

## **PARENTAL BEHAVIORS AND NEXT-GENERATION ENGAGEMENT IN FAMILY**

### **FIRMS: A SOCIAL COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE**

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## **PARENTAL BEHAVIORS AND NEXT-GENERATION ENGAGEMENT IN FAMILY FIRMS: A SOCIAL COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE**

Next-generation engagement is a key contributor to the success and continuity of family businesses. It has been recognized that family relationships are an important factor in shaping such engagement. However, we know little as to how this process unfolds especially during the formative years of next-generation members. Using the principles of social cognitive theory and drawing from the literatures of career development, organizational behavior and family business, we propose a conceptual model that examines the psychological mechanisms linking parental behavior and next-generation engagement. We argue that parental behaviors influence next-generation engagement through its effects on next-generation members' self-efficacy and commitment. We elaborate on this model by presenting contingency factors that moderate the proposed relationships. Lastly, we offer theoretical implications that can open new avenues for future research.

## **Parental Behaviors and Next-generation Engagement in Family Firms: A Social Cognitive Perspective**

Engaged and competent family members are critical to the success and continuity of family enterprises (Sharma, Melin, & Nordqvist, 2014). Senior generation leaders often express the desire to retain family control of their enterprises over generations to preserve and enhance the family's economic and socio-emotional wealth (Miller & Le-Breton Miller, 2005). Nevertheless, global studies about next-generation family member career choices continue to reveal low levels of interest and intention of potential successors to join their family business (Sieger, Fueglistaller, & Zellweger, 2014). For instance, among 93,000 students surveyed in 26 countries, only 6.9% said they are willing to take over the family business immediately after graduation. Similarly, in the UK, only 6.7% of respondents were willing to take over the business 5 years after completing college education (Zellweger, Sieger, & Englisch, 2012).

Despite a global succession crisis, understanding of the factors that influence next-generation engagement remains limited. This issue reflects several gaps in current family business research. First, while family business studies is a multi-disciplinary field focused on issues and dynamics at the interface of family and business systems, the literature is skewed more towards business than family (Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017). Scholars have repeatedly emphasized the need for a more balanced perspective by applying theoretical lenses from disciplines aside from financial economics and strategic management (Daspit, Holt, Chrisman, & Long, 2016). This is not to say that attempts have not been made to address this issue. Efforts to integrate research from family sciences (e.g., Jaskiewicz, Combs, Shanine, & Kacmar, 2017) and organizational behavior (Gagné, Sharma, & De Massis, 2014) to inform family business studies

are underway. Although these are encouraging steps in the right direction, there is much to learn from these disciplines about next-generation engagement.

Second, while the importance of personal characteristics in shaping family business dynamics has been recognized since the nineties (e.g., Chrisman, Chua & Sharma, 1998), research has largely been undertaken at a macro or firm level of analysis, with limited attention to the individual or psychological perspectives (Gagné, et al., 2014). When succession is examined at individual levels, the focus is on understanding the influence of incumbent and successor attributes on succession process or outcomes (e.g., De Massis, Sieger, Chua, & Vismara, 2016) with little attention to understand how successors are motivated and prepared for leadership roles (Daspit et al., 2016).

Lastly, findings on the influence of family dynamics on the level of next generation engagement are mixed. Growing up in an entrepreneurial environment imbues a sense of confidence to run a family business (e.g., Fairlie & Robb, 2007). Yet, high family expectations for next generation members to take over the business may be perceived as unwelcome control suppressing the potential successor's autonomy (Davis & Tagiuri, 1989; Kaye, 1996). Thus, it is unclear how early formative experiences and relationships help shape the identities, attitudes, and behaviors of next-generation family members. Prior work has not elaborated on the process-oriented nature of this phenomena, and thus, we know little about the psychological mechanisms that link parental behaviors with next-generation engagement (Daspit et al., 2016).

This paper addresses the abovementioned gaps by proposing a theoretical model that draws insights from the career development, organizational behavior, and family business literatures. We examine next-generation engagement from an individual-level of analysis particularly from the successor's perspective. Building on the principles of social cognitive

theory (Bandura, 1986), we propose that parental behaviors, particularly *parental support* and *parental psychological control* affects *next-generation engagement* by influencing successors' *self-efficacy* and *commitment to the business* (Figure 1). Following Zellweger et al. (2012), next-generation engagement is defined as the intention of next-generation members to actively contribute to the sustainability of their family business through their involvement in its ownership and/or management and/or governance.

In the next section we introduce the aspects of social cognitive theory used to understand the influencers of next-generation engagement, and the key variables in our theoretical framework. The following section offers propositions as to how these variables interrelate to predict next-generation engagement. Next, we consider the contextual contingencies that could potentially impact the proposed relationships. The article closes with a discussion of future research directions. Preliminary results aimed at testing parts of the proposed model are shared in Appendix A.

### **Social Cognitive Theory & Next-generation Engagement**

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory (SCT) views human development and functioning as complex and dynamic. This is reflected in one of SCT's major tenets—triadic reciprocal determinism. Under this principle, personal attributes, environmental factors, and behavior are believed to interact with each other in a bidirectional manner. That is, behavior or intentions can be perceived as a bi-product of person-environment interactions, as well as, a predictor of person and environmental factors. The behavior of interest here is the next-generation's engagement in their family enterprise. We theorize that this behavior is affected by two attributes of these family members – their self-efficacy and commitment to the family firm.

These attributes, in turn, are influenced by the parenting environment experienced by these individuals.

