

Puppeteer, Puppet and Scenographer in a Family Business Succession

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Abstract

Succession is a phenomenon where power relations are articulated and influence the social structure of organizational management. This article analyzes the process of succession in a Brazilian family business under Bourdieu's view. Empirically, a qualitative research was carried out on a large company. From Bourdieu's perspective and through the Linguistic Analysis of Discourse the empirical corpus was analyzed. The data show that the succession of executives in organizations is much more than a simple exchange of players. Succession, as a game of power relations, involves planning, cunning, knowledge of the field, a certain domain of *illusio*, *doxa* and *nomos*, and the use of capital. This power play can involve manipulations and bluffs. In a way, we have observed that the use of Bourdieu's categories helped us better understand this game called succession process in the field of administration of large family businesses.

Keywords: succession, Bourdieu, linguistic discourse analysis.

Introduction

This article analyzes succession from the point of view of Pierre Bourdieu, in the context of a Brazilian family company. Succession is as a determining factor behind continuity in the management of family businesses (Karaevli & Zajac, 2013; Ma, Seidl, Guérard, 2015). We argue that this process may (and must) be structured (planned). We should not forget, though, that this is also a structuring process, since it produces actions and agencies that may or may not be favorable to the organization, impacting its management and the businesses as a whole. This article also studies succession as a process where the material (the company), the symbolic (the title of president, the rite of passage, the chosen successor), the objectivism (the company and the office), the subjectivism (to be the successor, power relations), the individualism (the owner, the president) and the group (the company's stakeholders) are intertwined.

An empirical qualitative research was conducted in a large-size company headquartered in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Interviews have been held with major players involved in the process of succession within the organization, as a way to collect historical data and other information relevant to the understanding of how this process takes place in the routines. We ended up facing a succession process where power games were carefully articulated, deserving, therefore, more attention. Accordingly, the following interviews will be analyzed here: Interviewee number 1 – the Predecessor; Interviewee number 2 – the Successor; Interviewee number 3 – the Consultant. They describe the schemes behind this succession game. We were not allowed to interview other members of the owner family or other participants in the succession. This large company's management is based on

the family, in terms of who holds the shares and who occupies positions in the C-Level and in the Board. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed according to Bourdieu's ideas, adopting the Linguistic Analysis of the Discourse.

At the end of the process, we observed a succession game that excluded the family, assigning its members predominantly to a board of directors presided over by a new chairman, namely the predecessor, who was chosen to occupy the main executive position. Among us, researchers, we created a metaphor to refer to the studied game, where the Predecessor has proved to be the puppeteer; the Successor a puppet; the Consultant the one in charge of constructing the scenario, a scenographer. We have also observed that the use of Bourdieu's categories may help us better understand this game of succession in the context of large family companies.

This article is divided into four sections. Initially, the fundamental aspects of its theoretical perspectives were laid, including Bourdieu's concepts and its potential applications to the context of organizational succession. Next, we described the method and present a linguistic analysis of the discourses of the interviewees, in reference to the succession power game. Finally, we prepared a synthesis of our conclusions and opportunities for future studies, where Bourdieu's theoretical approach was adopted to examine organizational succession.

Theoretical background

Researchers in the field of organizational studies demonstrate a disarticulated appropriation of Bourdieu's concepts, adopting institutional, functional, neo-functional and neo-institutional approaches, and thus, reducing the complexity of managerial analysis (Misoczky, 2003). For that reason, we present the major concepts addressed by Bourdieu in his sociological studies, namely: social field, habitus, symbolic capital (together with the economic, cultural and social kinds of capital), *doxa*, *illusio*, *hexis*, *nomos* and symbolic violence.

Bourdieu (2005, 2007) defines the field as the place where social action takes place, since it is the social microcosm space where individuals join together according to affinity. Therefore, the field is the space where power relations symbolically occur.

