

**Four shades of family business successor commitment:
Motivating factors and expected outcomes**

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Four shades of family business successor commitment: Motivating factors and expected outcomes

Commitment towards family business has been identified as a key desirable attribute in successors of family firms. Drawing on the organizational commitment literature, this article distinguishes between four types of successors commitment to family firm – affective (based on perceived desire), normative (based on perceived sense of obligation), calculative (based on perceived opportunity costs involved), and imperative (based on perceived need). A model of motivating factors leading to each type of successor commitment and the expected behavioral outcomes is developed. Related propositions are presented, contributions to family business and organizational commitment literature are discussed, as are research and practical implications.

Commitment to the family business has been repeatedly identified as one of the most desirable characteristics in next generation family members (e.g., Chrisman, Chua, Sharma, 1998; Deloitte and Touche, 1995; Handler, 1989; Sharma & Rao, 2000). Research suggests that when such commitment prevails, next generation family members are more likely to be: co-operative in performing their role in the leadership transition, satisfied with the succession process, and pursue a career in family firms (Dyck, Mauws, Starke, and Mischke, 2002; Handler, 1989; Sharma, 1997). Based on these findings, the prescription to date has been to find ways to assess and nourish next generations' commitment towards the family business (e.g., Keating and Little, 1997; Gilding, 2000).

The construct of commitment has received significant attention in the workplace or organizational commitment literature (e.g., Meyer and Allen, 1991; McGee & Ford, 1987). Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) recently developed a general model of workplace commitment in which they defined commitment as a *force*, experienced as a frame of mind or psychological state that *compels an individual toward a course of action of relevance to one or more targets*. In the case of family firm successors, the 'target' of their action is the family business. The course of action or 'focal behavior' that these family members feel compelled to engage in is to pursue a career in their family business.

Despite sharing a common focal behavior (choosing to pursue a career in their family firm), the motivation for such behavior can vary significantly (e.g., Dumas, Dupuis, Richer, & Cyr, 1995). The following statements made by four family firm successors sharing their reasoning for joining their family business provide a glimpse of such variations:

I'm one of the luckiest guys to come out of the University because I haven't been slotted into a specific job. We have an item that we manufacture from scratch, we warehouse it, we wholesale it, and we retail it. I see the business from every angle and I'm involved in it from every angle. It's kind of neat to be able to do that....I love being part of my family business. (Tim in Sharma, 1997: 130).

I felt touched; I felt needed, but I felt uncertain that this (moving to the family business) was a good move..... He (my father) said that the most important thing right now is for you as a Stillman is to be visible here because your sister is out.... we need another family member here. And so with that kind of plea I had no choice in my mind. I couldn't let the family down. So I dropped everything I was doing and I just went the next day and started working. (Polly in Handler 1989: 117).

I was always afraid of change (working outside of family business). I'll stick it out..... I really think, in a way, being so cowardly. I've really been lucky; I've done as well as I have so far It could have been a lot worse. (Bob in Handler 1989: 114).

At that point we really didn't know what her (wife's) involvement was from a shareholders standpoint. And what we found out was she was heavily involved to the point where it dwarfed what we were doing personally and all of a sudden it did change our perspective.....It sort of changed our outlook on it (their family business)..... that is when we decided we cannot pass this up. (Rob in Sharma, 1989: 131).

Tim joined the business because it offered task variety and job satisfaction that he desired and valued. Polly, on the other hand, had made a decision to work elsewhere, until her father approached her with a plea explaining his need for her presence in the business. With this plea, she felt obligated to join the family firm. Bob's decision to pursue a career in his family firm is based on his perceived dependence on the firm and lack of confidence in his ability to pursue a career outside this firm. He seems to use the family firm as a safe career haven. Finally, Rob and his wife decided to pursue a career in his in-laws' firm only after realizing the extent of their ownership stake in the business,

their perceived value of this stake and related opportunity cost of not pursuing a career in it.

Although all four of these next generation family members appear committed to pursue a career in the family business (focal behavior), the motivators or reasoning for pursuing this course of action are different. Thus, it is quite possible that their subsequent behaviors in relation to the family business will differ as well. For example, it is unclear whether all these individuals will continue their career in these firms in the long term, or whether each will exert the same amount of discretionary efforts to their jobs. Thus, our prescriptions for assessing next generation commitment to the family business and promoting such commitment may be somewhat hasty as it is unclear whether commitment to a business is a sufficient factor for successor effectiveness and high performance.