***Self-Efficacy:*** SCT emphasizes that humans have an innate capacity to direct their own behaviour, as individuals are neither mere conduits of external forces nor are they fully governed by internal desires. Instead, humans have the capacity for forethought and metacognitive self-reflection (i.e., to think, and reflect about thinking). Self-efficacy is a construct that captures this self-regulative function. It is a person's belief that s/he can successfully perform tasks to achieve goals. Self-efficacy has been applied to explain varied phenomena such as workplace aggression (Garcia, Restubog, Kiewitz, Scott, & Tang, 2014), career decision-making (Hackett & Betz, 1981), career choice intentions (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), and entrepreneurial intentions and behavior (Carr & Sequeira, 2007). Research confirms that because of their belief of a higher likelihood of achieving desired results and ability to persevere amidst difficulties, individuals gravitate towards activities and careers in which they view themselves to be efficacious. Self-efficacy should not be confused with actual knowledge, ability, or skill. While competence certainly plays a critical role in what individuals choose to do, SCT argues that it is the individual's interpretation of the usefulness and quality of these attainments that ultimately determines behavior. Take for example a potential family business successor who has an MBA degree and who has worked in the family business for quite some time. The extent to which this person will actively engage in the family business depends not so much on the current skills or capabilities he/she possess, but on the person's judgment of whether these attainments are sufficient to be a successful successor.

***Commitment to the Business:*** has been identified as an attribute of next-generation family members' highly valued by the senior generation leaders (Chrisman, et al., 1998). In the

organizational behavior literature, commitment is described as a psychological state that compels an individual towards a course of action and is a three-dimensional construct (Meyer, Stanley, Hersovitch & Topolnytsky, 2002). Focused largely on non-family employees, this research suggests that individuals may choose to work with their current employer because of three propelling reasons - a strong emotional attachment to their organization (affective commitment); a feeling of indebtedness or obligation (normative commitment); or a concern for work- and nonwork-related costs (continuance commitment). These three dimensions have also been found useful to understand next-generation engagement and their subsequent performance in family firms (Sharma & Irving, 2005). We extend this work to understand how parenting environment influences the commitment of next-generation family members; and the relative impact of self-efficacy and commitment on next-generations' engagement in family firms.

***Parental Behaviors:*** Over fifty years of research on parent-child socialization confirms two key dimensions of parenting behaviors associated with the optimal functioning and well-being of a child. These are: parental support and parental control (Barber, 1997; Bean, Barber & Crane, 2006). Conceptualized as the level of acceptance and warmth that parents express towards their children, *parental support* has been found to be an essential feature in the normal development of children. It is positively related to higher social and academic achievement, higher self-esteem and lower depression in children and adolescents (Bean et al., 2006). However, there is far less conceptual clarity on the *parental control* variable or consensus on its impact on children and adolescents. Some researchers make a distinction between *behavioral and psychological control* (Barber, 1997; Bean et al., 2006). Behavioral control refers to regulation or structure in a child's life, and higher levels of this control are associated with better functioning of the child. Psychological control, on the other hand, refers to too-much control by a

domineering parent who intrudes on a child's sense of self by manipulating and constraining interactions, and invalidating choices and feelings. The limited research on this dimension suggests that psychological parental control negatively affects the well-being of a child by contributing to internalized problems such as depression and anxiety (Barber, 2002; Bean et al., 2006). As both parental support and behavioral control have similar positive influences on children, and much less attention has been devoted to understand the impact of psychological control on next-generation behaviors (Bean et al., 2006), in this article we focus on the two parental behavior dimensions of *parental support* and *parental psychological control*.

### **PLEASE ADD FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE**

#### **Parental Behaviors, Self-efficacy, Commitment, and Next-generation Engagement**

Behavioral research from SCT perspective has shown that as primary providers of resources and socio-emotional support, parents are highly influential during the formative years of a child (Restubog, Florentino, & Garcia, 2010; Turner & Lapan, 2002). Due to their direct interaction as providers in their lives, children often view their parents as sources of guidance and advice (Papini, Farmer, Clark, Micka, & Barnett, 1990). Entrepreneurship research also acknowledges the significant role played by parents in shaping the credibility and desirability of an entrepreneurial career in the minds of their children (e.g., Van Auken, Stephens, & Silva, 2006). But how exactly do parents influence next-generation engagement? What specific supportive behaviors are effective in increasing successor self-efficacy and commitment?

***Parental Support and Self-efficacy:*** Four types of parental support increase self-efficacy beliefs. These are instrumental assistance, career-related modeling, verbal encouragement, and emotional support (Turner & Lapan, 2002). *Instrumental assistance* involves behaviors that assist children and adolescents' career-related skill development through mastery experiences. In



a family business context, this constitutes behaviors such as providing successors with opportunities to gain work experience through apprenticeships and financial assistance for formal education or professional development (Zhao, Seibert, & Hills, 2005). Parents can also increase their children's self-efficacy through *career-related modeling* where potential successors learn through observational learning. The effectiveness of this learning mode depends on whether or not the observed role model attains positive outcomes that are also relevant to the successor. For instance, Scherer, Adams, Carley and Wiebe (1989) found that individuals who perceived their parents to be successful entrepreneurs have a higher likelihood of establishing a new venture as opposed to those who were not exposed to successful role models. *Verbal encouragement* is another source of self-efficacy information. When trusted others encourage and provide specific performance feedback, it is easier to sustain a sense of efficacy especially during challenging situations. However, verbal encouragement should be as realistic as possible to avoid instances of overconfidence (Boyd & Vozikis, 1994). Lastly, parents can also increase self-efficacy through *emotional support* particularly influencing children's affective reactions towards participation in the family business. Helping potential successors manage negative emotions is particularly important in the family business context given that the family and the firm are inextricably woven. That is, successors may suffer from fear or anxiety arising from the need to differentiate themselves from incumbents as they exert their own personal identities (Dunn, 1999). Given these arguments, we propose that:

*Proposition 1: Parental support, in the form of instrumental assistance, career-related modeling, verbal encouragement, and emotional support, is positively related to next-generation members' family business self-efficacy.*

***Parental Support and Commitment:*** We also propose that parental support shapes the type of commitment next-generation members have towards the family firm. Our propositions

for this relationship comes from the organizational behavior literature where commitment has been mainly studied in the context of employer-employee relationships (e.g., Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). Organizational commitment is predicted not only by features of the job, but also of the quality of the exchange relationship between the individual and organizational members such as colleagues and supervisors (Van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006). For instance, perceived organizational support (POS) has been found to be strongly and positively correlated with affective commitment as it signals to employees that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). POS helps address employees' socio-emotional needs such as their need for esteem, approval, and affiliation (Shore & Shore, 1995). When this happens, employees develop a deeper sense of belongingness and pride towards the organization manifested in higher levels of affective commitment. Parental support similarly addresses children's socio-emotional needs. For instance, through instrumental assistance and career-related modeling, senior generation family members can instill their own sense of pride, accomplishment, and satisfaction in the family business towards next-generation members (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2005). This increases their affective commitment as they perceive an alignment of their identity with the needs, goals, and values of their family business (Dawson, Sharma, Irving, Marcus, & Chirico, 2015). Thus, we propose:

*Proposition 2a: Parental support is positively related to next-generation members' affective commitment towards the family business.*

Parental support could also increase next-generation member's normative commitment towards the family business. This relationship can be explained by the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960) which states that we repay in kind what others have done for us. Thus, when next-generation members perceive that their parents show concern about their career

development and well-being, they are more likely to feel indebted towards them. One way to reciprocate these investments is to work in the family firm. This feeling of reciprocity and obligation may be particularly salient in the family business context where communal and exchange based relationships simultaneously exist (Gagné et al., 2014). Indeed, family expectations have been found to significantly predictor next-generation members' felt obligation to remain in the family firm (Dawson et al., 2015).

*Proposition 2b: Parental support is positively related to next-generation members' normative commitment towards the family business.*

Prior research suggests that high levels of perceived support are either unrelated or negatively related to continuance commitment (Aubé, Rousseau, & Morin, 2007). Next-generation family members who have high levels of continuance commitment engage in the family business because of the social or financial costs associated with leaving. Effective parental support should reduce next-generation members' feelings of entrapment as it should serve to address the child's socio-emotional needs (Garcia, Restubog, Toledano, Tolentino, & Rafferty, 2012). Afterall, parental support is manifested not just in provision of financial or economic resources (e.g., instrumental assistance), it also includes verbal encouragement and emotional support which relates to a more affective rather than economic exchange relationship.

Thus we expect:

*Proposition 2c: Parental support is negatively related to next-generation members' continuance commitment towards the family business.*

***Parental Psychological Control, Self-Efficacy, and Commitment:*** As parents try to balance the needs of several claimants of rewards (including their own legacy desires), their involvement may also be manifested through extreme control (Dietrich & Kracke, 2009). By virtue of the power they have over resources, they can exert unwanted influence controlling their

children's career interests and choices (Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi, Glasscock, 2001). Parental control interferes with the child's individuation as parents restrict adolescents' decision-making and autonomy (Kaye, 1996). This, then, leads to fewer opportunities for self and environmental exploration, both of which are essential ingredients to developing high levels of self-efficacy (Garcia et al., 2012). Parental control has particular relevance in family firms because of the close interface between the family and the business. Incumbents may focus on preserving wealth and power associated with the family business at the expense of the adaptive development of their children (Kaye, 1996). As Le Breton-Miller and Miller (2014, p. 671) have noted, controlling and domineering incumbent parents tend to have sons and daughters who "worship them, lack independence of thought and confidence, and to slavishly copy their parents' practices even after these had lost relevance." Thus, we propose:

*Proposition 3: Parental psychological control is negatively related to next-generation members' family business self-efficacy.*

In the context of family firms, no research has examined the relationship between parental psychological control and family members' commitment towards their firm. Nevertheless, we expect this relationship to vary based on the type of commitment. This is because we can draw parallels from the organizational behavior literature on parent-child and supervisor-subordinate relationships to guide our propositions (Game, 2008). Similar to abusive and destructive leadership, parental psychological control also involves punitive and uncaring behaviors such as yelling and swearing. Such behaviors undermine affective commitment (Tepper, 2000). Unfair treatment in hands of supervisors has been found to not only reduce affective commitment, but to also increase withdrawal behavior (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001). Similarly, parental psychological control may lead next-generation members to interpret that the incumbent parent leader does not value their contributions to the

family business or care about their circumstances. This is consistent with the family business literature acknowledging the inability of incumbents to relinquish control as a major factor hampering the willingness of successors to take over the business (Daspit et al., 2016).

