for work-life balance: that of aiming only at the advantages of being a family business leader and not being ready to invest time, energy and effort in doing more than just to "preserve the business as it is today" (male).

Current family business leaders prepare themselves for the Protector scenario. This scenario is that of the good child, afraid to take such a big responsibility and responding to family pressure with initial psychological resistance. Protectors are afraid of emotional conflict and aspire to successfully fulfill their leadership role with the hope of making their parents proud of them. Not being good enough is their worst fear as they constantly compare themselves to the previous family business leaders. For them, management transfer is a source of stress and anxiety related to perceived personal legitimacy and expertise. What makes them the ideal future scenario for current family business leaders is that Protectors feel profoundly "indebted to a legacy" (male) and bound to the family business by a strong motivation to preserve the business as is, which may be interpreted as a form of conservatism and conformism, but this behavior is certainly motivated by the fact that Protectors and older generations think they "share the same values, this is crucial" (male).

From the perspective of next generation members, the Rebel scenario is the ideal future alternative. A strong trend in family business consists in men and women's common aspiration to fulfill one's potential, to self-actualize one's talents through long academic studies, working abroad, leading teams in other companies and thus discovering one's strengths and limits outside the family context. Therefore, before entering the leadership role they want to develop their professional skills and talents. Rebels' worst fear is the loss of personal freedom and the pressure to conform to the rules of the game, to the family business' tradition. Rebels have the potential to become transformative leaders within the family business given that they come from different backgrounds and have encountered various people, ideas and worldviews.

There are two major implications for the management transfer of family businesses in France. The first concerns the entrepreneurial preparation of next generation members, and the second concerns the relationship between next generation members' identity and the family firm. The analysis of trends and uncertainties in family businesses along with the workshop conversations highlight the major opportunity of building a stronger entrepreneurial environment and mindset for future family business leaders. This opportunity demands a strategic choice: that of investing in the next generation's education while focusing on a rigorous and systematic sensitization to the family business history, know-how, mission and values. Current family business leaders should also be aware of the coexistence and sometimes internal tensions among various kinds of individual and group identities within the family enterprise environment.

Individual identities, family identity, and the firm identity permanently interact and negotiate within what Shepherd and Haynie (2009) called a "family-business meta-identity." Family businesses should thus carefully assess the degree of coherence and convergence between personal, family and business identities to prevent denial, rejection, and opportunistic behaviors from future leaders.

III. THE IMPACT OF ROLE MODELS ON ENTREPRENEURIAL SELF-EFFICACY AND INTENTION

## 1. Entrepreneurial Experience Transfer by Role Models: A Structural Model

Brunel, Laviolette and Radu Lefebvre (2014)[18] conducted experimental research to measure whether the entrepreneurial experience of alumni students can be transferred through testimonials to new students with a snowball effect on their self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention. Often, students do not engage in an entrepreneurial career because of their lack of experience. To compensate for that, their engagement might be highly influenced by similar role models (alumni who embraced an entrepreneurial career after graduation), which may increase their involvement and reinforce their self-efficacy, along with their intention to choose an entrepreneurial career. The influence of these role models has been strongly confirmed in the entrepreneurial literature (Bosma et al., 2011; Shapero and Sokol, 1982).

Steyaert and Bouwen (1997) assert that these testimonials can inspire and encourage emulation even when they put forward an unsuccessful story (Lockwood, 2006, 2004; Stapel and Koomen, 2001; Stapel and Marx, 2006). From an educational standpoint, selection and exposure to legitimate and appropriate role models is essential to the reinforcement of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention of students (Mueller and Conway Dato-On, 2008). We tested a structural model whereby exposure to role models impacts the attitude towards the message, which consequently generates a reaction of emotional arousal, one of the four sources of self-efficacy. Arousal may impact the level of students' entrepreneurial intention (McGee et al., 2009; Barbosa, Gerhardt and Kickul 2007; Boyd and Vozikis, 1994; Drnovsek and Glas, 2002; Krueger and Brazeal, 1994; Zhao, Seibert and Hills, 2005).