A broad range of factors has been suggested to influence successors' performance. For example, individual ability, experience, training (Morris, Williams, Allen, Avila, 1997), external networks (Goldberg, 1996), internal relationships (Malone, 1989), competitive and industry environment (Porter, 1980), organizational resources and processes (Habbershon and Williams, 1999). *If all these factors were equal, will all next generation members who express their commitment to their family firm by making a decision to pursue a career in these firms, (a) maintain this career choice in the long term, and (b) exert similar amounts of effort to their jobs?* This article explores these questions.

Drawing from workplace commitment literature, we distinguish between the varying shades of commitment thereby systematically identifying different motivators for

next generations' commitment. Next, the antecedents and consequences of each type of commitment are discussed and related propositions presented. The research and practical implications of these ideas are discussed in the last section.

SHADES OF COMMITMENT

Multiple shades of commitment: After a thorough review of the literature on organizational commitment, Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) concluded that although commitment is a force that binds an individual to a course of action, it is characterized by distinguishable 'mind-sets' that shape the behavior of an individual. Based on these mind-sets they identify the following types of commitments (c.f., Meyer and Allen, 1991, 2001):

(a) *Affective commitment* is based on an individual's 'emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization' (Meyer & Allen, 1991: 67). Thus, affective commitment is characterized by a desire to follow a course of action of relevance to the target. An individual with high affective commitment to an organization portrays a strong belief in, acceptance of, and an excitement about organizational goals. There exists a strong desire to contribute to these goals. S/he perceives a possibility of simultaneously contributing to the organization, as well as, satisfying her/his personal ambitions and career aspirations. A high level of confidence in one's own abilities to make a positive contribution to the organization is exhibited.

All four successors, whose statements were shared in the introduction section, decided to pursue a career in their respective family business, thus displaying identical focal behavior. However, it was only Tim who joined his family business due to his excitement about the tasks undertaken by this business, thereby exhibiting affective

commitment to pursuing a career in his family's business. He seems to value the diversity of tasks and experiences that a career in his family business offers. There is a clear sense of his identifying with the business and a confidence in his ability to contribute to every aspect of it.

The current usage of the term 'commitment' in the family business literature implies this type of commitment. Although there have been practically no attempts in this literature to clearly define this construct, Handler's (1989) explanation of the term sheds light on the prevailing meaning of the term. She states that commitment to family business perpetuation occurs when the family values the business and is willing to work together to ensure its future. This family value translates into family's operating norms and is practiced through the family member's sharing, helping, and contributing within the context of the business (p.171).

Mitchell (age 20) interviewed by Handler (1989: 171) explained what commitment to the family business meant to him:

'You're contributing to the family; you're helping to reach a goal, you're getting something done that needs to be done. You can see the progress on the work that you're doing, which is always nice when you're doing work. But I think the underlying thing is that it's our business. That is what we do; this is something that my father does. This kind of attitude or thought process is the main thing that made me work for him more and work hard.'

This statement indicates that the usage of term 'commitment' in family business literature refers to *affective commitment* that is based on a strong identification and emotional attachment with the business, combined with a desire and ability to contribute.

As suggested earlier and discussed in more detail below, there can be other motivators for successors to join their family business.

(b) Normative commitment is based on an individual's feeling of obligation to pursue a course of action of relevance to one or more targets (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). In the case of organizational commitment, an individual with high normative commitment would feel obligated to remain with the organization (c.f., Meyer & Allen, 1991). There is a sense of being 'locked into' the organization although the individual may not perceive this negatively. S/he accepts the influencing force and is eager to establish or maintain satisfying relationships. As in the case of affective commitment, the focal behavior exhibited in the case of normative commitment is a decision to pursue a career in the business. However, unlike affective commitment, the push factor is an experienced obligation to do so rather than an intrinsic desire to indulge in such a behavior.

Polly, whose statement was shared in the introduction, is an example of next generation family member's normative commitment to the organization. She joined her family firm due to the plea of her father. She noted that, although she was not convinced that it was a good decision for her to join her father's business, she felt 'touched' and 'needed' and unable to 'let the family down'. Another family business successor interviewed by Sharma (1997) voiced a similar reasoning to his joining his father's business:

I had finished university in 1977 and went to work for (a large multinational firm) for four years. Basically my father came to me and said if you don't get in and help out with this thing (family business), he was just going to unload it because it turned into too much to bear.....My father was getting on in age and I guess he felt that if he didn't have me in there, he would just unload the whole thing. Why go through all this if there is no interest within your own family.... to see the thing through. So basically, we had a meeting prior to Christmas 1980 and I made my decision pretty much over the Christmas time frame, and joined (the family business) in March of 1981. (Tim in Sharma, 1997).