Therefore, we propose:

*Proposition 4a: Parental psychological control is negatively related to next-generation members' affective commitment towards the family business.*

On the contrary, we expect parental psychological control to increase both normative and continuance commitment. At best, controlling behaviors may increase the feeling that children are “obligated” to reciprocate the investment their parents made in them. Indeed, strong family expectations has been found to significantly increase normative commitment towards the family firm (Dawson et al., 2015). Similarly, we expect parental psychological control to increase continuance commitment towards the family firm. Such control involves limiting the independence and autonomy of next-generation members, preventing them from exploring alternative career paths beyond their family business. Limited exploration of alternative career paths induces risk and uncertainty increasing the “costs” associated with pursuing careers outside of the family firm (Dawson et al., 2015). Furthermore, controlling parents may increase the economic and social costs associated with leaving the family firm by offering financial rewards or highlighting the risk of ostracism should the next-generation family member disobey the incumbent’s wishes (Nicholson, 2015). Thus, incumbents may use their power over important resources that the potential successor values, to increase the perceived costs of not engaging in the family business. As the focus of our theorizing is neither on the duration of next generations’ engagement in the family firm nor on their performance, we expect that:

*Proposition 4b: Parental psychological control is positively related to next-generation members' normative commitment towards the family business.*

*Proposition 4c: Parental psychological control is positively related to next-generation members' continuance commitment towards the family business*

***Self-Efficacy, Commitment, and Next-generation Engagement:*** Self-efficacy influences an individual's intention or goal to engage in particular activities. That is, people will generally choose tasks or goals congruent with their self-efficacy beliefs. For example, Lent, Brown, and Larkin (1986) found that self-efficacy for technical/scientific fields is positively related to perceived career options in technical/scientific fields and this relationship remained significant after controlling for interest. Similarly, entrepreneurial self-efficacy has been found to increase entrepreneurial intentions and behavior (Carr & Sequeira, 2007). Specifically, entrepreneurial self-efficacy mediates the relationship between perceived family support and entrepreneurial intent (Carr & Sequeira, 2007). Next-generations' perceptions of readiness to lead their family business significantly influences the incumbent parents' satisfaction with the succession process and propensity to pass the baton to these family members (Sharma, Chrisman & Chua, 2003). Thus, we predict that:

*Proposition 5: Next-generation members' family business self-efficacy is positively related to their engagement in the family business.*

We also expect all three bases of commitment (affective, normative, and continuance) to increase next-generation members' intentions to engage in the family business. High levels of affective commitment indicate that next-generation members' sense of self and identity are aligned with family firm goals and values (Dawson et al., 2015). Furthermore, next-gen members high in affective commitment are more likely to go beyond their contractual duties and responsibilities to achieve family business goals (Dawson, Irving, Sharma, Chirico, & Marcus, 2014). Similarly, we expect next-gen members high in normative commitment to have high intentions to engage in the family business. The sense of obligation to the family firm is not

necessarily negative “because individuals may feel a sense of satisfaction if they are meeting the expectations of other family members maintaining positive social relations with these significant people” (Dawson et al., 2014, p. 3). Indeed, Dawson and colleagues (2014) found that among the three bases of commitment, only normative commitment is predictive of transformational leadership among family firms. In organizational behavior research, continuance commitment has the weakest influence on turnover intentions and actual turnover (Meyer et al., 2002). As our outcome variable focuses on the intention of next-generation members to engage in the family business, as opposed to whether they would stay or perform well in the job, we expect a positive relationship between continuance commitment and next-generation engagement. This relationship will be particularly strong if costs associated with seeking alternative career paths lead to unfavourable financial and social consequences. Next-generation members with high levels of continuance commitment have fewer alternative career opportunities leading to working in the family business as the “default” career path (Dawson et al., 2015). Therefore, we expect:

*Proposition 6: Next-generation members’ affective, normative, and continuance commitment is positively related to their engagement in the family business.*

### **Contingency Factors Influencing Parental Behaviors and Next-generation Engagement**

The impact of parental behaviors on self-efficacy and commitment of the next generation can potentially be moderated by a host of additional factors associated with family influence. To qualify the heterogeneity of family influence (Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017), we draw on two key drivers of family-oriented particularistic behavior – *family goals* and *family power* (De Massis, Kotlar, Chua, and Chrisman, 2014). We propose that given certain parental behaviors, the involved family can influence the self-efficacy and commitment of next-generation members in different ways depending on family goals and power. Overall, we expect family goals and family’s

concentrated power will amplify our proposed relationships (Table 1). Below, we elaborate on possible individual and firm-level moderators associated with the family's goals and power that can strengthen or weaken the proposed relationships.

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**The Moderating Role of Family Goals:** We propose that family goals are an important contingency factor that determines the ultimate effect of parental behaviors on next-generation engagement. Family owners' goals can be either family- or nonfamily-centered, economic or noneconomic (Kotlar and De Massis, 2013). These goals play a central role in emerging theories of the family firm and are considered a primary driver of family firm heterogeneity. While all firms pursue non-economic goals, family firms pursue those that relate to the unique interests and influence of the controlling family (Chrisman, Chua, Pearson, & Barnett, 2012). The extent to which family owners decide to prioritize family-centered or business-centered goals, affects decision making and individual behavior (De Massis, Kotlar, Mazzola, Minola & Sciascia, 2016).

***Parental support, Family Goals, and Self-efficacy:*** We argue that the family's prioritization of family-centered goals is likely to influence the relationship between parental behaviors, self-efficacy, and commitment in terms of emphasizing the importance of family harmony, well-being, and the preservation of socio-emotional wealth (Berrone, Gomez-Mejia, & Cruz, 2012). For instance, having family-centered goals includes emphasizing the family's welfare over that of the business. It may also encourage family members to be more considerate and altruistic towards one another thereby reducing potential family conflict (Lubatkin, Schulze, Ling, & Dino, 2005). Driven by the preservation of socio-emotional wealth, family-centered goals may also facilitate parental behaviors aimed at developing the skills and capabilities of next-generation members (Sirmon & Hitt, 2003). Thus, we predict that family-centered goals will moderate the



relationship between parental support and self-efficacy such that prioritizing family-centered goals would strengthen the positive relationship between parental support and self-efficacy.