The concept of *habitus* can be defined as a set of long-standing stipulations introjected by individuals. According to Bourdieu (2007, p. 61), it is "[...] both a knowledge acquired and an asset, a capital (of a transcendental subject in the idealistic tradition) [...]" of the individual who acts within a field. Individuals must have the appropriate *habitus* for the field that they are related to, otherwise, they risk not being able to legitimize themselves.

In a different manner, the *ethos* serves as the base for judgement of people's behavior as well for decision-making and choices according to our own tastes. Through corporal *hexis*, on the other hand, we spontaneously or in a controlled way (by keeping track of our acts and expression) demonstrate the bodily reflexes of our socialization and detect information, when relating to others (Bourdieu, 2007). Our *ethos* and our *hexis* are both influenced by *doxa*. *Doxa* is the common sense prevailing in a field; a sense that is produced by the vision of the dominant players (the dominant class of a given field) and that are popularly internalized and turned natural (Bourdieu, 2007). The concept of *doxa* is similar to that of naturalization referred to by Taylor (2010, 2011) and Souza (2006).

Nomos is another concept related to the legitimation processes that take place within fields. The *nomos* refers to general laws that guide the functioning of social fields (Bourdieu, 2005, 2007, 2011). Since society is subject to a continuous process of evolution that triggers changes to its social structure, new fields appear, promoting a continuous differentiation process. It is worth mentioning that *doxa* and *nomos*, as instruments of field legitimization and,

therefore, instruments of power, are, themselves, legitimized by symbolic violence. Symbolic violence is the dissimulated imposition of meanings by means of force relations or, better saying, of power relations occurring within fields (Bourdieu & Passeron, 2010).

Another important Bourdieu's concept linked to those of *habitus* and field in his reflexive sociology is the symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 2005, 2007, 2010, 2013; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2010). Symbolic capital is an asset of the player that may be an incorporated (turned subjective as social and cultural legacy) or a material property (economically objective), being legally guaranteed (Bourdieu, 2007). The symbolic capital is composed of the amount accumulated by the player, considering all kinds of capital, including the economic capital, the social capital (product of social relations) and the cultural capital (product of the acquired knowledge).

Competitiveness in the social space requires players, as participants in the fields, to be permanently interested in the disputes taking place within said fields. The concept of *illusio* corresponds precisely to that interest. *Illusio* is the knowledge players have on the *rules of the competitive game* taking place in the social space (Bourdieu, 2005). The domain of *illusio* allows competitors to better manage his or her *habitus* and symbolic capitals, thus improving their chances of success in competitions taking place in the field.

We believe that Bourdieu's social theories may substantially contribute to our understanding of succession in organizations, especially in the context of family business. Fitzsimmons & Callan (2016), for instance, argue that succession may be one of the ways adopted by players to constitute and reconstitute the field of management, by means of criteria adopted for the selection of its high-level executives. This would involve all different kinds of capital. Relative to the social capital, for example, the network of relations build by the successor enables the recognition of management skills, visibility, strategy thinking, leadership and integrity. For cultural capital, aspects like languages, formal education and previous experience come into perspective. Economic capital, on its turn, refers to which class fraction that executive represents, such as the industrial, the financial, agribusiness or any other segment. All these kinds of capital operating together constitute the symbolic capital, a very important element for a company's succession and managerial processes.

According to Lubinski (2011), this mobilization of capital would favor the maintenance of status-quo and would take place before the formal replacement of holders in key positions. This happens because succession includes periods of anticipatory socialization, when the different kinds of capital are evidenced, analyzed and even transferred by means of relationships within and outside the company, as well as formal education programs and demonstrations of knowledge and of symbolic emotional ties to shareholders or owners.

In agreement with Fitzsimmons and Callan (2016), we reinforce the existence of different forces with potential for inhibiting the accumulation of said kinds of capital by successors in their attempt to occupy dominant positions in organizations. One of these forces represents the dominating players or predecessors who occupy command positions and, consequently, command the succession process. They may adopt strategies to keep their own symbolic capital, ensuring that certain perpetuity of the power (and management) dynamics is linked to his or her private interests. On the other hand, Bourdieu (2007) shows that the new players, who are then the 'new entrants' in the field, may use two different strategies to achieve dominating positions. The first strategy is *succession*, where they accept free competition within the field starting from its current characteristics (*doxa, nomos, habitus* etc.); the second strategy is *subversion*, or the attempt to redefine the current structure and order.