Similar to Polly's case, Tim's sense of obligation towards his parents and their family's business was the motivator for his decision to join the business.

Although the literature on organizational commitment struggles with the question of ‘whether affective and normative are truly distinguishable forms of commitment’ (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001: 305), the close interaction of family ties in family firms provides a good context for distinguishing between these two forms of commitment. Whereas affective commitment is motivated by a desire to contribute or a sense of ‘wanting to’ pursue a focal behavior, the foremost motivator in normative commitment is a feeling of obligation or a sense of ‘ought to’ behave in a certain manner. While such sense of obligation may be relatively difficult to find in a non-blood related employer-employee relationship, it is commonly experienced in family firms where a sense of duty or obligation to the previous and future generations plays a significant role in the career decisions of family members.

(c) *Continuance commitment* is based on an individual’s awareness of the costs associated with leaving an organization (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This type of commitment is based on the ‘cost-avoidance’ mind-set. There is some disagreement concerning whether continuance commitment is a unidimensional or multidimensional construct (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001: 305). Whereas some studies (e.g., Dunham, Grube, & Castenada, 1994; Ko, Prince, & Mueller, 1997) suggest that continuance commitment is unidimensional, others provide evidence for the presence of two dimensions (e.g., McGee & Ford, 1987; Meyer, Allen, & Gellatly, 1990). One dimension reflects perceived sacrifices or costs associated with leaving. The second dimension is the recognition of a lack of alternative employment opportunities.

The statements of family firm successors presented in the introduction suggest that both these dimensions of continuance commitment influence successors’ commitment to

pursuing a career in the family business. Rob and his wife became interested in joining his wife's family business only after learning the value of it and realizing the significant opportunity cost involved in not pursuing such a course of action. Such *calculative commitment* is based on an individual's perceptions of the cost involved with or threatened loss of investments or value if he/she were not to indulge in a focal behavior (Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). As found in Rob's and his wife's case, their decision to pursue careers in their family business was not based on an overarching feeling of 'wanting to' (as would be the case in affective commitment) or 'ought to' (as in normative commitment). Instead, their primary motivation was based on a feeling of 'having to' and their inability to afford losing out on their shareholder claim or value without exhibiting such focal behavior.

In stark comparison to the above example, Bob's reasoning for pursuing a career in his family's business was based on his self-doubt and uncertainty of his ability to successfully work outside this business. Bob's comments provide a strong sense of his feeling a 'need to' pursue a career in his family business. Evidence of such uncertainty and suspicion of one's abilities are often noted amongst family firm successors. It can be found in another successor's reflections shared by Handler (1989):

I couldn't ask for a better job than I've got. Where else can a 33 year old come and run a business with 900 employees? And I always am a little bit concerned about whether I would have been able to have succeeded and achieved outside of the family's environment. There's no doubt about it. That's always something that I think most people in family businesses think about. Whether they believe they would have been as successful outside. (Ted in Handler 1989: 122).

Handler observes that, although Ted appears to feel happy about his decision to join his family firm, there also appear to be "twinges of doubt about his ability outside the family environment" (Handler, 1989: 121). Vinton (1998) shares similar evidence of

doubt about own abilities among young heirs who leapfrog non-family employees to get coveted positions in family firms. Such individuals feel guilty for being ‘members of the lucky sperm club’ and wonder whether they could succeed outside the protected family business environment (Vinton, 1998: 300). In order to clearly distinguish this type of commitment from other types, we label this dependence-based commitment as *imperative commitment*.

In short, the above discussion suggests that successors’ commitment to pursuing a career in their family business can be influenced by four distinct motivators. That is, in cases where there is a commitment towards pursuing a career in the family business, the underlying mind-sets for this commitment reveal four shades:

Affective commitment is based on a strong belief in, acceptance of, and an excitement about organizations goals, combined with a desire to contribute to these goals, and confidence in own ability to do so. In essence, the successor ‘wants to’ pursue such a career.

Normative commitment is based on feelings of obligation to pursue a career in the family business. By this behavior, the successor attempts to foster and maintain good relationships with the senior generation. In short, the successor feels that s/he ‘ought to’ pursue such a career.