*Proposition 7a. The positive relationship between parental support and family business self-efficacy will be stronger when the family prioritizes family-centred goals.*

***Parental support, Family Goals, and Commitment:*** Parental support signals to the next-generation that their parents care about their wellbeing and value their potential contribution to the family business. This support fosters an emotional attachment to the organization and helps increase identification towards the family firm. The preservation of close family ties and identification towards the family firm are inherent in family-centered goals which makes it easier for parent incumbents to engage in parental support. This alignment fosters loyalty, commitment, and a sense of obligation towards the family firm. A stronger focus on family-centered goals will likely help to address next-generation members' socioemotional needs, thereby reducing next-generation members' feeling of entrapment (e.g., continuance commitment). Hence, we predict that:

*Proposition 7b: The positive relationship between parental support and affective commitment will be stronger when the family prioritizes family-centered goals.*

*Proposition 7c: The positive relationship between parental support and normative commitment will be stronger when the family prioritizes family-centered goals.*

*Proposition 7d: The negative relationship between parental support and continuance commitment will be stronger when the family prioritizes family-centered goals.*

***Parental Psychological Control, Family Goals, Self-efficacy, and Commitment:***

Prioritizing family-centered goals may also have a dark side which can be harmful for next-generation self-efficacy and commitment. Family-centered goals may also entail preserving family control and influence towards dynastic succession (Berrone et al., 2012). Pressure from senior generation family members to retain control of the family business can result in "tunnel vision"

where the family or parent incumbent does whatever it takes to attain that goal (Locke, 1996). Prioritizing family-centered goals may serve to justify parental psychological control as the family owners believe preserving family ownership takes precedence over the next-generation's welfare and wellbeing. When this occurs, parents are less likely to provide children with opportunities for career exploration or give their children autonomy in decision-making – both are important sources of self-efficacy. Imagine an incumbent who retains decision-making rights after passing the baton. This situation is harmful for next-generation self-efficacy as it does not facilitate mastery experiences (e.g., experiencing and learning from one's success and failures). Such a situation may lead to potential conflicts that may undermine a strong emotional attachment to the family business. By default, next-generation members are more likely to feel “obligated” and “fearful” about the possible consequences of non-engagement. Thus, we offer the following propositions:

*Proposition 7e: The negative relationship between parental psychological control and family business self-efficacy will be stronger when the family prioritizes family-centered goals.*

*Proposition 7f: The negative relationship between parental psychological control and affective commitment will be stronger when the family prioritizes family-centered goals.*

*Proposition 7g. The positive relationship between parental psychological control and normative commitment will be stronger when the family-prioritizes family-centered goals.*

*Proposition 7h. The positive relationship between parental psychological control and continuance commitment will be stronger when the family-prioritizes family-centered goals.*

**The Moderating Role of Family Power:** Power in the hands of the family changes according to management and ownership configuration. Prior studies on corporate governance in family firms identify factors that strengthen or weaken the relationship between parental behaviors and next-generation engagement through power concentration: the presence of a family CEO (Gómez-Mejía, Núñez-Nickel & Gutierrez, 2001) and family involvement in other top managerial positions

(Cannella, Jones, & Withers, 2014). Family owners' span of control increases when the ultimate control of the firm is restricted to a close circle of family owners and affiliates (Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2005). Moreover, power concentration is likely amplified when family owners appoint the CEO and other top executives based on personal relationships, thereby forming relational rather than arm's length agreements (Cannella et al., 2014) and gaining substantial decision-making authority (Bertrand & Schoar, 2006).

The influence of parental behaviors on next-generation engagement through power concentration may be moderated by the dispersion of family ownership among multiple family members (Schulze, Lubatkin, & Dino, 2003). When family ownership is divided among multiple members, the principal family owners tend to lose authority and influence over other family shareholders and struggle to obtain their support to pursue their preferences (Schulze et al., 2003), especially in light of the diversity of goals and values pursued by other family members (Kotlar & De Massis, 2013). Therefore, family ownership dispersion likely reduces power inequality and bifurcation biases in the firm (Patel & Cooper, 2014). Family owners are likely to allow higher representation of non-family managers and employees in decision making.

The dispersion of family ownership among family members can lead to family identity erosion and greater emphasis on non-family goals. We propose therefore that the positive influence of parental support, the positive and negative influences of parental control on the ensuing successor's self-efficacy and commitment are likely to be weaker under these conditions. In the following, we examine the effects of the family's power as a key contingency on the direct influences of parental behaviors on self-efficacy and commitment, respectively.

***Parental support, Family Power, Self-efficacy, and Commitment:*** The moderating influence of family power on the relationship between parental support and self-efficacy will be

stronger when family power is more concentrated in the hands of family members, and weaker *vice-versa*. Higher concentration of power in the hands of the family means family members' have higher discretion to direct, allocate, add to, or dispose of a firm's resources. Indeed, resources are needed (e.g., financial, formal education) to expose next-generation members to learning opportunities that better develop their skills and knowledge of the family firm (Turner & Lapan, 2002). Furthermore, having higher levels of power allows parents and family members to provide resources that next-generation members value which can also increase their felt attachment and/or obligation towards the family firm. Thus, next-generation members may feel a sense of pride and loyalty towards the family firm.