It is also worth highlighting that research on succession is focused on quantitative analyses based on large databases and samples of companies listed in stock exchanges. However, "measurement difficulties are thought to be at the heart of the problem of results which are too often inconsistent or weak in their explanatory power and there are repeated calls

for new methodologies, namely ‘longitudinal,’ ‘process,’ ‘clinical,’ ‘qualitative,’ and ‘psychological’ studies” (Pitcher et al., 2000, p. 625).

Let us remember that our understanding of executive succession remains limited by a focus on U.S. firms, which are at relatively more advanced stages of corporate governance (Nakauchi; Wiersema, 2015, p. 298). Therefore, current researches do not explore properly the social context of emerging economies, mostly characterized by relationships among families and business groups showing different institutional logics (Chung; Luo, 2013, p. 338). Despite the relevance of Bourdieu’s concepts for the advance of knowledge on succession processes in organizations, there are so far few studies that rely on them.

Methodology

Succession in family businesses is a subject difficult to address that, by nature, leads us to the depths of the social and cultural fabric where companies are also immersed, being many times silenced or disguised in the history of business management. This subject in this article, always approached from the perspective of Bourdieu, appeared to the researchers in the course of studies on the history of the management of family businesses. Starting from research based on a qualitative method, more precisely on ethnography (and interviews), the study soon came to the subject of succession. In spite of being unable to do ethnography on the succession process itself that was taking place in a large-size company, we were able to track it from afar and to conduct interviews both before and after it ended.

Applying the biographic model, the research attempted a deep discussion on the individual within the surrounding social context, so as to enable reconstruction of his or her experiences along the professional career and the succession process. According to Abrantes (2014), the biographic method must be accompanied by a debate on the individual and on society, since the researcher intends to detect how relevant are the attitudes of the former relative to the other members of the group. According to Machado (2018) the hugest challenge posed to life stories is the reconstruction of the relationships among individuals. In accordance, in this present study the biographic method complements the subjective perspective of the institutional processes individuals undergo, enabling a better view of the interactions among individuals, family and business.

Initially, the research was conceived considering the use of several sources of information. Minutes, ethnography in the company and headquarters, conversations with members of the family, so as to include many possibilities of knowing and going deep into Bourdieu’s categories and the history of the businesses. When the subject succession and the corresponding process came up, we were allowed to interview only three players: 1st – the Predecessor; 2nd - the Successor; and 3rd - the Consultant. As support, we based our choices on Dos Santos Bastos & De Souza (2018). We will use these three terms to identify the players in this text. Each of the interviewees gave us a particular perspective of the succession process under analysis, based on their own points of view. This enabled researchers to approach significant aspects of succession that are not usually contemplated in researches conducted on the theme. The interviews were long and recurring, opening room for many meetings.

The interviews were first transcribed and then analyzed. Based on Bourdieu’s dimensions such as Field; *Habitus*; *Doxa* and *Nomos*; *Illusio* and Capital: Economic, Social, Cultural, Symbolic, we proceeded a Linguistic Analysis of the Discourse (ALD), pairing the theoretical frame of reference provided by a structural-constructivist author with an also structural and constructivist analytical technique (Aranha & Carvalho, 2017). Thus, one of the greatest advantages of using this technique is the possibility of interpreting what is said and explicitly told, and, above all, of unveiling the ideology behind the speeches and that is not necessarily stated.

The discursive excerpts from the speeches of the interviewees that have been selected, presented and analyzed in this article were sequentially numbered, such numbers being presented within parentheses at the beginning of each excerpt, so as to make references easier and more quickly identifiable by readers.