Calculative commitment is based on a successor’s perception of substantial opportunity costs and threatened loss of investments or value if s/he were not to pursue a career in the family’s business. The successor feels that s/he ‘has to’ pursue such a career.

Imperative commitment is based on a feeling of self-doubt and uncertainty of the ability to successfully pursue a career outside the family business. As such, the individual perceives a lack of alternatives to a career in the family business. The overarching mind-set in this case is a *'need to'* pursue such a career.

SUCCESSOR COMMITMENT: ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Having suggested that commitment of successors to pursue careers in the family business can be based on four different mind-sets reflecting different motivators for such behavior, we now turn to a discussion of antecedents or factors that lead to each form of commitment, and a consideration of the potentially different behavioral consequences.

Antecedents of four types of successor commitment:

Affective commitment: The underlying mind-set in the case of affective commitment is a *desire* to pursue a focal behavior. An individual experiences this mind-set when there is a strong sense of identity with an organization and an excitement about organizational objectives. S/he becomes involved in, recognizes the value-relevance of, and/or derives his or her identity from pursuing a career in an organization (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001).

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1985) suggests that individuals classify themselves and others into social categories. Individuals have multiple identities (e.g., brother, manager, church member), the strength of which is a function of factors such as shared goals. According to Ashforth and Mael (1989), 'people who identify may see themselves as personifying the organization'. Conflict may occur between these multiple identities if the values associated with each are sufficiently distinct. Work-family

conflict, for example, may result from a lack of convergence of values associated with work and family roles (Lobel, 1991).

In the context of family businesses, many family members derive their sense of self and identity from their firms (Rosenblatt, de Mik, Anderson, and Johnson, 1985). The family business constitutes an important center of activity in the lives of family members, many of whom use the firm to define their place in their community and world at large (Levinson, 1971; McGivern, 1978). However, the overlap of the ownership, managerial, and family roles in family firms, makes family firms a ripe context for intersection between different identities (Lansberg, 1988). To the extent that one's family and work-related values are consistent, we can expect a strong identification with the family business.

Research on family business successors has indicated that when they perceive a fit between their career interests and opportunities available in their family firm or alignment between their family and work related identities, these individuals exhibit a keen desire to pursue a career in their family firm and make a positive contribution to it (e.g., Handler, 1989; Sharma, 1997). There is a clear sense of pride and feeling of competence in their ability to contribute to the organization. Such individuals have a propensity of putting in extra efforts that would be beyond the call of duty. In other words, they would be more inclined to exhibit 'discretionary behavior' (i.e., 'any behavior that is not clearly specified within the terms of the commitment, but can be included within these terms at the discretion of the committed individual' [Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001: 312]). From this reasoning, it follows that,

P.1. Family business successors will display affective commitment (mind-set of desire) to pursuing a career within the family business when they perceive that

their career values are aligned with opportunities afforded to them by their family business.

Normative commitment: *Normative commitment* is based on a mind-set of obligation or feeling that an individual 'ought to' pursue a course of action. According to Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) such a mind-set develops as a result of the internalization of norms through socialization, the receipt of benefits that induces a need to reciprocate, and/or acceptance of the terms of a psychological contract (Rousseau & Parks, 1993).

Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that parents' employment has a strong influence on occupational choices of their children (e.g., Barling, 1990). Children, and particularly sons, tend to follow the occupational path of their fathers (Mortimer, Lorence, and Kumka, 1986). Gottfredson (1981), for example, suggested that parental occupational aspirations for children set parameters for acceptable occupational choices for their children. Research by Barling, Kelloway, and colleagues (Barling, Kelloway, and Bremerman, 1991; Kelloway and Newton, 1996; Kelloway and Watts, 1994) also demonstrated that parents' attitudes toward unions shaped those of their children. These studies provide strong evidence of the impact of social learning on the development of key work-related attitudes.

Evidence of the impact of social learning on career choices of younger generation family members can be found in the following statement made by 20 year old David in Handler (1989: 108):

I find that... all my friends..... regardless of if there's a family business or whatever..... want to do whatever their family wants to do just by virtue of the fact that that's what they know. I could never see myself as being a doctor. I have one relative that's a doctor and none of my parents' friends are doctors.... Business is something that I've grown up with, and it seems totally normal to me as a way of life and as what people do.