We also tested the moderating role of students' past experience, locus of control and self-esteem. Our hypothesis was that past experience in project management (including possible entrepreneurial experiences) moderates the relationship between emotional arousal and self-efficacy:

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[18] BRUNEL, O., LAVIOLETTE E.-M. AND RADU LEFEBVRE, M. (2013). Entrepreneurial Experience Transfer by Role Models: A Structural Model. *RENT*, Vilnius, Lithuania.
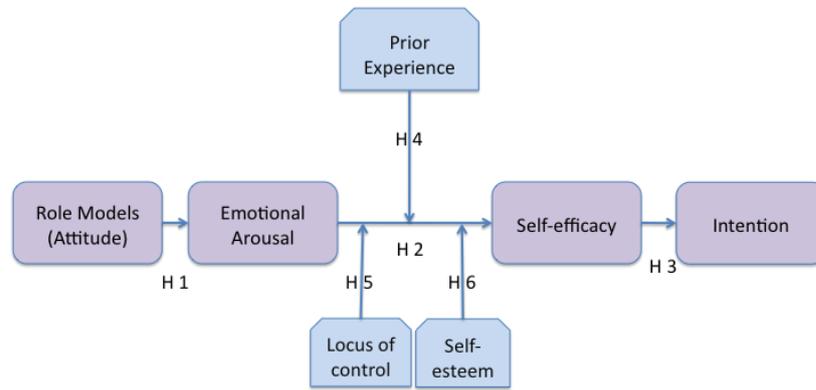
Figure 3. Structural model

In the psychology literature, previous research demonstrated that internal locus of control reduces stress, and increases motivation and performance in multiple contexts (Judge, Erez, Bono and Thoresen, 2002). In entrepreneurship, locus of control is among the most studied personality traits. Several empirical studies have confirmed a positive correlation between internal locus of control and entrepreneurial intention (Shapero, 1975). Research in psychology and entrepreneurship indicates that individuals with low self-esteem are more influenced by verbal persuasion and role modeling because they tend to rely on role models' information to master their anxiety and act appropriately in various contexts (Chen, Gully and Eden, 2004; Bandura, 1977). Wheeler (2000) suggested that self-esteem is a good predictor of emotional responses in situations of social comparisons.

We carried out an experimental study on 275 French students enrolled in a management and entrepreneurship curriculum in the spring of 2011. Participants were 118 female and 158 male students with a major or a minor in entrepreneurship. They read a testimonial attributed to a young entrepreneur who graduated a couple of years before the participants from the same academic program, to enhance the role model's perceived similarity. After reading the message, the participants filled in a questionnaire to measure several dependent variables on a 7-point Likert scale (the attitude towards the role model, the emotional arousal, the self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention). Several control variables were also taken into account: the students' self-esteem, locus of control and past experience in dealing with entrepreneurial projects.

The structural model explains 56% of the emotional arousal generated after exposure to the role model's testimonial, 4% of the students' entrepreneurial self-efficacy and 16% of their entrepreneurial intention. Prior experience indeed plays a moderating role, but not as expected: students with a low level of entrepreneurial experience were less persuaded by the role model's message than students with a higher level of entrepreneurial experience. The latter relied on the

experience of alumni to reinforce their self-efficacy and their intention to engage in an entrepreneurial career, whereas the former did not benefit from this "experience transfer" effect.

Our results also indicated that the moderating role of locus of control was confirmed. Participants with an internal locus of control were less influenced by the alumni's testimonials, be they positive or negative. Concerning the moderating role of self-esteem, our results indicated that this variable was significant only for students with a low level of self-esteem. As in the case of internal locus of control, it seems that the participants who were more uncertain about their personal abilities were more open to external sources of information and more prone to rely on role models' testimonials to decide whether or not to embark on an entrepreneurial career. For these participants, the entrepreneurial experience of alumni acting as role models is an effective trigger of self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention.

Students in management and entrepreneurship are exposed daily to many sources of information and different entrepreneurial role models, either real or symbolic, which vary widely in terms of profiles, discourses and behavioral strategies. However, research in the field of social comparison indicates that individuals do not compare themselves to all the available models. Rather, individuals are likely to actively select the models with which they want to compare themselves in specific situations, according to their personal goals, their level of personal or situational involvement, their motivation and their capacity to process the role model's information (Buunk and Gibbons, 2007; Gibson, 2004; Stapel and Marx, 2006). Our research suggests that personality traits such as locus of control and self-esteem also impact the effectiveness of role models' testimonials and their ability to increase students' self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention.

2. The impact of mentoring on mentee's self-efficacy: combined effects of the mentor's functions and perceived similarity, and of the mentee's learning goal orientation

St-Jean, Radu Lefebvre and Mathieu (2014)[19] measured the combined impact of an individual variable (learning goal orientation) and two relational variables (mentor's functions and perceived similarity) on the self-efficacy of 314 novice entrepreneurs of the Network M (Fondation de l'entrepreneurship) in Quebec, Canada. The sample contained 162 men (51.6%) and

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[19] St-JEAN, E., RADU LEFEBVRE, M. and MATHIEU, C. (2014). Mentorat et développement de l'auto-efficacité de l'entrepreneur novice: l'effet combiné des fonctions du mentor, de la similitude perçue et de l'orientation dans un but d'apprentissage du mentoré. *CIFPME*, Agadir, Morocco.

152 women (48.4%), aged between 23 and 70. Mentoring relationships lasted an average of 16 months. Meetings with the mentor took an average of 68.52 minutes and there was just under one meeting per month. Our results indicated that the best impact on mentee's self-efficacy is produced when the mentee has a low learning goal and perceives his/her mentor as highly similar.

The impact of mentoring relationships on the mentee's self-efficacy was acknowledged by previous empirical research, especially in the case of novice entrepreneurs (Bisk, 2002; Cull, 2006; Deakins et al., 1998; Hulela and Miller, 2006; Nandram, 2003; Powers et al., 1995). Among the sources of self-efficacy, modeling or vicarious learning is crucial in the context of mentoring relationships. Modeling influences the level of self-efficacy through social comparison processes leading mentees to compare themselves with mentors. Social comparison allows mentees to assess their own skills and implement learning strategies and imitative behaviors in an effort to achieve the same level of performance as their models. In addition, mentoring involves several mentor roles or functions (Kram, 1985). These functions are related to the mentee's learning and, in particular, to the increase in the mentee's self-efficacy (Allen and Eby, 2003; Hulela and Miller, 2006). To learn effectively within a mentoring relationship, one needs a high perceived similarity between the mentor (model) and the mentee from the mentee's perspective (Ensher et al., 2002; Ensher and Murphy, 1997; Lankau et al., 2005; Madia and Lutz, 2004; St John, 2012). Other mentee variables may also have an impact on learning and self-efficacy. The learning goal orientation has been studied in connection with self-efficacy (Phillips and Gully, 1997), and was identified as useful for optimizing mentoring relationships (Egan, 2005; Godshalk and Sosik, 2003; Sosik et al, 2004). However, there is a lack of research on the impact of mentoring relationships on self-efficacy, simultaneously considering the mentor's functions, perceived similarity, and the mentee's learning goal orientation.

The learning goal orientation is a relatively stable psychological disposition that individuals mobilize in their relationships with others (Dweck, 1986). Individuals with high learning goal orientation are more inclined to consider their skills as malleable and changeable as a result of effort and learning, which lead them to increase their efforts to develop their skills. These individuals value effort and self-improvement and are constantly looking for new challenges to improve their skills (Dweck and Leggett, 1988). Previous research measured the impact of learning orientation on self-efficacy (Bell and Kozlowski, 2002; Phillips and Gully, 1997). Recent studies demonstrated that the learning goal orientation moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and entrepreneurial intention (De Clercq et al., 2013). Moreover, a high learning goal orientation combined with a high level of self-efficacy is likely to lead to an entrepreneurial career (Culbertson et al., 2011). However, entrepreneurs who seek the help of a

mentor send a signal that they need external support to meet the challenges of their career. They can certainly see the mentor as a potential source of learning (Lefebvre and Radu Redien-Collot, 2013; St-Jean and Audet, 2012; Sullivan, 2000). Our hypothesis was that a low learning goal orientation may increase the need for external help when entrepreneurs face challenges they perceive as insurmountable by their own efforts. In a mentoring relationship, these individuals may experience the benefits of mentoring more intensely than individuals with a high learning goal orientation.