Dominant and dominated: power games in organizational successions

The studied company, here named Alpha, is a large-size centennial manufacture enterprise with more than three thousand employees and an annual revenue that exceeds US\$ 200 million. Presidents coming from one and the same familiar nucleus and who always held the majority of shares have always controlled the capital stock of the company. As usual, we gave the organization a fictitious name and avoided presenting detailed information on it, in order to ensure anonymity.

Our narrative and analysis of the succession process at Alpha starts when the current predecessor took the office of executive president of the organization, at a time close to the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries. His experience as candidate selected for succession triggered interest on the subject and, consequently, influenced the actions taken during his own succession process.

- (01) I succeeded the former president, a very dedicated person, [...] was the president for many years, as most people know. **It was a hard succession process.** In my own succession, at the time of the [...], the professor [...] (name of consultant) participated, and it was at that time that I started to appreciate the succession subject. Then [...] (name of consultant) **talked to some people, a group of family members**, then I was called and told: [...] (name of current predecessor), **you will be chosen.** This happened in the year 2000. But I will give you a suggestion: **Get out of here! Disappear!** (PREDECESSOR).
- (02) Then I left, I went to [...] (a state in the United States), stayed there for two and a half months at the [...] (name of university) and later went to Europe to visit factories. Because the president I succeeded perceived succession with some kind of a shock. **Nobody could speak about it.** It was **taboo.** This was, therefore, my biggest problem. (PREDECESSOR).

Discursive excerpt (01) reveals the first evidences that succession processes involve a complex power game whose players want to conquer or maintain dominance of the field (of the organization), as seen in the use of the work ‘**hard**’ by the Predecessor, when qualifying the process that raised him to the executive control of the firm. Another relevant evidence may be found in the sentence where the interviewee narrates the following action taken by the consultant: “[...] he talked to **some people, a group of family members** [...]”. The use of an imprecise word such as ‘some’, makes clear that some people, to the detriment of others, conducted the conversation. We may then infer that distinct interests were under discussion during Alpha’s succession process. These interests would be defended by different groups of the owner family, as evidenced by the excerpt ‘**a group of family members**’. Here again we have an implicit presupposition, since the indefinite article ‘a’ indicates the existence of different groups in the family rather than one cohesive group.

In the discursive excerpt (02), the phrases “**Nobody could speak about it**” and “It was **taboo**” are evidences of how the top layer of the organization had difficulties to discuss its power relations. When it is said that one could not speak about succession, the underlying meaning is that discussions about succession took place in restricted conditions, being accessible only to certain groups or people.

It is worth emphasizing that Alpha’s statutory regulations define an age limit after which its executives have to leave office. When the Predecessor assumed the presidency, he could still hold the office for other fifteen years. This should be enough time for him to prepare

his succession and, possibly, his admission to the Board of Directors (preferably in the position of Chairman). From a formal point of view, Alpha's second succession process, under analysis here, started in 2011. Notwithstanding that, as shown by discursive excerpts (03) and (04), since 2006 the Predecessor is conducting, in an informal and disguised way, its personal succession project.

- (03) [...] but I feel that, formally, everything started to change in 2006. Why? That was when he determined changes to the Directorate. And, in consequence of the changes, he took some of his duties, characteristic of a president's office, of the president of a company operating in the segment of [...] (segment denomination was omitted), so he took some of these attributions and said: "you, commercial director, you take care of this too; you, industrial director, though the responsibility is mine, you [the future successor] will take care of this for me". (SUCCESSOR)
- (04) In the morning, I woke up and, while having my breakfast, I said: - I am going to talk to [...] (name of a director) and to [...] (name of a director). This was in June 2006. I invited them for lunch. We went to a restaurant [...] (starting point, name of a restaurant and of the street where it is located). We three went to the restaurant but I was not completely at ease. We sat at a table but we were not able to engage ourselves in a conversation. I told them: - "Look, I need that you quit the company. (PREDECESSOR)

The statement of the Successor in excerpt (03) contains evidence that he has made an accurate diagnosis of the context of the succession process that has made him executive director of the organization. He even defines a date he believes the process has started. The Successor detects a significant change in the Predecessor's behavior, as stated in the excerpt: "Why? That was when he determined changes to the Directorate". From the Successor's perspective, the Predecessor was assigning duties in order to prepare potential candidates (Alpha's directors) for the succession process to take place five years ahead. Nevertheless, as can be read below, this was not the Predecessor's true objective.