In family firms, it is not simply the passive acceptance and familiarity of the parents' occupation that influences the junior generations perceptions of career choices, but a strong sense of obligation towards maintaining the continuity of their family name and traditions, and a psychological contract with members of the senior and following generations of the family (Dumas, Dupuis, Richer, & Cyr, 1995; Dutta, 1997; Innarelli, 1992). Twenty-one year old Barry communicates this sense of obligation quite succinctly in Handler's (1989) study:

I'm kind of stuck between a rock and a hard place, in a sense, because I don't want to go into the business, and my father respects that and doesn't expect me to go into the business.... However, my mother would really like for me to become involved with that. When I told her I wasn't going to law school, she said, "Ok, well you can do this (enter the family business)" but I said "no, I don't want to do that either." But eventually I think down the road; I think all paths will probably lead to his (my father's) business. (Barry in Handler, 1989: p.128).

Family has a significant influence on an individual's attitudes, values, and behaviors considered acceptable and unacceptable (e.g., Asakawa, 2001). Practices such as primogeniture are broadly recognized and still remain popular modes of transfer of leadership in family firms in many cultures (Barnes, 1988). When there is widespread cultural and family acceptance of such modes of power and leadership transfer, junior generation family members accept such practices as the 'right' or 'acceptable' way of doing things. The following comment of Larry, who is the eldest of four siblings, indicates how acceptable family practices influence next generations' career decisions. Larry took over the leadership of their family business from his father.

I felt that I had that option communicated to me by my fathersince I was four years old. I always felt that it was reasonably clear that it (the family firm) was there in a more old fashioned sense to the eldest in a preference to the others. I didn't really have an assessment as to whether that was fair or not but I always felt that. And whether that was the way it was meant to be communicated or not, I don't know. But I always felt that was the way it was communicated (Larry in Sharma, 1997).

The above discussion suggests that the socialization of junior generation family members leads them towards feeling obligated to pursue a career in their family firms. It follows that,

P2. Family business successors will display normative commitment (mind-set of obligation) to pursuing a career within the family business when they have been socialized to follow such a career.

Calculative commitment develops when an individual values an investment and perceives a threatened loss of this investment or specific rewards, unless s/he indulges in a related focal behavior (c.f., Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001). Research in the behavioral economics literature has repeatedly revealed that in comparison to an opportunity to acquire an object, people value dearly what they already possess or own (Issacharoff, 1998; Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1990; Thaler, 1980). Labeled as the ‘endowment effect’, this propensity for possessiveness for an object and the perception of its value has been found to increase with the duration of ownership and the amount of sunk costs incurred in obtaining the object (Issacharoff, 1998; Knetsch, 1989).

In the context of family firms, family members often have property rights accorded to them derived from their position within the family (Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino, & Buchholtz, 2001, Ward, 1987). As the junior generation family members are born into these rights to their family business, the endowment effect theory would suggest that many of these members would perceive the business to be a valuable asset due to the duration of ownership and family’s sunk costs in the business (Shepherd & Zacharakis, 2000). It is quite possible that they would perceive losing their status and/or the value of their investment if they were not to pursue employment in their family business.

Of course, it is not only economic investments in the business that may be lost by not pursuing a career in the family business. These investments can also be psychological or emotional in nature. Carson, Carson, and Bedeian (1995) use the term ‘occupational entrenchment’ to describe factors that bind an individual to a job or career choice. Such factors might include investments made into one’s occupational choice (e.g., the status associated with being employed with the family business). Another factor associated with occupational entrenchment is the emotional costs associated with pursuing a different career path, particularly in terms of disrupted interpersonal relationships. This might be particularly the case if the family does not support a family member’s wish to pursue employment opportunities outside of the family business.

P3. Family business successors will display calculative commitment (mind-set of have to) to pursuing a career within the family business when they perceive significant accumulated investments (whether economic or psychological) in their family business or the potential for high emotional costs of not pursuing a career in their family firm.