*Proposition 8a: The positive relationship between parental support and family business self-efficacy will be stronger with high levels of family power.*

*Proposition 8b: The positive relationship between parental support and affective commitment will be stronger with high levels of family power.*

*Proposition 8c: The positive relationship between parental support and normative commitment will be stronger with high levels of family power.*

*Proposition 8d: The negative relationship between parental support and continuance commitment will be stronger with high levels of family power.*

***Parental Psychological Control, Family Power, Self-efficacy, and Commitment:*** Power also has a dark side, particularly when used to advance self-interests at the expense of other's wellbeing. Evidence of the possible link between power and abuse in organizations can be found in studies that examined abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000, 2007). According to this line of work, supervisors are able to abuse their subordinates because they have power over resources that are important to them (e.g., pay, promotions, etc.). Subordinates on the other hand may choose to be silent about their mistreatment due to fear of further reprisals (Garcia, et al., 2014). A similar logic may operate among family firms with high levels of power. Having high levels of discretion and

access to resources allows families with high levels of power to abuse it at the expense of the next-generation's wellbeing. Thus, high levels of power can facilitate the enactment of parental psychological control harmful for self-efficacy and commitment. Hence, we propose the following:

*Proposition 8e: The negative relationship between parental psychological control and family business self-efficacy will be stronger with high levels of family power.*

*Proposition 8f: The negative relationship between parental psychological control and affective commitment will be stronger with high levels of family power.*

*Proposition 8g: The positive relationship between parental psychological control and normative commitment will be stronger with high levels of family power.*

*Proposition 8h: The positive relationship between parental psychological control and continuance commitment will be stronger with high levels of family power.*

## **Discussion**

We have developed a theoretical model that integrates existing work on career development, organizational behavior, and family business literatures to examine next-generation engagement from an individual-level of analysis of the successor's perspective. Specifically we have explored how parental support and parental psychological control can affect next-generation engagement by influencing the next-generation's level of self-efficacy and commitment. We have also argued that two principal contingency factors the influence of parental behavior, that is family goals and family power. In this section we discuss some potential areas for theoretical development and key issues in moving to test our theoretical model.

***Theoretical Extension.*** A theoretical extension to our model would be to explore the temporal contingency of the influence of parental behavior on next-generation engagement, that is, the influence of the duration of family ownership defined as the length of time that family owners have been in control of the firm (Zellweger et al., 2012). The time-variant nature of

family ownership and its organizational consequences have been recognized (e.g., Schulze et al., 2003; Zellweger et al., 2012) and a temporal perspective helps shed light on diversity of forms that family ownership can take and ensuing variations of next-generation engagement over time.

Emotional attachment to possessions generally follows a psychological appropriation process, such that possession of an asset gradually becomes part of the owner's identity (Belk, 1992). Over time, existing routines and beliefs can become part of the family owners' legacy and symbolize their continuity, increasing the later generation's perceived value of the assets beyond their financial value (Zellweger et al., 2012). Similarly, family owners likely increase their psychological attachment to existing knowledge assets with time. As a result, the goal dimension of family ownership influence should increase over time, strengthening the effects of parental support and control over the firm's lifetime. Specifically, the positive influence of parental support and the negative influence of parental psychological control on next generation self-efficacy are likely stronger over time as the goal dimension of the influence of family ownership increases.

However, family ownership influence through power concentration may weaken over time as a longer association between the owner and non-family members fosters family trust towards these members, supporting their participation in decision-making processes (Patel & Cooper, 2014) and reducing the distance between the upper echelon - owners and their associates – and the rest of the organization (Verbeke & Kano, 2012). This reduction of power concentration may reduce the positive effect of parental support and control on next-generation engagement over time. Specifically, the positive influence of parental support and the negative influence of parental control on next generation self-efficacy likely weaken over time as the power dimension of the influence of family ownership decreases.

The proposed model could also be extended to include the actual job performance of next-generation members. Next-generation members may be willing to engage in the family business but this does not necessarily guarantee high levels of job performance or effective leadership. Indeed, the three bases of commitment differentially predict whether successors would engage in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB; Dawson et al., 2014). OCBs are described as going above and beyond job duties for the benefit of the family business. That is, affective commitment was more likely to predict OCBs and normative commitment is more likely to predict transformational leadership.

As noted earlier, SCT suggests that person factors, the environment, and behaviour interact with each other in bidirectional manner (Bandura, 1986). Thus, our theoretical model could further be extended to account for the possible influence of engagement and performance on parental support, self-efficacy, and commitment. For instance, would high performing and engaged next-generation members elicit higher levels of parental support? Consistent with SCT, it is also possible for performance and engagement to inform self-efficacy and commitment. That is, successful (or poor) performance may further increase (or decrease) next-generation confidence and commitment towards the family firm creating a feed-back loop mechanism.

***Model Testing.*** To test our model, further research should first be devoted to how key behavioral variables can be measured using scales that are more appropriate in a family business context. Bandura (2006) notes the problem that most items used in an all-purpose self-efficacy test may have little or no relevance to the domain of focus in a particular study. For instance, we lack family business domain-specific measures of self-efficacy as most studies have relied on entrepreneurial self-efficacy. While certain skills overlap, some are more important for family business successors to have (e.g., balancing work and family issues). DeNoble, Ehrlich and

Singh (2007) attempt to address this issue but provide only a conceptual base and did not really develop a measure. Also, they treated self-efficacy as human capital as opposed to a social cognitive approach. Further research also needs to consider the development of a parental support and psychological control measure that is context specific to family businesses. Existing measures fall short as they usually include items pertaining to how parents supported general career development tasks such as career exploration, helping with homework, general career advice.