In excerpt (4), the Predecessor starts to explicitly list the actions he took to conduct his own succession, according to his particular view of what would be better for the future of the organization. The statement "In the morning, I woke up and, while having my breakfast, I said: - I am going to talk to 'X' and 'Y' (names of directors were omitted)" suggests that the moves made by the Predecessor were planned ahead and seem to be the result of his unstated understanding of the field. Directors 'X' and 'Y' were members of the family and part of the group linked to the former president. He needed room to act within the field and pushing aside two players – directors 'X' and 'Y' – he would create a void in the directorate and in the family that would be filled by other players. We noticed that in the excerpts addressing the retirement an exchange takes place between the Predecessor and the former directors: they lose symbolic capital but continue to earn economic capital until they actually retire.

In the sequence of facts and taking advantage from new room to move, the Predecessor states that his next step was to change the duties of some directors, as observed in excerpt (05) that deals specifically with one of these changes.

- (05) I arrive at Alpha, call 'W' [we omitted the name of the mentioned director] for a meeting. – 'W', I have to change your area of activity. 'W' was the commercial director. And for me, in any company, the sales process is the most important. [...] And I call 'W', on this very same day: - You will have to change functions. You are always complaining of the industrial area, so you will be transferred to the industrial area. I had to take him away; he did not have the right profile. (PREDECESSOR)
- (06) The [Successor] joined the company in 2004. I had to make him director, but not a puppet. (PREDECESSOR)
- (07) Thus, I had to move the [Successor] and I found a place for the [Successor] as HR director. (PREDECESSOR)

The use of the words "I had to take him away; he did not have the right profile" that appear in excerpt (05), could be semantically interpreted to mean two different things. The first one related to a possible lack of competence of the player to lead the commercial area from the

point of view of the Predecessor. The second one may mean that the Predecessor was referring to the office of President Director, anticipating the succession process and seeing “W” as not possessing the required abilities according to his personal view, despite the fact that “W” might be a potential candidate from the perspective of the Board of Directors. Such interpretation is in harmony with the information later provided by the Predecessor, as stated in excerpts (06) and (07). The candidate who fit the demands of the Predecessor was the Successor. But the organizational *habitus* privileges members of the founding family. In the history of the organization, all president directors were members of the family. Therefore, the project of taking the Successor to the mentioned office needed to be strategically conducted in order to overcome the difficulties that would arise from the disputes over power.

Once succession at Alpha has formally started, a specialized consultant was hired to conduct the process. Initially, the process was conducted according to two distinct guidelines, namely: a survey of the market in search of external executives, which resulted in the identification of three potential candidates, and an internal selection among directors, that led to the identification of other three potential candidates, two of whom belonging to the family.

- (08) Even by mapping: **great resistance**. It is **absurd** to think of a market solution. It would be **absurd** to look for someone in the market other than [founding family’s surname omitted] to assume [Alpha]. (CONSULTANT)

As stated in discursive excerpt (08), Alpha’s Board of Directors were not willing to let the management of the organization in the hands of an executive who was not already at Alpha, and more specifically, who was not a member of the founding family. The use of the expression “great resistance” is evidence that, in the power relations established among the players involved, the majority moved to turn that possibility unfeasible.

- (09) I said: Look, I have two candidates. At that point, things were already moving in the Board of Directors’ meeting. My candidate is a consensus candidate. **But then, I made a Machiavelian move**. My candidate was the [Successor], but I would not say that, nobody knew. And I played consensus candidate because I knew there would be reaction against the [Successor]. (PREDECESSOR)

In the beginning of our analyses, we stated that the Predecessor was conducting the process of his succession in a disguised way. The word has not been herein used in its pejorative sense. It was used simply to emphasize this player’s ability to play the game of organizational power relations. The phrase: ‘But then, I made a Machiavelian move’, supports this point of view. The use of the word ‘move’ shows that the Predecessor himself perceives the organizational power relations as, metaphorically, a game. By using the adjective ‘Machiavelian’ to characterize his move, in addition to making a reference to Niccolò Machiavelli and his work, the Predecessor is semantically classifying it as astute and tricky, thus exhibiting his efforts to make his will prevail over that of competitors. The Predecessor’s narrative transcribed in (10) shows the clear vision this player has of power, and curiously well aligned with Bourdieu’s theoretical view of symbolic power: “Symbolic power is, actually, this invisible power that can only be exerted with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are also subject to it or of those who exert it” (BOURDIEU, 2007, p. 7).

- (10) Reactions, naturally ... because whether we want it or not, the position of president is a title of power. And power presupposes dispute, sometimes in a hidden, sometimes in an undercover way. (PREDECESSOR)

Preventing the disclosure of his real preference and hiding the actions being taken to make his candidate a more feasible alternative along the process was a strategy for preventing

the candidate from suffering resistance capable of making his name unfeasible, as explained by the Predecessor in excerpt (11).

- (11) Because it could not happen, and it did not happen in a **sincere** way, something like “the [Predecessor] is indicating someone for president”. If the [Predecessor] indicates a president, the latter would be in a more vulnerable position. (PREDECESSOR)

The use of the expression ‘and it did not happen in a sincere way’ in excerpt (11) above, focusing on the adjective ‘sincere’, also exhibits the dissimulated behavior of the Predecessor in the conduction of the succession process, as previously said.

- (12) The Chairman of the Board came, “[Consultant], I think it is better that each one makes now a presentation of their individual plans”. I said: “Don’t do that.” “Don’t do that because you will be assessing communication skills and no matter how I try to avoid the differences I know, each one of the three, I know what is going to happen. Some of them will lag behind and results would not be symmetrical to what each one is able to contribute”.. (CONSULTANT)
- (13) And I said: “Ok! But there will be trouble”. So much so that he was later inquired by groups of shareholders. “But this is cowardice, because you know that [Successor] studied”. I warned. “The guy came from [omitted name of the consultancy agency to which the successor worked before joining Alpha]. The guy knows how to do it. A power point pilot, and good on stage. (CONSULTANT)

The facts reported in excerpts (12) and (13) refer to the development of a business plan, each of the three internal candidates remaining from an initial six-name list would have to construct in order to present their strategic view for the Alpha’s business. Curiously, as told by the Consultant in excerpt (12), the idea of incorporating this activity to the succession process, as a way of assessing the candidates in this particular aspect, was proposed by the chairman of the Board of Directors and not by the president director at the time, the Predecessor, to whom this proposal was very interesting, because it significantly favored his candidate. Here, in these excerpts, it is possible to identify the use of cultural capital acquired by candidates. The chairman of the Board created the opportunity to the analysis, in the process, of this capital as a tiebreaker category.

In this manner, after approximately fifteen decades of history, Alpha’s Board of Directors, against some resistance, elected its first top-level manager who was not a member of the family who found the organization, though already an employee. In addition, the process opened room for the Predecessor to assume the presidency of the Board of Directors, carrying out his personal project of becoming the dominant player in this microcosm of the social space.

The set of data collected corroborates our point of view that succession processes are linked to a complex game of power leading to the conquest or the maintenance of dominance over the organizational field.

Organizational Succession and Power Relations at Alpha: What Conclusions could be Drawn?

This article analyzed the succession process in a large family business by means of contributions from Bourdieu’s theory. Regarding the succession process as a power game, both real and symbolic, enabled us to improve our understanding of the social phenomena involved in management and in family businesses.

The data collected show that the succession of executives in organizations is much more than a simple change of players. Succession, as a game of power relations, involves planning, sagacity, and ability to master *illusio*, *doxa* and *nomos*. This game of power may involve manipulation and bluff, as when the Predecessor in this research made Alpha’s Board members believe that he was supporting a candidate different from the one he actually helped in the way to succeed him. Playing with power relations also involves taking some risks, such as when the

Predecessor, without previous approval from the Board of Directors, changed the placing of his pieces on the chess board to his favor, dismissing or sending to retirement directors linked to a family group who opposed his own group.

We have observed that the *habitus* constituted in the Alpha field is aimed at maintaining the control the family has over the organization, holding the majority of shares, defining the composition of the Board of Directors and, particularly, holding the office of president. The shareholders have considerable power to intervene in executive functions and to influence decisions that are made by the majority rule and based on the pursuit of consensus, a condition that often raises resistances and disputes. Therefore, to play the game of power relations, as we have observed in some of the narratives that compose this research, one must know how to deal with resistance. This is exactly what the Predecessor so well demonstrated when he went beyond the organizational *habitus* that, all along Alpha's centenary story, reserved its executive positions to family members, always strongly rejecting candidates from outside the familiar circle.

The importance of the symbolic capital, especially in its incorporated way and subjectively regarded as social and cultural legacy (BOURDIEU, 2007), has been observed in the collected data. The cultural capital is essential for the succession, because its possession legitimizes the players in their attempt to occupy superior symbolic spaces in organizations. This importance can be noticed, for instance, when the Predecessor, needing to keep himself away from the company at the time he was to be chosen as the new Alpha's president, enrolls himself in a program at an American university and, later, visits European companies operating in the same segment as Alpha in order to improve his knowledge on the market. It is worth mentioning that the concept of cultural capital is not limited to intellectual capability but rather includes the player's technical abilities. The Successor's technical expertise, gathered along years of experience in business consultancy, appears in the preparation of a business plan by the candidates for the presidency and its presentation using the Power Point application. The social capital is also clearly to notice in the direct and 'under supervision' contact of the Predecessor with the Successor.

With regard to the notions of *doxa* and *nomos*, we may here draw a comparison with an Alpha's governance clause that contains an age limit for those occupying executive offices in the company. This could have been one of the facts that triggered succession. In the company persists the belief that the Board of Directors must be the 'owner' of the succession process. Besides, the importance of counting on the participation of external consultants to support and conduct the process had already been proved in previous occasions.

Since succession processes involve power relations, it is important to emphasize the knowledge of players on their dynamics. Therefore, it is appropriate to underline the ability to master *illusio*. The Predecessor proved himself to be a knower of *illusio* in his field. This is exemplified by the conclusion the player came to, that the organization was numerically dominated by the same familiar nucleus linked to the former president, exactly the one who had pretermitted him in a previous succession process. He recognized that the board of directors must be the owner of the succession process and understood the importance of carefully conducting the process to avoid stock exchange traumas. However, he also regarded the company's governance as fragile, not transparent and excessively turned to the interests of certain groups of shareholders. Starting from this scenario, he made use of his astuteness and of *illusio* to favor his own interests, overcoming his opponents' resistances.

Although the subject of succession in organizations has been addressed by many specialized scientific publications, it is not common to find articles that approach the subject from the point of view of power relations, of conflicts, of resistances and of the domination strategies adopted, analyzing the narratives of the players involved in the process. This article helps the advance of the studies on the subject of succession in organizations in that it presents

such kinds of data. Another help this article can give to the scientific advance of the subject in the field of organizational studies is the use of Bourdieu's theory in a research work that deals with the symbolic power around succession in a large family organization, a fact that opens room for new similar studies.

The article presented data related to a particular case. Although the dispute for power around succession has been relevantly evidenced, other critical studies on the theme are necessary to enable collection of data from other organizations, unveiling their own contexts and peculiarities, thus cooperating to the growth of knowledge on the power relations involved in succession processes in large-size organizations.

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