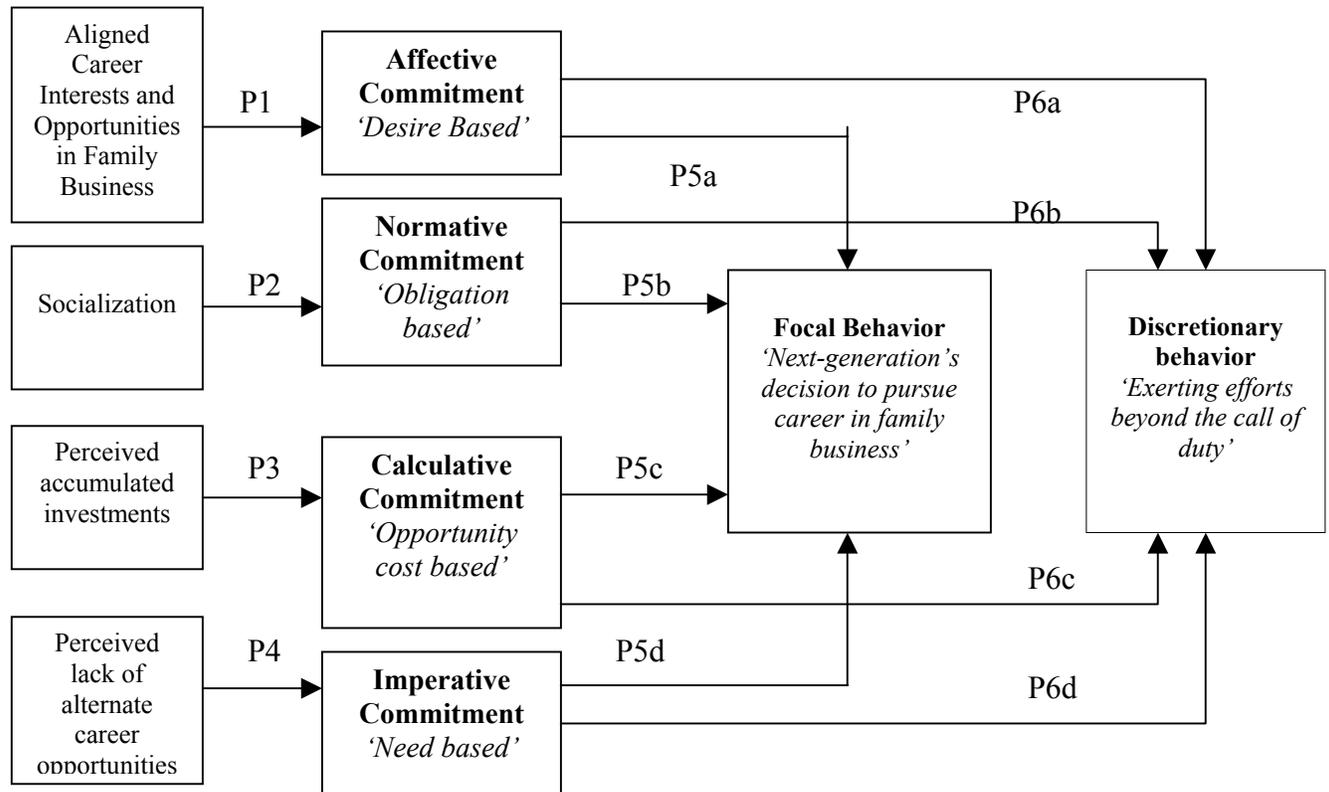
Imperative commitment develops when a next generation family member feels bound to the business by the perception of a lack of career alternatives. Whereas calculative commitment might derive from situational factors (Blau, 2001), imperative commitment is more likely to be a function of dispositional antecedents. For example, Irving, Coleman, and Cooper (1997) found continuance occupational commitment to be related to an external locus of control (i.e., the perception that one has little control over his or her environment). Similarly, Blau and Ryan (1997) reported that employees with a lower general work ethic also tend to experience a feeling of being stuck in their occupation.

Family businesses act as convenient summer or part time employment locations for younger family members in their teenage and formative years. Although family business leaders report that involving family members in their business complicates their jobs (Ford & McLaughlin, 1986), they encourage such participation (Mass Mutual, 1995), as it allows them to ‘keep an eye on their youngsters’, while simultaneously satisfying their offspring’s desire to take up employment. Although initiated by convenience, such opportunities introduce juniors to the prevailing culture in their family firms (Dyer, 1986). Moreover, they gain firm-specific knowledge (Cannella Jr. & Shen, 2001). Over time, their learning curves shorten and familiarity with their family business increases. In contrast, external employment opportunities may appear rife with uncertainties involving extensive ‘liabilities of newness’ (Stinchcombe, 1965). While some may find these opportunities exciting and related careers liberating, others may want to stick to their zone of comfort within their family business perhaps because their self-efficacy for employment outside the family business is low. To the extent that a family member believes that he or she has few alternatives outside of the family business, one would expect that individual to feel a ‘need’ to retain employment with the family business.

P4. Family business successors will display imperative commitment (mind-set of need to) to pursuing a career within the family business when they perceive a lack of career opportunities for themselves outside of the family firm.