An empirical extension could be to adopt multi-level and longitudinal research designs. Our model, while looking at the individual level of analysis, could be extended to a multi-level operationalization by, for example, examining how group-level variables such as senior family members (or extended rather than nuclear definitions of family), influence self-efficacy and commitment. Contingencies relating to family power in relation to individuals could also be examined using multi-level analysis.

Longitudinal research designs would be helpful in terms of capturing the temporal element underlying the relationships in our model but may be demanding in terms of obtaining fine-grained time-variant measures. The nature of next generations and the relationship with parents may vary depending upon which generation of ownership the firm is currently at. Next generations may be heterogeneous and only a subset of the next generation may be involved in succession to management. Measures need to take account of the scope of this next generation. There may also need to be recognition of endogeneity issues relating to the scope of the generation selected.

The relationship may differ as between generations where the founder is currently in control and the firm is handing over to the next generation for the first time, versus cases where



there have been previous handovers. Future measurement may need to develop fine-grained measures that take account of the nature of the process for previous handovers. For example, prior transfers to the next generation may have been perceived as successful or unsuccessful which may influence how the current transfer is perceived.

Access to prior generations and recall bias are obvious challenges. For private businesses, there is likely little media coverage but there may be opportunities to access archives of family businesses such as minutes of meetings or even autobiographies (Dalpiaz, Tracey & Phillips, 2014). Such data sources may lend themselves to more qualitative or process studies.

Ideally, testing our model requires responses from both next generation (potential) successors and their parents. The challenges of obtaining more than one response from a focal organization are well-known and relate not just to access permissions but also the difficulties associated with surveying sensitive issues. Where the parent and the next generation sides each involve more than one individual, the challenges of accessing more than one individual from each side in order to try to obtain reliable perceptions are magnified. Hence, trade-offs may need to be made between obtaining responses from a sufficient number of individuals versus being able to obtain multiple responses from a particular firm.

Organizational and institutional contexts can influence family business behavior (Wright, Chrisman, Chua & Steier, 2014). In particular, our model has not specified any differences between public and private family firms, or between institutional contexts. Yet, the goals and power concentration of families may differ between publicly listed and private family firms given the likely different emphasis in socioemotional goals and differences in the concentration of owners. Different institutional contexts have implications, inter alia, for the roles of trusts in generating distinct patterns of transformation and continuity in family firms, and the importance

of kinship and family ties as contributors to the social capital of family firms, etc. (Wright et al., 2014). For example, institutional contexts differ in the extent to which they force the owner to pass on the undivided property to the next generation, even though inheritors may be unwilling or unable to continue to run the firm. Future theoretical and empirical work might usefully explore the implications of this heterogeneity of contextual factors on the role of parental behaviour in next generation involvement and the impact on self-efficacy and commitment.

### **Appendix: Preliminary Analyses**

We collected pilot data to provide a preliminary test of our propositions. Questionnaires were sent to family business owner/manager across the UK. Private UK firms with more than 20 employees and a majority owner were identified using FAME (approximately 8000 firms). From this group family firms were identified as having two shareholders with the same surname where one shareholder was also a director (the European Commission Definition of a private family firm). The number of family firms identified and contacted was 2714. Family business owners were asked to identify and pass the survey to current or potential successors. We obtained 60 completed successor questionnaires. The small number of respondents can be attributed to logistical issues during data collection. First, there was only one potential successor per family firm, creating a limited pool of potential respondents. Second, some incumbents expressed hesitation in participating as they had not identified possible successors. Despite these limitations we present preliminary results as they can potentially advance further development of our propositions and guide future researchers in testing the model.

### **Participants and Measures**

Among participants, 62% were males and 45% were below the age of 40. Most respondents (92%) are currently working in the family business. We assessed parental support

using a 12-item version of the career-related parent support scale (Turner, Alliman-Brissett, Lapan, Udipi, & Ergun, 2003). Successors rated the extent to which parents or senior generation members provided them with instrumental assistance, career-related modeling, verbal encouragement, and emotional support. Parental control was assessed using 5-items developed by Dietrich and Kracke (2009). Participants were asked to rate the extent parents interfered with their career aspirations and choices. As noted in the discussion section, currently no family business self-efficacy measure exists. Thus, we used entrepreneurial self-efficacy scale developed by Chen, Greene & Crick(1998) and modified it following findings from DeNoble and colleagues (2007). Overall, we came up with a 22-item scale that taps human (e.g., firm-specific knowledge and skills) and social (e.g., managing business and family relationships) capital. We used the organizational commitment scales modified by Sharma and colleagues (2013) to measure affective, normative, and continuance commitment. Intentions to engage in the family business was measures by asking participants if they intend to be involved in the family business 5-10 years from now. Responses were coded as 1 = no, 2 = unsure, 3 = yes.

## **Results**

Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, and zero order correlations are presented in Table 2. All correlations pertaining to the propositions were not significant perhaps due to the small sample size obtained. However, most relationships are in the predicted direction. The overall measure of parental support ( $r = .09$ ), as well as its dimensions: instrumental assistance ( $r = .04$ ), career-related modeling ( $r = .10$ ), and verbal encouragement ( $r = .18$ ) were positively related to family business self-efficacy. However, emotional support was negatively related to family business self-efficacy, albeit very small ( $r = -.001$ ).

Similarly, overall parental support and its dimensions were positively correlated with affective and normative commitment. While emotional support was positively related to normative commitment ( $r = .14$ ), it was negatively related to affective commitment, albeit very small ( $r = -.007$ ). In line with our predictions, overall parental support as well as its three dimensions were negatively related to continuance commitment. However, contrary to predictions, emotional support was positively related to continuance commitment ( $r = .006$ ).