To maximally cover entrepreneurial self-efficacy dimensions, we combined the scales developed by Anna et al. (2000) and De Noble et al. (1999). Thus, we measured the perceived ability to establish a vision for the company (3 items) and manage unexpected challenges (3 items) (De Noble et al., 1999), the perceived ability to recognize opportunities (3 items), to plan (3 items), to manage human resources and to manage the company financially (3 items) (Anna et al., 2000). To measure the mentor's functions, we used the scale developed by St-Jean (2011), which includes nine items. Perceived similarity was measured with the three items proposed by Allen and Eby (2003), which include similarity in values, interests and personality. We added the similarity of views suggested by Ensher and Murphy (1997). The learning goal orientation was measured with the eight-item scale developed by Button et al. (1996). We used 7-point Likert scales, and did hierarchical regression of entrepreneurial self-efficacy to test our hypotheses.

Our research suggests that mentoring is more effective in increasing mentees' self-efficacy when mentees have a low learning goal orientation and a high perceived similarity with their mentor. Mentees with a low learning goal orientation have what Dweck and Leggett (1988) call a performance goal, as opposed to individuals pursuing a learning goal. According to these authors, novice entrepreneurs who engage in a performance goal are primarily interested in testing and demonstrating their skills, while those pursuing a learning goal are more interested in improving their current skills. Results indicate that for mentees with a high learning goal orientation, when the mentor positively fulfills mentoring functions, this triggers a negative impact on the mentee's self-efficacy. Conversely, for mentees with a low learning goal orientation, when the mentor positively fulfills mentoring functions, this triggers a positive impact on the mentee's self-efficacy. Regarding perceived similarity, when mentees think their mentors are not very similar this has no effect on the mentees' self-efficacy, even when the mentoring functions are fully accomplished. Conversely, when mentees see their mentor as highly similar, the more the mentor effectively fulfills mentoring functions, the more positive the impact on the mentee's self-efficacy. These two categories of individuals probably enter mentoring relationships with different motivations: those with a low learning goal orientation seek to receive a confirmation of their

entrepreneurial skills (reassurance) and effective counseling to enable them to overcome the perceived limitations of their own abilities (be guided), whereas those with a high learning goal orientation wish to learn from the experience of the mentor (improve) and be stimulated in terms of new skills to acquire (be challenged).

The negative impact of mentoring on mentees' self-efficacy (for mentees with high learning goal orientation) may be explained as an adjustment of their level of self-efficacy that may be more consistent with the actual situation of the mentee's current skills. We infer that mentoring balances the entrepreneurial self-efficacy levels of novice entrepreneurs, according to their level of learning goal orientation. At first glance, one would be tempted to infer that novice entrepreneurs with a high learning goal orientation would not benefit from being mentored because this will lower their self-efficacy. However, before drawing this conclusion, more research is needed. Evidence exists that some entrepreneurs demonstrate exaggerated optimism, and this has a negative effect on the sustainability of their business (Lowe and Ziedonis, 2006). In particular, Hmieleski and Baron (2008) find that a high level of self-efficacy has a negative effect on firm performance when the level of optimism is very high. In this context, mentoring could be useful to entrepreneurs showing exaggerated optimism by readjusting their self-efficacy to a level that is closer to the reality of their skills. This could increase the chances of survival of the mentee's business.

CONCLUSION

A HDR Thesis is a self-narrative about past choices and accomplishments, and thus we may say it is inevitably one of the many potential outcomes of a more or less longer process of post-rationalization. The objective of this dissertation was to provide meaning and purpose to our intellectual productions which can eventually enable us to learn from our personal history while also trying to make our story coherent and appealing for those who read it, our academic audience. Yet, we know that the very process of elaborating an academic self-narrative may conduct the author to project new meanings on past research so as to help him/her put forward explanatory answers. The positive consequences of such an effort, besides the fact of summarizing 10 years of research, is that of contributing to the progressive emergence and consolidation of a distinctive academic identity, essential for providing meaning and direction to one's professional life.

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