In this section, we have identified four different mind-sets that motivate successor commitment to pursue a career in the family business. In doing so, we described the potential antecedents of these different forms of commitment (depicted in Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Four shades of successor commitment:
Motivating factors and expected outcomes**



In addition to developing in different ways, the forms of commitment delineated in this paper also result in different consequences beyond pursuing a career in the family business. We next examine the expected outcomes of affective, normative, calculative, and imperative commitment in terms of both the focal behavior (pursuing a career with the family business) and discretionary behaviors (efforts beyond the call of duty). It is important to make this distinction because, although all forms of commitment regardless of their basis should be related to the propensity to pursue the focal behavior, their effects on discretionary behavior will demonstrate more variability. Furthermore, research has

suggested that it is these discretionary behaviors that influence effectiveness and performance of successors in family firm (Rosenblatt, et al, 1985).

Consequences of four types of successor commitment:

By its very nature, commitment to pursuing a career in the family firm will compel a family member to engage in that course of action. This is true regardless of the mind-set that forms the basis of that commitment. However, the strength or glue holding the commitment-behavior relationship will likely vary as a function of the form of commitment. This strength will determine the duration for which the glue of the relationship holds and the duration for which career in family business is pursued by a successor.

Recent meta-analytic research by Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, and Topolnytsky (in press) suggests that affective organizational commitment is most strongly (negatively) related to turnover intentions, followed by normative commitment, and then continuance commitment (see also Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). Further examination of the subcomponents of continuance commitment revealed that the sacrifice (investments) subcomponent was more strongly related to turnover intentions than was the lack of alternatives subcomponent.

On the basis of these findings, we would expect that affective commitment would be most strongly related to successors' focal behavior of pursuing a career in their family business and intention to stay in this career, followed by normative, calculative, and imperative forms of commitment.

P5. Successor commitment, regardless of the mind-set that forms its basis, will be positively related to the likelihood of pursuing a career in the family business.

P5a. Successors whose decision to pursue a career in family business is based on their mind-set of desire (affective) will display the highest strength of the commitment-focal behavior relationship.

P5b. Successors whose decision to pursue a career in family business is based on their mind-set of obligation (normative), will display a commitment-focal behavior relationship that is stronger than if the decision were based on perceived costs (calculative) or need (imperative), but weaker than if it were based on the mind-set of desire (affective).

P5c. Successors whose decision to pursue a career in family business is based on their mind-set of perceived opportunity costs (calculative), will display a commitment-focal behavior relationship that is stronger than if the decision were based on need (imperative), but weaker than if it were based on the mind-sets of desire (affective) or obligation (normative).

P5d. Successors whose decision to pursue a career in family business is based on their mind-set of need (imperative) will display the lowest strength of the commitment-focal behavior relationship.

A successors' decision to join or pursue a career in his/her family business (focal behavior) and continue such employment (strength of the focal behavior), is distinct from the extent of efforts s/he exerts while in the job (discretionary behavior). Next, we discuss factors that would influence such discretionary behavior.

The discretionary behaviors that have typically been examined in commitment research have included work attendance, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors. These discretionary behaviors are critical for effective organization functioning and firm performance. With respect to discretionary behaviors, we see a similar pattern of relationships to that of the focal behavior, though the affects are more amplified. That is, affective commitment exhibits the strongest relationship with these variables. The pattern of relationships for normative commitment and discretionary behaviors is similar to that of affective commitment (i.e., positive relationship), although the relationships tend not to be as strong.

Continuance commitment is typically unrelated or negatively related to these desirable discretionary behaviors (Meyer et al., in press). Recent research by Herscovitch and Meyer (in press) examining commitment to organizational change suggested that, whereas affective and normative commitment were associated with cooperation with and championing of the change effort, continuance commitment was unrelated to either of these variables. Instead, continuance commitment was only weakly related to compliance with the change effort. These results suggest that, at least in the context of organizational change, the components of commitment relate differentially with the discretionary behaviors necessary for successful change. Given that similar results can be found in the organizational behavior literature, we have reason to believe that such relations will be found for successor commitment to pursuing a career in the family business. When decision to pursue a career in the family business is motivated by mind-sets of calculative or imperative commitment, successors are likely to devote minimal efforts needed to ensure their claims to accumulated investments or continued employment in the family firm. Such successors are likely to find ways to ‘coast’ through their workdays and take on the role of ‘plateaued’ managers (Malone and Jenster, 1992). Based on these ideas we propose:

P6a. Affective commitment will have the strongest positive relationship to discretionary behaviors on the part of successors that lead to the effective functioning of the family business.

P6b. Normative commitment will have a strong positive relationship to discretionary behaviors on the part of successors that lead to the effective functioning of the family business.

P6c. Calculative commitment will be unrelated or negatively related to discretionary behaviors on the part of successors that lead to the effective functioning of the family business.

P6d. Imperative commitment will be unrelated or negatively related to discretionary behaviors on the part of successors that lead to the effective functioning of the family business.

CONCLUSION

Key arguments: Research focused on understanding desirable attributes of family business successors suggests that it is crucial for these family members to be committed to their business (e.g., Chrisman, Chua, Sharma, 1998; Deloitte & Touche, 1995; Handler, 1995; Sharma & Rao, 2000). These findings have resulted in practitioners being suggested to assess and foster the commitment of next generation towards their family firm. The underlying assumption is that when junior family members portray a commitment to their business and decide to pursue a related career, it will lead to positive outcomes for their family business.

Scholars interested in studying workplace commitment suggest that when various individuals follow a similar course of action or focal behavior, their performance will vary significantly based on *why* they chose to pursue that course of action. It is believed that individuals with different motivators leading them to the focal behavior, will exert different amounts of discretionary behavior on the job, leading to varied performance effectiveness (c.f. Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Four different types of motivators have been identified to explain the same focal behavior. Each of these motivators leads to a different type of commitment. Four commitment types identified are: affective (based on desire), normative (based on obligation), calculative (based on opportunity costs), and imperative (based on need). A model of the motivating factors leading to each type of successor commitment and the expected behavioral outcomes is developed. We propose that alignment of career

interests to business opportunities leads to affective, socialization leads to normative, perception of sunk costs or accumulated investments in the business leads to calculative, while perception of lack of alternative career opportunities leads to imperative commitment.

Each form of commitments leads to different power or strength of the binding force of an individual with the organization. It is proposed that successors joining the family firm due to these different motivators will display varying levels of discretionary behavior, which in turn, will lead to varying effectiveness and firm performance. For example, in comparison to other factors, when the predominant motivator for a successor's decision to pursue a career in his/her family business is a feeling of 'desire', s/he is most likely to continue such career and devote maximum amounts of discretionary efforts to the job.

Research implications: This article contributes both to the family business and workplace commitment literatures in the following ways. We have extended the workplace commitment literature by moving its insights into the context of family business where stakes are high and findings are of significant practical importance. The workplace commitment literature continues to struggle with two questions: (i) highlighting the differences between affective and normative types of commitments, and (ii) whether calculative commitment is a unidimensional or multidimensional construct. Viewing the types of commitments in the context of successors of family firms, aids in clearly differentiating between the affective and normative types of commitments, as well as, in highlighting the two dimensions (labeled here as calculative and imperative) of the continuance commitment.

Our contributions for the family business literature are even more pronounced. This article takes the first step of untangling the shades of successor commitment, factors leading to each of these types of commitments, and behavioral consequences of different commitment types.

Ideas presented in the article present research opportunities along two dimensions. First, there is clearly a need to conduct exploratory empirical studies to understand the prevalence of each type of commitment and further develop the model of antecedents and consequences. Second, this article discusses only pure cases of commitment or bi-variate relations between various components of commitment and other variables, assuming when one commitment is strong, others become weak. In reality, different forms of commitment will be found to exist simultaneously, as commitment often develops by means of multiple motives (Meyer and Herscovitch, 2001). For example, the mind-sets of desire and obligation can coexist, particularly in a family business context. There will be a need to develop models to understand affect of interaction and moderated affects between different types of commitments.

Practical implications: The ideas presented in this article have both short- and long-term implications for practice. They provide an immediate challenge to the widely held belief that successor commitment to a business is always good for family businesses. Instead, it is suggested that whether successors' commitment to family business is good or not, really depends on what type of mind-set underlies the commitment and why this family member was motivated to pursue a career in family firm. If such motivation was based on a strong desire to contribute to the family firm, then positive exertion of efforts and outcomes on firm performance can be expected. Conversely, the decision to pursue

this course of action based on a sense of obligation, perceived opportunity costs of not joining, or inability to succeed in other careers, may result in less positive, or even negative, outcomes for the family business.

In the long-term, once the related theory is empirically tested and further developed, we can move towards developing a *commitment profile or index* for family business successors. Such ability will aid in making career decisions from the perspective of juniors and succession decisions of seniors.

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