As for parental control, all correlations were in the expected direction. Parental control was negatively related to self-efficacy ( $r = -.09$ ) and affective commitment ( $r = -.002$ ). It was also positively related to normative commitment ( $r = .14$ ) and continuance commitment ( $r = .17$ ). Similarly, self-efficacy ( $r = .14$ ), affective commitment ( $r = .20$ ), and normative commitment ( $r = .20$ ) were positively related to next-generation engagement, consistent with our hypothesis. However, results showed that continuance commitment is negatively correlated with next generation engagement ( $r = -.15$ ).

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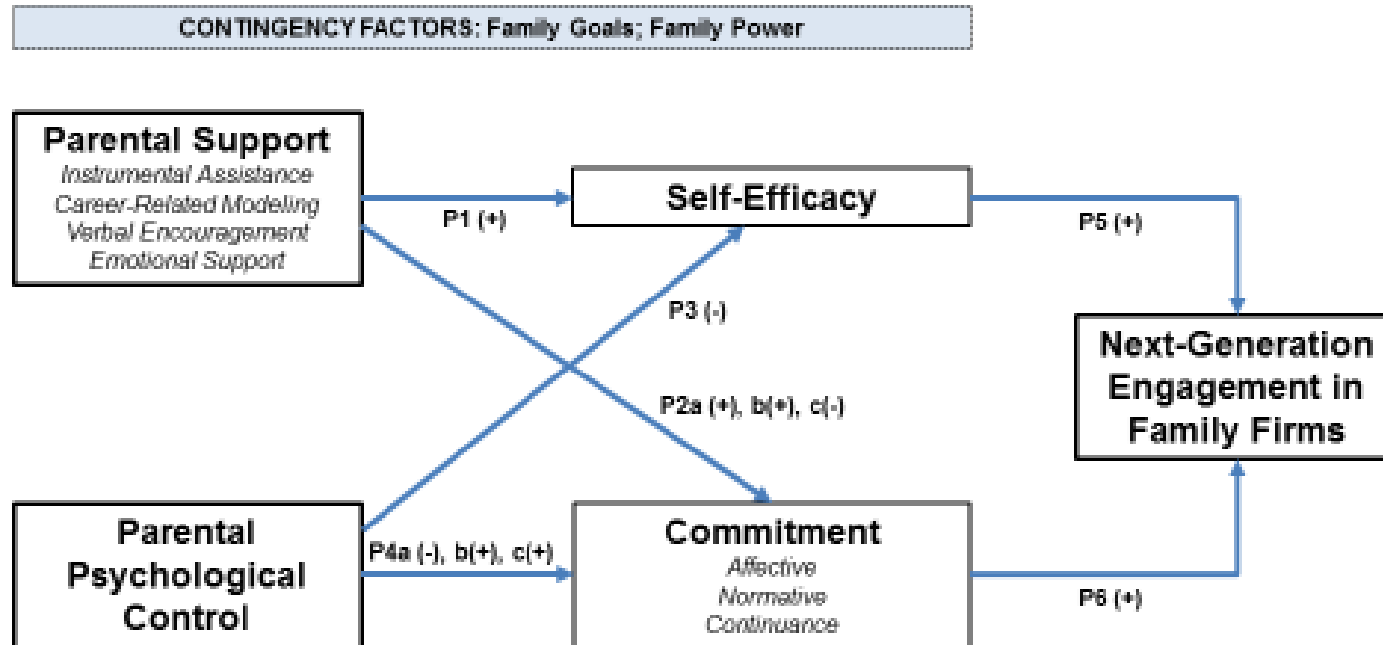
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**Figure 1: Next-generation Engagement in Family Firms**



*Note: Refer to Table 1 for a summary of the propositions relating to contingency factors.*

**Table 1. Contingency Factors: Family Goals and Family Power**

	<b>Self -efficacy</b>	<b>Commitment</b>		
		<b>Affective</b>	<b>Normative</b>	<b>Continuance</b>
<b>Parental support</b>	+	+	+	-
Family Goals (P7a-P7d)	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger
Family Power (P8a-P8d)	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger
<b>Parental Psychological Control</b>	-	-	+	+
Family Goals (P7e-P7h)	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger
Family Power (P8e-P8h)	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger	Stronger

**Table 2. Means, Standard deviations, and Zero-order Correlations of the Study Variables**

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Overall parental support	3.46	1.03	(.94)									
2. Instrumental assistance	3.31	1.22	.90***	(.96)								
3. Career-related modeling	3.76	1.14	.90***	.71***	(.94)							
4. Verbal encouragement	3.99	1.19	.80***	.56***	.75***	(.97)						
5. Emotional support	2.79	1.21	.85***	.82***	.63***	.46***	(.96)					
6. Parental psychological control	2.10	1.03	.29*	.31*	.29*	.03	.38**	(.88)				
7. FB self-efficacy	3.63	.72	.09	.04	.10	.17	-.001	-.09	(.95)			
8. Affective commitment	4.24	.73	.18	.11	.23	.29*	-.007	-.002	.21	(.72)		
9. Normative commitment	3.78	.67	.16	.13	.16	.12	.14	.14	.15	.45***	(.70)	
10. Continuance commitment	2.86	.68	-.12	-.14	-.12	-.17	.006	.17	-.15	.12	.35**	(.73)
11. Next-gen engagement	2.63	.69	.31*	.21	.41**	.38**	.10	-.007	.14	.24	.20	-.15

Note: \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .