Determinants of family meetings in private family businesses

Peer-reviewed author version

CICEK, Akif; KELLECI, Ruveyda & VANDEKERKHOF, Pieter (2021) Determinants of family meetings in private family businesses. In: Journal of family business management, 12 (4), p. 750-779.

DOI: 10.1108/JFBM-11-2020-0110
Handle: http://hdl.handle.net/1942/34678

Determinants of family meetings in private family businesses

Akif Cicek, Rüveyda Kelleci and Pieter Vandekerkhof

Abstract

Purpose – Family governance mechanisms serve to govern and strengthen relations between the family and the business, as well as the relationships between the members of the business family itself. However, despite agreement on the importance of adopting family governance structures, explicit research on the determinants of family governance mechanisms is currently missing. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to uncover the determinants of family meetings. In order to do so, the social systems theory is used to unravel several determining factors of this crucial form of family governance mechanisms in private family firms.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors perform a qualitative study by conducting semi-structured interviews in eight Belgian private family firms in order to discover the antecedents of the implementation of family meetings. The authors use a pattern-matching technique as an analytical strategy.

Findings – The findings of the study highlight the importance of "soft," relational, qualitative issues as antecedents of family meetings as opposed to previous research on family governance, which predominantly focused on "hard," quantitative measures (e.g. family ownership). The findings of the study also provide novel insights into the origins of the family component (i.e. family meetings) of family business governance.

Originality/value – While the current literature has only focused on describing the different types of family governance and their positive consequences for the family firm, the authors take a step back to explain why family meetings, as a form of family governance, are adopted in the first place. Second, the authors demonstrate the instrumentality of the social systems theory in understanding the family's needs that necessitate the implementation of family governance mechanisms.

Keywords: Family businesses, Family governance, Family meetings, Determinants, Social systems theory

Introduction

Numerous studies have been conducted on the importance of family businesses and their contribution to the economy. In contrast to publicly held businesses, the sustainability of a family business does not only depend on the success of the business but also on the functionality of the family itself (Stafford et al., 1999). The family can either be a competitive advantage or an obstacle for the business (Eddleston and Kellermanns, 2007). Thus, the success of a family business is largely influenced by the way the family organizes itself and its relationship with the business. To organise the relationships within the family, and between the family and the firm, business families need to apply specific family processes, institutions and structures, captured under the concept of family governance mechanisms (hereafter FGMs) (Suess, 2014). Suess (2014) defines FGMs as "voluntary mechanisms established by the business family with the primary aim of governing and strengthening relations between the family and the business, as well as the relationships between the members of the business family itself" (p. 2). FGM has been found to correlate not only with current competitive advantage but also with business longevity over multiple generations (Astrachan and Kolenko, 1994). When the family members are unified in their actions and work together toward a common goal, this is likely to be reflected in enhanced performance of both the firm and the family (Berent-Braun and Uhlaner, 2012). After all, collective action rather than independence or autonomy seems to be central to the success of family businesses (Berent-Braun and Uhlaner, 2012).

FGMs have been found to range from rather informal family meetings to heavily structured, professional bodies such as family offices, family foundations and family committees designed for special purposes (Jaffe and Lane, 2004; Ward, 2004). However, family meetings are among the most essential and recurring form of family governance structures (Parada et al., 2020). Family meetings consist of recurring assemblies of family members to discuss business and/or family issues (Habbershon and Astrachan, 1997; Neubauer and Lank, 1998). These meetings can vary considerably in terms of their membership policies, formality, meeting frequency and the topics covered (Suess, 2014). They are usually characterized by a high level of informality and, depending on the situation, are either a mixture of family and company problems or are exclusively devoted to company matters (Neubauer and Lank, 1998; Ward, 2004; Carlock and Ward, 2010). However, although family meetings are the simplest and most common form of family governance (Koladkiewicz, 2014), they represent the first step toward professionalization (Martin, 2001). Family meetings can be replaced or complemented by other, more formal forms of family governance, such as a family council, according to the needs of the business and the family (Suess, 2014). However, for smaller family businesses, a simple system of solely family meetings may suffice for their governance needs. While some family businesses may exclusively implement ad hoc meetings for specific reasons, others may install these at regular intervals (Howorth and Kemp, 2019). Family meetings are an important forum for the exchange of information and visions between active and passive family members regarding the functioning of the company- and family-related topics, where they can develop joint solutions for different key matters. They also build awareness among the family members regarding the fact that they are unified by a common goal: the good of the company fostering the good of the family and vice versa (Koladkiewicz, 2014). Family meetings, in spite of a lack of structural complexity, may become an important starting point for developing best practices in the process of managing relations in the family and family–business relations, especially those relating to managing emotions and resolving conflicts (Carlock and Ward, 2010). Indeed, family meetings have been proved useful and have been highlighted as an essential means for achieving long-term sustainability of the family business (Parada et al., 2020; Arteaga and Escriba-Esteve, 2020). Yet, despite the recognition of the importance of family governance (Gallo and Kenyon-Rouvinez, 2005), there is little research as to why family firms adopt FGMs, such as family meetings (Suess, 2014; Parada et al., 2020). Given this research gap, our article aims to uncover the determinants of family meetings, and in doing so increasing our understanding of which factors determine why such FGMs are implemented. To accomplish this aim, we formulate the following research question: *"Why do private family businesses decide to implement family meetings?"* Since there is evidence that, despite the presence of formal governance mechanisms, private family businesses still resort to informal means to make decisions, such as at the kitchen table over breakfast in the weekend or through informal conversations between family members (Parada et al., 2020), we will take into account both formal and informal family meetings.

We choose to focus on private family firms for several reasons. First, although previous research has predominantly focused on public family firms due to easier data accessibility (Carney et al., 2013), the largest portion of family firms are privately held (Che and Langli, 2015). Second, private family businesses differ from public family businesses in their behavior, goals, problems and policies (Schulze et al., 2003). Public family businesses have been found to show more resemblances with nonfamily firms as compared to private family firms (Westhead and Howorth, 2006; Chrisman et al., 2012). Therefore, there have been increasing calls for research on private family firms (Chrisman et al., 2007), especially with regard to studies on governance issues (Che and Langli, 2015). Private family firms thus create an ideal context for studying family meetings due to the blurred boundaries between family and corporate governance, where in public companies, this distinction is more explicit.

To address our research question, we draw on social systems theory (Frank et al., 2010, 2017, 2018) to develop nine patterns regarding the antecedents of family meetings. We base our study on a multiple case study consisting of eight Belgian private family firms. This qualitative methodology allows us to access, analyze and interpret rich data of Belgian private family firms, enhancing our understanding of family firms' motives to implement family meetings.

Our article contributes to the family business literature in several ways. Firstly, we heighten our knowledge on (family) governance issues in private family firms, a literature domain which is less developed in comparison to the literature on public family firms (Carney et al., 2013). Furthermore, while the current literature has only focused on types and the positive consequences of FGMs, we take a step back to explain why these governance mechanisms were adopted in the first place. We provide novel insights about the implementation of family meetings as a form of family governance and as such contribute to filling the current knowledge gap in the research field on FGMs. Indeed, Suess (2014) has indicated that this topic is in need of some good empirical research as it has not been sufficiently examined until now. Lastly, our study responds to calls in the family firm literature to apply more holistic theories to family governance research (Suess, 2014). We demonstrate the instrumentality of the social systems theory (Frank et al., 2010) in understanding the family's needs that necessitate the implementation of FGMs (Arteaga and Escriba-Esteve, 2020).

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. First, we provide a literature review on family governance with a specific focus on family meetings. Next, we present the social systems theory as a useful perspective for exploring our research question. Then, we present our methodology and results. We conclude with a discussion of our conclusions, research limitations and avenues for future research.

Literature review

Family business governance

Following Gallo and Kenyon-Rouvinez (2005), we use the term family business governance for capturing the overarching governance of family firms, including both the governance of the family (which is the focus of our study) and the governance of the business. Gallo and Kenyon-Rouvinez (2005) define family business governance as “a system of processes and structures put in place at the highest level of the business, family, and ownership to make the best possible decisions regarding the direction of the business and assurance of accountability and control” (p. 45). Family business governance is aimed at understanding the interactions between the business and as such its corporate governance, e.g. the board of directors and the executive committee, and its family and thus family governance, e.g. family meetings and the family council. It facilitates transparency and trust between the two subsystems and is essential for the long-term sustainability of any family business (Gallo and Kenyon- Rouvinez, 2005).

Corporate governance can be seen as a system to help direct and control companies (Cadbury, 1999) and to help mitigate or solve potential conflict of interests between different stakeholders (Su'are and Santana-Mart'ın, 2004). For family firms, in addition to company problems, there are also family problems. This can either be within the family or between the family and the business. This is why it is important that the corporate governance of family firms should include additional FGMs to resolve these types of conflict, which have been found to endanger the continuity of the firm (Eddleston and Kellermanns, 2007). In other words, it is equally important to manage the relationship in the family and between the family and the firm, in addition to business relationships (Cadbury, 2000; Carlock and Ward, 2001).

Family governance is a system of processes and structures with the main purpose of governing and strengthening the relationships within the family and between the family and the business (Suess, 2014). Although it is not mandatory (Koeberle-Schmid et al., 2012), research has linked the implementation to improved firm performance (Berent-Braun and Uhlaner, 2012; Fahed-Sreih, 2009; Tower et al., 2007). According to Gallo and Kenyon-Rouvinez (2005), family governance facilitates unity among family members and allows them to come forward as a unified voice. As there is no one-size-fits-all structure, FGMs can range from informal to formal according to the needs and complexity of the family or the firm (Jaffe and Lane, 2004; Ward, 2004). The choice and degree of family governance is thus found to be varying over time, in correspondence with the life cycle of the family and the firm (Gersick et al., 1997; Neubauer and Lank, 1998; Carlock and Ward, 2001). Most family firms do not find it necessary to implement a certain formal governance structure when there is only one controlling family member. The decision usually takes place after the involvement of the second generation in order to deal with the growth and planning of a succession. Even though there is awareness among family firms that family governance has advantages, such as a platform for socializing with each other and for open communication, they have not fully implemented these structures (Brenes et al., 2011). Families in small firms often have a good relationship with each other and do not find any need for all these structures. However, good family relations do not self-evidently guarantee continuity, communication, alignment of values and the ability to resolve conflicts (Gallo and Kenyon-Rouvinez, 2005).

The implementation of family governance can provide the much needed structure in order to mitigate the social complexity of the expanding family and dispersed ownership (Jaffe and Lane, 2004). Although FGMs have been found to range from rather informal family meetings to heavily structured, professional bodies such as family offices, family foundations and family committees designed for special purposes (Jaffe and Lane, 2004; Ward, 2004), family meetings are among the most essential and recurring form of family governance structures (Parada et al., 2020). Family meetings consist of recurring assemblies of family members to discuss business and/or family issues (Habbershon and Astrachan, 1997; Neubauer and Lank, 1998). Although family meetings are the simplest and most common form of family governance (Koladkiewicz, 2014), they represent the first step toward professionalization (Martin, 2001). Family meetings can be replaced or complemented by other, more formal, forms of family governance, such as a family council, according to the needs of the business and the family (Suess, 2014). Su'are and Santana-Mart'ın (2004) have explained this evolution in their research in a more detailed manner. The informal family meetings usually occur in the first generation where there is only one controlling owner and no need for any formality. The family is limited and nearly everyone is involved. Because of the small size of the firm, the organization tends to be dependent on all the family members (Su'are and Santana-Mart'ın, 2004). These informal meetings continue until the family has grown too much after three to four generations. As the company matures, the family meeting evolves toward a more formal mechanism, such as the family assembly, family forum or family council to align potential differences in family interests (Flamholtz, 1986). Lastly, as FGMs govern the relations between the family and the business, they also act as a mediator between the corporate governance subsystem of the family business. As such, FGMs may report to the board of directors concerning business matters from a family point of view. Thus, family governance and corporate governance inform, cooperate with and complement each other. While family governance serves to deal with family matters, corporate governance focuses on business issues (Gallo and Kenyon- Rouvinez, 2005).

Theoretical framework and pattern development

In this study, we develop nine theoretical patterns regarding the determinants of family meetings, which we visualize in Figure 1.

We base our patterns on the social systems theory. As there is no previous theorizing on the subject of this study, we follow Yin (2018)'s advice to use a single theory as a guiding framework for formulating expected patterns. Indeed, Yin (2018) recommends using some relevant theory in order to provide researchers with guidance in formulating theoretical patterns. These theoretical patterns serve the purpose of giving researchers a sense of direction in collecting and analyzing data without getting lost. Previous studies on FGMs have been based on other theories such as agency, stewardship and institutional theory (Parada et al., 2020). However, in recent decades, social systems theory has become useful for family firm research (Frank et al., 2018; Simon, 2012; Von Schlippe and Frank, 2013), especially for governance (Suess, 2014). Social systems theory explains how organizations adopt a governance structure (Suess, 2014) and is appropriate for social science research on family firms because it focuses on communication structures as the foundation of social systems (Frank et al., 2018; Von Schlippe and Frank, 2013).

Social systems theory concerns the communication systems that underlie the structures of a family and a business (Frank et al., 2017). Family firms have a unique communication system that incorporates decisions shaped by a couple of systems: the family and the business (Weismeier-Sammer et al., 2013), where the two systems use each other to build their structures (Von Schlippe and Frank, 2013). Social systems theory assumes that family firms emerge through a sequence of intertwined communication decisions (Frank et al., 2017) which makes communication the constitutive element of a family business and makes the family business efficient in creating a meaningful and validated network of decisions (Frank et al., 2017).

According to a systems approach, the family governance system is shaped by forums that promote collaborative discussions to secure cohesion within the family. Implementing family governance is a unique communication process for each family firm (Arteaga and Escriba-Esteve, 2020). It starts with unplanned discussions directed by a few simple rules and evolves into a formalized, guided conversation (Frank et al., 2018). In this paper, we focus solely on family meetings, whether these are informal or formal.

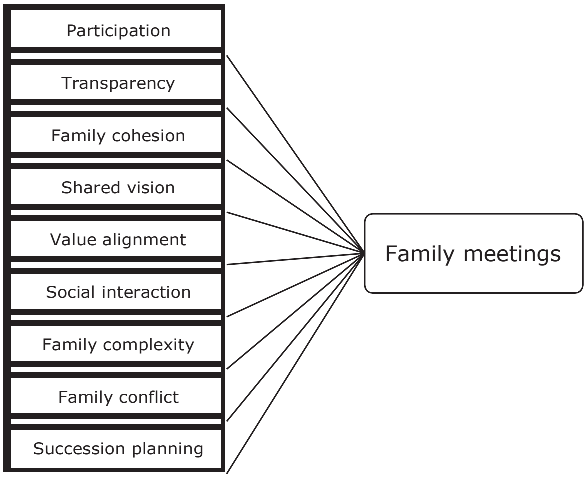

Figure 1. Visual representation of the nine predicted patterns

In social systems theory, the basic elements of a family and a business system are acts of communication (Frank et al., 2018). Martin (2001) pointed out that every member of the family should be included in FGMs such as a family meeting. Family meetings, as a platform of communication, give family members a feeling of inclusion and appreciation by letting everyone participate in important family and business matters (Martin, 2001). Otherwise, no one gets the opportunity to express themselves, which might lead to frustration and isolation, which could result in conflicts due to family members feeling upset for feeling left out. On the other hand, family members might get angry because of certain decisions such as the appointment or promotion of someone they did not find suited (Martin, 2001). As such, we expect the following pattern:

Pattern 1. A lack of participation increases the need for family meetings.

As discussed earlier, family meetings enable communication between family members and help the family to come out as one unified voice, which enables transparency between family members and creates a supportive environment for better performance. Subsequently, it gives the opportunity to deal with conflicts outside of the business activities. As such, these conflicts will have less impact on the competitive performance of the family firm (Brenes et al., 2011). Although the implementation of family meetings is not obligatory, family firms that decide to engage in this type of family governance have been found to be characterized by improved communication and better social relations between family members. In turn this led to a higher level of transparency, clarity, and trust (Brenes et al., 2011). This is why we expect the following pattern:

Pattern 2. A lack of transparency increases the need for family meetings

Despite the advantages of family governance, only a small percentage of family firms adopt formal family governance structures. This is mostly due to the fact that the importance of FGMs for the family depends largely on the stage of the company. As the family and business increases in size and enters the cousin consortium stage, the family relations and firm management become more complex. This dispersion of the family causes the weakening of the relationship with the business. Additionally, family cohesion, which is the emotional bonding that family members have toward one another (Olson et al., 1983) also decreases when the family members are not able to identify themselves with the values of the company (Gersick et al., 1997; Labaki, 2011). Frequent family meetings can enhance the relationship between the family and the firm by enhancing cohesion and by facilitating the alignment of family interests (Labaki, 2011). Conversely, every action taken in these structures to ensure business continuity leads in turn to trust and better social relations because the conflicts can be resolved before they have a negative impact on the firm (Michiels et al., 2015; Brenes et al., 2011; Gersick et al., 1997; Habbershon and Astrachan, 1997; Poza, 2009). Therefore, we introduce the following pattern:

Pattern 3. A lack of family cohesion increases the need for family meetings.

As the firm matures and the family grows in size, good communication and social interactions become increasingly complicated. Moreover, as the family grows, there is a greater chance that different family members have different visions for the firm. Family meetings can serve as a forum where family members can share their vision. More specifically, family governance can pave the way for the emergence of “associability” (Berent-Braun and Uhlaner, 2012) where family members pursue shared goals instead of their own (Leana and van Buren, 1999). According to Berent-Braun and Uhlaner (2012), enhancing a unified vision of the business family can even be seen as the most important function of FGMs. Thus, FGMs such as family meetings reinforce the family’s commitment to a shared vision and goals. This shared vision can only take place in an environment where there is honest communication within the family. Indeed, Mustakallio et al. (2002) indicate that improved communication enables a shared vision, which helps to take better decisions, reduce conflict and ultimately improve business performance. As family meetings provide a means for communication in the family, we propose the following:

Pattern 4. A lack of shared vision increases the need for family meetings.

The growth and dispersion of the family can cause a misalignment of values or shared goals among family members (Habbershon and Astrachan, 1997). According to Ward (1997), conflicting goals and values among family owners hinder family business growth. Ward (1997) states that defining the family purpose, mission and values is the most important means to ensure this long- term family business growth. FGMs help to communicate and strengthen a shared commitment to the same norms and values, which in turn may enhance the cohesiveness of the business-owning family by clarifying expectations in advance and by reducing potential conflicts between family owners (Berent- Braun and Uhlaner, 2012). Thus, family meetings can serve as a platform to bring the family back together. In particular, during a family meeting, each family member can voice his/her values and goals, after which differences can be discussed. As such, the need to communicate and find common ground regarding family firm values can be facilitated by family meetings (Dooley and Fryxell, 1999). Based on this, we expect the following pattern:

Pattern 5. A misalignment of values increases the need for family meetings.

As a family business grows throughout generations, social interactions become more complicated. In order to represent every generation, and at the same time create platforms for efficient collaboration between the different generations, proper governance mechanisms need to be put in place (Jaffe and Lane, 2004). Fahed-Sreih and Djoundourian (2006) state that mature family firms, i.e. firms that have already undergone a succession or consist of multiple generations, are more inclined to set up a family governance structure than younger firms. According to the research of Mustakallio et al. (2002), social interaction deteriorates as family firms mature and as more generations are involved in the family firm. However, good social interactions can be fostered by implementing FGMs. Hence,

Pattern 6. A lack of social interaction increases the need for family meetings.

As more generations are involved in the firm, family complexity increases. Family complexity can be seen as a main driver for the implementation of family governance. Family complexity can give rise to conflicts (Brenes et al., 2006) and can cause a decrease in financial performance (Lambrecht and Lievens, 2008), a deterioration of relationships within the family (Gimeno et al., 2006), a misalignment of values and goals (Ward, 1997) and a rise in agency cost conflict (Schulze et al., 2001). Moreover, as more generations are involved, there is a higher chance that there are a lot of family members who are not operationally active within the firm. Keeping these family members up to date requires more communication and coordination (Brenes et al., 2011). Furthermore, drawing on social systems theory, when a new generation takes over and the company grows in size, the communication system may become more complicated, requiring the implementation of family meetings (Arteaga and Escriba-Esteve, 2020). As such, we propose,

Pattern 7. A higher family complexity increases the need for family meetings.

As mentioned before, conflict management is vital for family business success if the family wants the firm to survive throughout generations (Martin, 2001; Chua et al., 2003). According to the social systems theory, conflicts can be mitigated through communication as communication can enable family cohesion. FGMs can facilitate communication and as such help resolve conflicts. As such, the need for conflict resolution can be an antecedent of family meetings (Martin, 2001; Brenes et al., 2011):

Pattern 8. Family conflict increases the need for family meetings.

Another recurring challenge in family firms is the matter of succession, which is considered as the lengthiest strategic process for a family business due to its complexity and its major consequences for the family firm (Fahed-Sreih and Djoundourian, 2006). If the owner fails to prepare for succession, it will jeopardize the continuity of the family business (Beckhard and Dyer, 1983; Handler and Kram, 1988). Many family firms have failed to survive after succession (Jaffe and Lane, 2004; de Vries, 1993; Ward, 1987). Morris et al. (1997) found several factors which cause a succession to fail. The most significant reasons were conflict between family members and unprepared heirs, on the other hand. Chittoor and Das (2007) found suggestive evidence that setting up right family governance structures is positively correlated to effective succession as these mechanisms can serve as a common interface, where family members can thoroughly plan succession. Family meetings serve to exchange different opinions of family members and work toward the alignment of vision and strategy through communication. The researchers demonstrate how family firms without FGMs suffered from conflict and a disintegration of the family. According to the social systems theory, family firms will be likely to implement family meetings in order to plan a potential succession (Arteaga and Escriba-Esteve, 2020):

Pattern 9. A lack of effective succession planning increases the need for family meetings.

Methodology

Choice for a qualitative study

Matching the methodology to the research question is central to any research effort (Sogunro, 2002). We employed a multiple case study methodology for two reasons. First, the antecedents of family meetings are not well understood. There is little to no previous theorizing on this subject to the best of our knowledge. Second, in order to explain why private family firms decide to implement family meetings, this study required exploration of a significant number of antecedents across the expected patterns. This called for a methodology that could analyze rich data in specific contexts, which made a multiple case study research strategy a natural choice (Yin, 1993, 1994). In particular, we followed Yin (1994) to build an explanatory multiple case study methodology. We started with the definition of a research question and proposed nine patterns for investigation on the basis of a literature review (Yin, 2018). Such an approach follows Mintzberg's advice to always begin with a "well-defined focus–to collect specific kinds of data systematically" (1979, p. 585) and Yin (2018)'s advice to formulate theoretical propositions before engaging in the data collection and analysis such that these give researchers a sense of direction in analyzing the data.

Sample and data collection

Cases in our sample were selected on the basis of purposive sampling, also known as targeted sampling (Yin, 1989; Patton, 2015). The reason for choosing this sampling strategy was to select as many relevant respondents as possible who can formulate an answer regarding the central research question (Yin, 2018). Moreover, the cooperation willingness of the respondents was also an important criterion in sampling the cases for our study (Yin, 2018). We contacted

145 Belgian family firms through email, explaining them the purpose of our study and asking them whether they would like to participate. Family firms in Belgium account for 77% of all companies, they provide 45% of total employment and provide one- third of the Belgian gross domestic product. These numbers highlight the importance of family firms for the Belgian economy and the necessity to investigate the antecedents of family meetings. This study can create awareness among family firms as to whether they need to implement family meetings in order to ensure their competitive advantage and support business longevity (Astrachan and Kolenko, 1994). Family firms were classified as such when there was family ownership of more than 50% of the business and at least one of the following criteria was met: more than one family member working in the business or the owner anticipates passing the business to the next generation of family members or the owner identifies the firm as a family business (Astrachan and Kolenko, 1994). We contacted 145 family firms with the question of whether or not they held family meetings and if so, if they were willing to participate in our study. Eventually, eight family firms met both conditions and formed our final sample. All of the family firms in our sample held family meetings, both formal and informal. As such, these cases were suited to inform our central research question. Despite selection of a limited number of cases, it was possible to replicate outcomes across cases in the study (Yin, 2018). In particular, the combination of cases allowed for literal replication across a range of industries as each case confirmed the formulated patterns (Yin, 1994, 2018). An overview of the selected cases is contained in Table 1.

Table I: Characteristics of the interviewees

Firm	Since	Sector	Gender	Function in the company	Revenues[1]	Balance sheet total[1]	FTE[1]
A	1993	Technology	M	Managing director	1.990.895	3.488.641	20
B	1925	Construction	M	Managing director	1.440.728	225.450.943	720[2]
C	1974	Catering	F	Managing director	-4.223	60.856	4
D	1984	Technology	M	Managing director	3.503.526	10.250.637	18,1
E	1997	Steel	M	Managing director	379.565	2.376.908	9,2
F	1989	Steel	M	Managing director	526.704	2.978.404	6,2
G	1975	Retail	M	Branch manager	1.619.258	6.636.860	18,6
H	1998	Infrastructure	M	Branch manager	598.954	23.401.641	250

[1] Key figures of the companies relate to the financial year 2018, FTEE = Full Time Equivalent Employee

[2] In Europe 230 in Belgium

Data collection

We used multiple data-gathering approaches to triangulate our data (Yin, 2009): semi-structured interviews and secondary data sources. In particular, we used semi-structured, face-to-face interviews (Lee et al., 1999; Yin, 2018). Our interviews contained questions about background information about the respondent and the family firm, about the different types of family governance methods used and questions on the antecedents for implementing family meetings. These antecedents were derived from our patterns and related to participation, transparency, family cohesion, shared vision, value alignment, social interaction, family complexity, family conflict and succession planning. We interviewed the managing director in six of the cases and the branch manager in the two other cases. Our preference went out to the managing directors as they participate in the family meetings and are in a good position to inform our research question. Nevertheless, the branch managers in our cases also participated in family meetings. We chose to conduct interviews for two reasons. First, this technique makes it possible that the formulated patterns from the literature research can be tested. In addition, this technique allows to include any additional information obtained about the determinants the companies may use to implement family meetings which are not described in the literature research. Second, semi- structured interviews were used to maximize the flexibility of the interview and allow tailoring of each interview to the individual (Lofland and Lofland, 1971; Yin, 1994). Before starting the interview, permission was asked from the respondents to record the interview (Reulink and Lindeman, 2005). It was also made clear that the sound recordings would be kept strictly confidential and that these could be destroyed after the end of the empirical study if the respondent wished so (Maso and Smaling, 1998). All interviews were recorded via a dictaphone application and were transcribed verbatim afterwards. We assured our respondents that all data would be processed anonymously. As mentioned earlier, we also consulted secondary data sources in order to triangulate our data. We consulted the publicly available financial database Bel first, gathered by Bureau van Dijk, to profile each firm in terms of its annual revenues, balance sheet total and the number of full-time equivalent employees (see Table 1). Second, we reviewed newspaper articles and website information about the family firms which (1) provided us with additional background information on our study participants and their family firms, (2) gave us reference points during the interviews and (3) validated some of the participants' accounts.

Data analysis

To verify and enrich our nine patterns, a pattern-matching technique was used as an analytical strategy (Yin, 1994, 2018). In case study research, pattern-matching techniques are commonly designed to strengthen the rigor of studies. If empirically observed patterns match with either hypothesized ones or patterns found in previous studies and different contexts, the findings support the internal validity of the study and result in the confirmation of prespecified theoretical patterns or propositions (Yin, 2009, 2018). In contrast, if observed patterns do not match a priori propositions, researchers must look for alternative explanations for their findings. Within this logic, hypothesized patterns or a priori propositions have to be prederived from extant literature, single theory or from conjectures by researchers developed from experiences in the field (Trochim, 1989; Yin, 2009, 2018). We used the social systems theory (Frank et al., 2018; Von Schlippe and Frank, 2013) as the guiding theoretical framework to formulate nine patterns.

To check whether the expected patterns could be observed within the collected data, two steps were undertaken. Adhering to a comparison and replication logic (Yin, 2018), we first analyzed each case separately. Next, we performed a cross-case search for patterns by looking for the similarities and differences among the cases. In order to carry out a cross-case analysis, we employed a pattern-matching logic (Trochim, 1989) that involves comparing the case-based empirical patterns with several alternate theoretical patterns (Yin, 1994). During this step, we compared our coded empirical results with the proposed patterns to establish whether the existing literature adequately explained the cases we studied. Data were initially coded and analyzed deductively according to the nine antecedents formulated in the literature review: participation, transparency, family cohesion, shared vision, value alignment, social interaction, family complexity, family conflict and succession planning. Data that did not fit into these predetermined categories were analyzed inductively. This inductive process was useful to help discover antecedents apparent in the data that were not readily anticipated on the basis of the literature review but were clearly valid as determinants of family meetings. This process helped us to discover two novel antecedents, i.e. decision-making and the next generation working in the company.

To ensure credibility, we used NVivo (release 1.0) to store our data and carefully manage our coding. Furthermore, to safeguard the rigor and validity of our study, we took two important steps. First, the data were coded and investigated individually by the first author. To overcome possible bias resulting from the first author's involvement in the fieldwork, the data were provided to the second and third author, who had not been involved in the fieldwork. The second and third author were instructed to independently code and compare the case data supplied against each of the nine patterns under investigation. This formed the basis for discussions and modifications until consensus was achieved. Such an approach follows the advice of Patton (2015) and Yin (2018) to use multiple researchers or evaluators during the data analysis stage (i.e. investigator triangulation, Patton, 2015) to strengthen the validity and reliability of the study. Second, to ensure the soundness and validity of our analysis and interpretations, we shared our results and conclusions with the study's participants (Yin, 2009). Their interpretations were consistent with ours.

Results

Lack of transparency

According to the respondents, a lack of transparency necessitated the implementation of family meetings. Family directors believe that family meetings can familiarize the children with the firm, reduce the information asymmetry between active and inactive family members and keep all family members on the same page. Another reason for implementing family meetings was to prepare the children for their future career in the firm and to encourage them to participate in the family firm. By informing all members about the activities of the firm and keeping everyone on the same page, family meetings also served to preserve trust within the family. As the director of firm B put it: “It is important that the family knows what is happening. This way, they get more information and trust is stimulated by interacting with each other.”

Lack of participation

Another important determinant mentioned in the interviews was the lack of participation. Family meetings served to increase participation by informing every member of the family about the activities of the firm. Moreover, by inviting family members to family meetings, the firms’ owners tried to motivate family members to become an integral part of the family firm. The director of firm F said: “He would have liked all his children to join the company and from childhood he has also guided us in that direction by gradually talking more about the company in certain meetings.” By implementing family meetings, directors hoped to spark the enthusiasm and interest of other family members to participate in the firm and to strengthen their belonging to the firm.

Succession planning

Succession planning was also mentioned the firms as necessitating family meetings. In one of the cases, health problems made the family owner think about the future of his company. Family meetings served as a platform to discuss the future of the firm, in terms of succession. As the director of firm H said during the interview: “Half a year ago, a little more, the owner was diagnosed with cancer. Then he started to think more about succession. The shares are already divided among the children now. Of course we had those consultation moments, but not always structured.” It can occur that children with the greatest contribution to the firm receive the most shares instead of others with less or no participation. This was the case in firm C: “One daughter joined the business in 2005. She has consciously chosen this and has dropped out of college to do this. She has therefore received ten percent shares in the company. The rest of the shares are split between me and my husband. The second daughter only got into the firm in 2015. She has no shares yet. But also because the first daughter worked without shares for the first ten years with a low wage, we also want to make sure that she has shares in the majority as she has contributed more to the success of the business. So we decided to hold a meeting and communicate and discuss our intention, so the second daughter knows that too." However, family members are not always adequate or capable candidates to lead the firm. An external chief executive officer (CEO) with better competences can be more appropriate to lead the firm.

Family meetings were implemented to discuss decisions regarding the selection of the next successor, such as in case D: “We have now decided that none of the three children can perform at top level, on a global level, but that we still want to continue with someone from outside who does have those skills. This Friday we have another meeting with the guidance of people from an external consultancy firm, who help us take all the steps, including the transfer of the company, so they guide the succession.”

Decision-making

The fourth determinant that was mentioned by the respondents was decision-making. This is a novel finding as we did not find this antecedent in the literature review. Decisions can be one-sided, taken jointly, or in a way where the business leader consults with the family but decides alone, as, for example, at firm F: “During these meetings, my brother and I tried to convince or stop my father when we thought it was not a good decision, but if he really wanted something you couldn’t stop him, that’s just the way it was.” There were two cases which pointed out that when there was a decision which impacted everyone in the family firm or when there were serious company-related problems, it increased the propensity to hold a meeting even more. It was in this family meeting where other members of the family could raise their voice and jointly decide how to react as a family during this special occasion. “Ten years ago we had to make very serious interventions. So we had to make decisions ten years ago that mattered to everyone. Then we started involving the children by having these meetings. Now, recently during the corona pandemic, we decided together to hold a family meeting and answer the question of what we are going to do in this coming period. That is a main function of these meetings for us.” , as stated by the managing director of firm C. Family meetings are thus an important medium for solving problems and taking precautions to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future. These cases indicated that situations in which certain decisions have to be made or, for example, interventions have to be made around decisions that are taken unilaterally necessitate the implementation of family meetings.

Lack of family cohesion

Family cohesion is fostered by the family members bonding with each other, resulting in the family ties becoming stronger and increasing mutual support between family members. Most family directors see the company and the family meetings as a medium to attain family cohesion. As stated by the managing director of firm E, “For me personally it was absolutely one of the biggest reasons to meet frequently, because my intention was to keep the children together. That they would keep a bond with each other through the companies and that they would even have necessary and compulsory meetings, and that they would interact with each other. And would also tackle each other's problems together as a company and hold consultations. As far as the relationship in the family and among the children is concerned, the companies are a backbone for me to link children to each other and to keep them in contact and to force them to go through one door together." Some of the cases also held family meetings preventatively, i.e. not because there was a lack of family cohesion or social interaction but to prevent this lack. As the managing director of firm E stated, "They have a good relationship with each other and they see each other regularly. It was my intention to rather keep it that way. That is why we implement family meetings. To prevent that they would become divided and would not know enough about each other's lives and that each would then go their own way."

Family conflict

Family conflicts necessitated the implementation of family meetings as these meetings can help resolve conflict through communicating about the problem as stated by the managing director of firm F: "A big conflict has been the trigger for us to have family meetings regularly. Because we realized that if we had held these meetings at that time and everyone could have expressed their opinion, it would not have come this far because there would be no accumulated frustration. So we have realized that we need to meet, and to avoid such conflicts, keep doing it." In one of the firms, family conflicts arose due to the absence of the payment of dividends, which caused tensions between the owner and the rest of the family. In firm D, the owner organized a family meeting to openly communicate about the issue and try to resolve this conflict: "I cannot keep saying that the company is doing well, the company is worth so many millions and in the end nothing in term of dividends ever comes to the table. I noticed there was some pressure coming up which was dealt with by newly deciding this year, invest a bit back, pay a bit of dividend and put a bit aside for difficult times." Although family meetings help to communicate conflicts, these meetings cannot always solve conflicts as stated by the managing director of firm B: "Disagreements are simply part of it. Transparency, meetings and communication, it does not rule out that you will have conflicts. But it does promote that you can prevent them and make it negotiable. You cannot always avoid conflicts, you have to try to fix them. If it's not solvable, then divorce is better than staying with the conflict."

Misalignment of values

Misalignment of values is another determinant of family meetings. When the company values differ from the family values or when different family members have different values, family meetings can be implemented to reach consensus on an overarching framework of values, which incorporates the differences between family members. “Through family meetings, we have made some adjustments so that we had everyone on the same line in terms of family values, but it also resulted in very big decisions.”, as admitted by the managing director of firm D.

Lack of social interaction

Family meetings can be seen as a medium by family business leaders to reduce the lack of social interaction. According to the managing director of firm B, involving the family in social activities, not only stimulates trust by interacting with each other but also eases the flow of information by being transparent about company and family matters: “The family meets regularly, everything gets discussed within the family. Then they get more information, while this is happening trust is stimulated because everyone is in dialogue with each other at that moment.” Additionally, family events, such as Christmas dinners, yearly barbecues, birthday parties, etc. team-building activities and holidays are organized to assemble the family and to foster family relationships. Thus, family meetings maintain family ties and ensure that the family members remain in contact with each other, as implied by the managing director of firm E: “We started specifically with family meetings so that we come together and that the children could remain in consultation. In this way they can support each other in good and bad or difficult times and exchange thoughts. They have a good relationship with each other and they see each other regularly. It was my intention to rather keep it that way. To prevent that they would become divided and would not know enough about each other’s lives and that each would then go their own way.”

Lack of shared vision

Our respondents indicated that family meetings were necessary to work toward a shared vision. There were cases where family members wanted to leave the company or were indifferent about the continuity of the family firm because they did not share the same long- term vision as the family leader, did not feel any connection to the firm and as such did not really want to be a part of it. The respondents stated that family meetings were an important factor to help overcome this challenge. As mentioned by the managing director of firm F, “He thought the company would be the thread that would keep us together as a family. When they no longer wanted this, he was not at all satisfied with it and there were some heated discussions. He felt they 'stole' from the company because they were actually taking capital out of the company. That was also when we started these meetings, they were rather 'crisis' meetings where I and my two other brothers tried to approach both sides to be on the same page and respect each other's vision and decisions... Family members want to leave the company, so that is mainly a lack of long-term vision. We have tried to get this through those meetings." This lack of a shared vision encouraged the owner to implement family meetings in order to align the vision of each family member. Family meetings helped to create mutual understanding and respect between family members with regards to their vision for the firm, resulting in improved family ties and loyalty to the company.

The next generation working in the company

We discovered another novel determinant, not mentioned in the literature, namely, the next generation working in the company. Many of the companies stated that family meetings were implemented after the participation of the next generation and more specifically when one or more children started working in the company, as stated by the managing director firm A: "We started these meetings the moment the children joined the firm." Family meetings served to convey information about the firm to the children. Another quoted reason is when the offspring is working in the family firm but in differently located branches, family meetings were implemented in order to come together and discuss course of events, such as firm F: "We started the weekly meetings when my younger brother also joined the company. We then had two locations where we did not see each other on a daily basis and we met weekly to discuss the course of events. Now we are both in one location, but those meetings are still held."

Family complexity

Family complexity is the last determinant that was brought up during the interviews. The more diverse the family becomes, the more complex the relationships among the family memberships are, which in turn makes it more difficult to manage these relationships. For example, the managing director of firm B, which is the husband of a family member from the third generation, mentions that family meetings are a blessing and a solution for managing family complexity. It should also be noted that larger family businesses are more inclined to involve external family consultancy firms to help them deal with family complexity. Managing and reducing family complexity is done by implementing a communication platform such as a family meeting. A means for reducing family complexity, often proposed by the consultancy firms, is called “pruning the tree” to ensure that only family members committed to the longevity of the business remain within the firm. This is often seen as a last resort as it is a brake on the growth of the firm. “Pruning is a great impoverishment. Buying out someone who has 20 percent of the shares, it means he has to be paid. That is to say, those resources are no longer in the company and cannot therefore be used to invest. As a result, the company has been inhibited from growth for 4–5 years. Very clear guidelines have been established about this during the meetings.”, as per the managing director of firm B. As such, family meetings are implemented to deal with family complexity by, for example, establishing guidelines for family firm conduct. Table 2 provides an overview of the determinants that are disclosed from the interviews, accompanied by illustrative quotes.

Discussion

In this study, we aimed to answer the following research question: “Why do private family businesses decide to implement family meetings?” Drawing on social systems theory and adopting a qualitative, multiple case study methodology, this article uncovers 11 antecedents of family meetings. Our results show that (1) a lack of transparency, (2) a lack of participation, (3) succession planning, (4) decision-making, (5) family cohesion, (6) family conflict and (7) misalignment of values are the main determinants that necessitate the need for family meetings, followed by (8) a lack of social interaction, (9) a lack of shared vision, (10) the next generation working in the company and (11) family complexity.

Our study contributes to governance literature in general and to the family business field in particular. Several studies have shown that family firm governance differs substantially from that of nonfamily firms (Bartholomeusz and Tanewski, 2006; Bammens et al., 2008; Navarro and Anson, 2009). In explaining these differences, these scholars have focused on “hard,” quantitative measures, such as the generational life cycle of the family firm (e.g. Bammens et al., 2008) or family ownership (e.g. Navarro and Anson, 2009; Giovannini, 2010), to the exclusion of the rather “soft,” relational, qualitative issues. This is surprising, given that the family firm literature emphasizes that good relationships between the members of the business family are important for the success of the family firm (Stafford et al., 1999; Eddleston and Kellermans, 2007). Our study contributes to the literature on business governance in the field of family businesses, by looking beyond the “usual suspects” (e.g. generational life cycle of the firm, family ownership) and taking into account “soft,” relational issues. Moreover, by examining the role of family issues (e.g. lack of transparency, lack of family cohesion) within the topic of business governance, we provide novel insights into the origins of the family

Table II: Determinants identified from the interviews

Determinants	Quotes from the interview
Lack of transparency	Managing director firm A: “We would consciously give information in an informal way at the kitchen table so that the children had an idea how the firm works and how we view it from a management perspective.” Managing director firm B: “Occasionally, there are family meetings with his children, on an owner level, to inform them once a year. This was done informally. So they would already have been informed, not only because it is officially prescribed by law, but also because it is important that the family knows what is happening. This way, they get more information and trust is stimulated by interacting with each other.” Managing director firm C: “We wanted to inform them at these meetings so that they could learn from our mistakes. Of course they will make their own mistakes, but why should they make our same mistakes again.” Managing director firm D: “We implemented these meetings to bring structure to the business. The son, who is active in the firm, knows what was going on in the firm but the others didn’t. So without those meetings you would have two camps and the others who are not involved in the firm know nothing about it. That’s the reason for these meetings, so we can keep them all on the same level.” Managing director firm E: “Because we have three entities, the children involved in each company did not always know what was going on in the other companies. That’s how we started those meetings, to inform them but also throw my ideas on the table. We would discuss the current situation, RFQ’s we received and ongoing projects. Such meetings were necessary, on the on hand to inform everyone with the same proportionality, on the other hand to motivate everyone.” Managing director firm F: “In terms of meetings, we hold a weekly meeting with my brother, but that is usually purely about business. Every month we have an extra meeting on Saturday, where my father and other brother are also present. This is where the financial and operational figures of last month are summarized to inform then, certain strategic decisions are taken, but family matters are also discussed” Branch manager firm G: “They mostly were very informal, during breakfast usually on the weekend. He did that so we had an idea about the firm and wanted to prepare us for the future when we would work in the company and already knew what he was doing.”

Table II (continued): Determinants identified from the interviews

Determinants	**Quotes from the interview**
Lack of transparency (continued)	Branch manager firm H: "Half a year ago, a little more, he was diagnosed with cancer. Then he started to think more about succession. The shares are already divided among the children now. Of course we had those consultation moments, but not always structured. But especially the moments when we got those shares, there were mainly info moments for my sisters, because they are teachers. They actually have no knowledge of a share, its consequences. So that was the goal. I can also imagine that next year, the general meeting is already over this year, but next year at that general meeting, my sisters will also be there. Then there will have to be information moments where explanation will take place."
Lack of participation	Managing director firm A: "I wanted to prepare my sons to come into the company later, so I informed them what I was doing." Managing director firm B: "Some are slightly interested and say if everything goes well, I don't care what or where, because they actually have no connection with it. They have become heirs from generation to generation, but they have their own job and family. In this way I wanted to involve them more so that they could maybe get more enthusiasm." Managing director firm C: "Because we felt we should educate the children. Not only to cooperate operationally, but also to contribute structurally to the management of the company. This eventually manifested itself in a clearer division of tasks." Managing director firm D: "We have a secret formula, we work with a Coca-Cola story. So the company cannot operate without the concentrate. I have 40 people at work here, if we don't deliver tomorrow the whole company will be shut down. I never wanted to pass that formula on to strangers, so I did it myself until five years ago and waited a long time to give it to my son, but now for the last five years he usually makes the concentrate." Managing director firm E: "That one child, son or daughter, was more interested than another, another was somewhat distanced. Such meetings were also necessary to motivate everyone so they could then easily make the decision: either get more involved with the company or make a concrete decision to what extent they would identify with it. Because not every child shows so much interest or not every child wants to give up so much of his or her private life in favor of the companies. To be able to define this and make it transparent you have to hold meetings."

Table II (continued): Determinants identified from the interviews

Determinants	Quotes from the interview
Lack of participation (continued)	Managing director firm F: "He would have liked all his children to join the company and from childhood he has also guided us in that direction by gradually talking more about the company in certain meetings. As I said, my sister and the youngest did not want this at all and wanted to leave the company. These meetings actually started to convince them to stay and possibly even participate more actively through meetings. This is true for my oldest brother, he is now more active than before thanks to these meetings."
Succession planning	Managing director firm C: "One daughter joined the business in 2005. She has consciously chosen this and has stopped her studies to do this. She has therefore received ten percent shares in the company. The rest of the shares are split between me and my husband. The second daughter only got into the firm in 2015. She has no shares yet. But also because the first daughter worked without shares for the first ten years with a low wage, we also want to make sure that she has shares in the majority. Because she has contributed more to the success of the business. So we decided to hold a meeting and communicate and discuss our intention, so the second daughter knows that too." Managing director firm D: "I'm not that young anymore. Either you sell your company to someone else. Either the family says we want to bring in the fruit of the tree that has been planted for another 10-20 years and later on to the grandchildren, the third generation, maybe someone can be a potential candidate again who has the capabilities to do that themselves. We have now decided during these meetings that none of the three children can perform at top level, on a global level, but that we still want to continue with someone from outside who does have those skills. This Friday we have another meeting with the guidance of people from an external consultancy firm, who help us take all the steps, including the transfer of the company, so they guide the succession." Managing director firm E: "From the moment they graduated, my intention was always to ask them to join our own company and then hand the business over to them step by step. This was the main reason why I wanted my children to gradually become more involved in the business and had started small meetings to pass on certain information or discuss decisions to be made. To talk about their vision of the future and their interests. It was a bit preventative in that area, to be on time, to take certain measures and to make agreements between the children and I and the children among themselves. That we could then plan a bit of custom succession, that some children might want to leave the business later and take a different path. Or perhaps wanting to delve further into the matter, that we could structure and discuss it better and make it negotiable and keep it that way."

Table II (continued): Determinants identified from the interviews

Determinants	**Quotes from the interview**
Succession planning (continued)	Managing director firm F: "Later this was of course discussed during these meetings and it was also settled how the succession would take place." Branch manager firm G: "The formal family council has been started for the sake of succession planning. So there was already a foundation that has been expanded over time with a broader scope of conversation material. We often heard that companies go wrong because of uncertainties about succession. That's why my grandfather wanted to act proactively. Nothing was personal, there was a formal process in place and everyone respected it. So there is already a succession scenario where we know which steps must be followed." Branch manager firm H: "Half a year ago, a little more, he was diagnosed with cancer. Then he started to think more about succession. The shares are already divided among the children now. Of course we had those consultation moments, but not always structured. But especially the moments when we got those shares, there were mainly info moments for my sisters, because they are teachers. They actually have no knowledge of a share, its consequences. So that was the goal."
Decision making	Managing director firm C: "Ten years ago we had to make very serious interventions. So we had to make decisions ten years ago that mattered to everyone. Then we started involving the children by having these meetings. Now, recently during the corona pandemic, we decided together to hold a family meeting and answer the question of what we are going to do in this coming period. That is a main function of these meetings for us." Managing director firm E: "Calling everyone together and holding a general meeting, that usually does not work. We only do this under special circumstances when it turns out that there are problems or certain things start to get out of hand in order to consult and make decisions. For example, there have been periods when we had a bit of bad luck with certain customers or with available orders, so that was one of the reasons, so that we could better structure the financial situation, and better link companies in terms of financial cohesion and to better align the capabilities and needs of certain companies." Managing director firm F: "During these meetings, my brother and I tried to convince or stop my father when we thought it was not a good decision, but if he really wanted something you couldn't stop him, that's just the way it was."

Table II (continued): Determinants identified from the interviews

Determinants	**Quotes from the interview**
Decision making (continued)	Branch manager firm G: “When we had dinner with my grandfather, he always brought up certain business matters. Usually it was because something was going badly or there was a problem, but that was almost always the case. Now we try to get into the habit of exploiting such mechanisms. For family matters we have the coffee on Sunday, but for company-specific large matters we try to organize meetings in advance in order to make decisions together.” Branch manager firm H: "In the second generation, when the decisions are made by the children, those structural moments must be inserted to make decisions."
Lack of family cohesion	Managing director firm B: “And in between there is also a lot of informal contact with the family, not only about the company but for good cohesion. That is essential, hence the family forum.” Managing director firm E: “For me personally it was absolutely one of the biggest reasons to meet frequently, because my intention was also to keep the children together. That they would keep a bond with each other through the companies and that they would even have necessary and compulsory meetings, and that they would interact with each other. And would also tackle each other's problems together as a company and hold consultations. As far as the relationship in the family and among the children is concerned, the companies are a backbone for me to link children to each other and to keep them in contact and to force them to go through one door together.” Managing director firm F: “He felt the company would be the thread that would keep us together as a family. The spiritual or emotional division also created a physical division between my father and my sister and brother. There was no family cohesion anymore and we tried to employ it through family meetings.” Branch manager firm G: “The family meeting ensured that everyone bonded with each other. It was important that he got everyone on the same page by putting the company first. Care was taken for the company by taking care of each other. You could say a knife with two sides. Suppose someone falls away due to an illness, the other gladly take responsibility because the company has everyone on the same line, or vice versa when it is quiet, my father or uncle say that we can leave earlier to spend more time with our family.”

Table II (continued): Determinants identified from the interviews

Determinants	Quotes from the interview
Family conflict	Managing director firm B: "Disagreements are simply part of it. Transparency, meetings and communication, it does not rule out that you will have conflicts. But it does promote that you can prevent them and make it negotiable. You cannot always avoid conflicts, you have to try to fix them. If it's not solvable, then divorce is better than staying with the conflict." Managing director firm E: "Other children were able to study longer, they joined the company later and the companies were already bigger. But afterwards it turned out to be an obstacle that my first son had been in the company for some time and started working right away, while the others could study, he felt a bit discriminated against. That created conflict and then you try to create homogeneity through these meetings." Managing director firm F: "As I just said, a big conflict has been the trigger for us to have those meetings regularly. Because we realized that if we had held these meetings at the time and everyone could have expressed their opinion, it would not have come this far because there would be no accumulated frustration. So we have realized that we need to meet, and to avoid such conflicts, keep doing it." Branch manager firm G: "Before that he had the impression that it would eventually work out on its own, but after our conversation that it is necessary because of the ongoing conflicts and that there are emotions that are not brought to the table, he took the responsibility to set up these meetings."
Misalignment of values	Managing director firm D: "Through these meetings, we have made some adjustments so that we had everyone on the same line in terms of family values, but it also resulted in very big decisions." Managing director firm E: "At one point I wanted to transfer not only the company, but also my objective, for what purpose were the companies founded, what do we strive for and how we want to achieve that, and also our corporate culture. That is why you have to discuss the goals and ideals, so the meetings served for that. So discussing and sharing that relationship, attitudes and ideals together, the meeting was a medium for that." Managing director firm F: "Although it may seem useless at times, it is very important that the goals and vision of the company are repeated over and over. The values were very different within the family and the firm, so this was certainly a problem and one of the reasons for starting these meetings."

Table II (continued): Determinants identified from the interviews

Determinants	Quotes from the interview
Misalignment of values (continued)	Branch manager firm G: "During these formal meetings, we were often told how important family values are. Suppose someone from the family board has an idea, he can check it out with the rest of the family at the meetings and get constructive feedback on whether what that person says is in line with the company or family values."
Lack of social interaction	Managing director firm B: "The family meets regularly, everything be discussed within the family. Then they get more information, while this is happening trust is stimulated because everyone is in dialogue with each other at that moment." Managing director firm E: "We started specifically with family meetings so that we come together and that the children could remain in consultation. In this way they can support each other in good and bad or difficult times and exchange thoughts. They have a good relationship with each other and they see each other regularly. It was my intention to rather keep it that way. That is why we implement family meetings. To prevent that they would become divided and would not know enough about each other's lives and that each would then go their own way." Branch manager firm G: "After a heavy fallout between the family members, it was decided to implement two types of meetings. One of which is informal, the coffee on Sunday. There, small matters about the company are discussed, but it is more to maintain the family relationship. In this way we can get to know each other better and try to fill the gap of our youth."
Lack of a shared vision	Managing director firm B: "Someone who says I don't feel happy in the company can always clear his shares from the company. But if that happens often, then there is a sign that there is no shared vision. Then there are some who still want to go their own way. But if that is well organized through these meetings, people like to remain part of the family business." Managing director firm D: "The three children do not have the same vision at the moment towards the third generation. Because there are two, they are around 50 years old, and they probably will not have children anymore. They look very differently at the future, that is a new problem that is now occurring and these meetings help us with that."

Table II (continued): Determinants identified from the interviews

Determinants	**Quotes from the interview**
Lack of a shared vision (continued)	Managing director firm F: “He thought the company would be the thread that would keep us together as a family. When they no longer wanted this either, he was not at all satisfied with it and there were some heated discussions. He felt they "stole" from the company because they were actually taking capital out of the company. That was also when we started these meetings, they were rather “crisis” meetings where I and my two other brothers tried to approach both sides to be on the same page and respect each other's vision and decisions... Family members want to leave the company, so that is mainly a lack of long-term vision. We have tried to get this through those meetings.”
Next generation working in company	Managing director firm A: “We started these meetings the moment the children joined, from the first day.” Managing director firm C: “Since the children are actually involved in the business. I must say that it is only something of the last ten years. Because we had to do very serious interventions ten years ago. So we had to make decisions ten years ago that mattered to everyone. Then we started involving the children. Before that they worked in the company but were not involved in management.” Managing director firm F: “We started the weekly meetings when my younger brother also joined the company. We then had two locations where we did not see each other on a daily basis and we met weekly to discuss the course of events. Now we are both in one location, but those meetings are still held.”
Family complexity	Managing director firm B: “The more complex, the more diverse, of course, then those formal organs (family councils) are a blessing. That's a handhold then. That is a solution for that complexity.”

component (i.e. family meetings) of business governance. Consequently, we also contribute to the insights on governance issues in private family firms, a subgroup of family firms on which research is less developed in comparison to public family firms (Carney et al., 2013).

In addition, our article contributes to the family business literature in several ways. While the current literature has only focused on the positive consequences of FGMs, there has been little to no research on the antecedents of FGMs. We take a step back and explain why family meetings, as an essential form of FGM, are implemented in the first place. As such, we fill the current knowledge gap in the research field on FGMs. Moreover, this study answers the call of Suess (2014) to conduct more research on the antecedents of FGMs. Our study also responds to calls in family firm literature to apply more holistic theories to family governance research (Suess, 2014). We demonstrate the instrumentality of the social systems theory (Frank et al., 2010) in understanding the family's needs that necessitate the implementation of FGMs (Arteaga and Escriba-Esteve, 2020). From the perspective of social systems theory (Frank et al., 2018; Von Schlippe and Frank, 2013), family firms emerge through a sequence of intertwined communication decisions (Frank et al., 2017), shaped by the family and business system (Weismeier-Sammer et al., 2013). We apply this logic to the adoption of FGMs and provide insights into how the needs of the family, on the one side, and the needs of the business, on the other side, and the interaction between these two needs influence the adoption of family meetings. As such, we provide a fresh perspective on the importance of the governance of the family system, as well as on the relationship of the family system with the business system.

On the "output" side of family meetings, several researchers argue that family meetings lead to stronger family relationships (e.g. Gallon and Kenyon-Rouvinez, 2005; Brenes et al., 2011). Our study finds that on the "input" side (cfr. antecedents), it is a lack of transparency and social interaction that necessitates the implementation of family meetings. Our study demonstrates that family meetings are implemented to foster good social interactions and to serve as a safe platform for each family member to voice his/her opinions and thoughts in an open and honest manner. This way, family meetings help to create mutual understanding and respect between family members, resulting in improved family ties and loyalty to the company. As such, our study explains how a lack of social interaction and weak family relationships act as antecedents of family meetings (Mustakallio et al., 2002; de Vries, 1993; Michiels et al., 2015; Brenes et al., 2011; Gersick et al., 1997; Habbershon and Astrachan, 1997; Poza, 2009).

Our results show that family meetings are needed to attend to the next generation working in the family firm and to include both operationally active and inactive members in the family firm. By letting everyone participate in important family and business matters, family meetings serve to give family members a feeling of inclusion and appreciation. While Gersick and Feliu (2014) express that family governance serves to foster a sense of belonging to the business among the extended family, Martin (2001) states that family governance allows everyone to participate in important family and business matters. Additionally, Lansberg (1999) and Poza (2009) set forth that one of the functions of family governance is to welcome and involve younger generations. Our results lend support for these statements by empirically verifying them.

Our research confirms that the next generation working in family firms necessitates the implementation of family meetings. Indeed, Brenes et al. (2011) state that most family firms do not find it necessary to implement a certain formal governance structure where there is only one controlling family member. The decision usually takes place after the involvement of the second generation in order to deal with the growth and planning of a succession. Moreover, in contrast to the research of Fahed-Sreih and Djoundourian (2006), who state that only firms who are effectively awaiting a succession implement family meetings, we find that also younger firms, who have the need to plan ahead, implement family meetings to help them do so.

Finally, according to Labaki (2011), family cohesion within the family decreases when family members are not able to identify with the company. Suess (2014) theorizes that the implementation of effective family governance could strengthen cohesion. Our study demonstrates that a lack of cohesion serves as an antecedent for implementing frequent family meetings. According to the literature, the need for conflict resolution could be a precursor of FGMs (Martin, 2001; Brenes et al., 2011). Our results confirm that conflicts raise the need to implement family meetings. Furthermore, our results show that families feel the need to implement family meetings, not only to discuss and resolve conflicts but to also avoid potential conflicts in the future by timely communication and hearing each other out. Our study also suggests that a misalignment of values necessitates the implementation of family meetings as family meetings can serve as a platform where every family member can voice his/her values. Thus, family meetings can serve as a platform where family members clearly communicate their goals and mission. This supports the idea of Gallo and Kenyon-Rouvinez (2005) who state that the main purpose of family governance is to clearly communicate the goals, mission and the values of the family firm.

Besides the theoretical relevance, our study also has important practical implications. More specifically, our study can help owning families and their advisors in their quest for firm continuity through professionalization of their family business governance (Gallo and Kenyon-Rouvinez, 2005). By unraveling a set of antecedents of family meetings, business families and/or their advisors can now better identify why such meetings should be implemented. Consequently, the likelihood of actively using FGMs rises. This improved awareness can make a major difference for family firms since FGMs such as family meetings will improve the functioning of the family system, which is crucial for family firm success and continuity (Eddleston and Kellermanns, 2007; Suess, 2014).

Limitations and avenues for future research

The findings and limitations of this study provide fruitful avenues for future research. The first limitation of the current study is that we did not have detailed data on family communication and interaction patterns. Therefore, while we have used the social systems theory (Frank et al., 2018; Von Schlippe and Frank, 2013) as a guiding theoretical framework for our study, where family and business communication systems play a central role in shaping family governance, future studies might adopt other theoretical lenses when further investigating the topic of family governance in private family firms. For example, Jaskiewicz et al. (2016) provide an overview of seven family science theories that can be used in management research. In particular, family systems theory (Bavelas and Segal, 1982; Broderick, 1993), which describes how communication patterns and processes define the family system, and family communication patterns theory (Ritchie and Fitzpatrick, 1990; Fitzpatrick and Ritchie, 1994), which describes specific ways in which family members interact and communicate, could serve as fruitful theoretical lenses in order to study governance structures in family firms. We strongly encourage future scholars to zoom in on the family variable (for an example see: Cassia et al., 2012) and to exploit knowledge from family science theories to uncover how other aspects of families (e.g. family–member relationships, family structures, family events) impact their organizations (Jaskiewicz et al., 2016).

Second, we have performed a qualitative study with a sample of eight firms. Although this size is acceptable and reflects common practice in qualitative studies, we need to be careful in generalizing the results of this study. Moreover, restrictions may arise from the sample as our study only comprises private family businesses in Belgium. Variations in institutional environments can play a critical role in explaining differences in business governance mechanisms (Aguilera et al., 2016). These circumstances may limit the generalizability of our findings to other countries. Therefore, future research could replicate our study in other countries or in public family firms and shed light on any differences in the antecedents of family meetings. Moreover, future studies could use other forms of data gathering, such as large-scale surveys, in order to quantitatively test our detected patterns and increase the generalizability of our results across a broader range of family firms.

Third, we have exclusively focused on family meetings as a form of FGM, while excluding other forms, such as a family charter or a family council. A number of respondents stated that they had also drawn up a family charter. We encourage future research to incorporate several forms of FGMs in order to compare whether the antecedents of these different forms of FGMs differ. Future research could also explore the relationship between different types of FGMs. For example, Parada et al. (2020) found that family firms follow a specific pattern in adopting their governance structures. Future work could examine how these patterns develop. A longitudinal study would be particularly suited to inquire into this matter. Finally, family firms have been found to be a heterogeneous group (e.g. Arteaga and Escriba-Esteve, 2020; Nordqvist et al., 2014). As such, it is possible that different family firms do not show equal interest in implementing family meetings. Future studies may try to uncover how different types of family firms choose to implement family meetings or FGMs in general.

References

Aguilera, R.V., Florackis, C. and Kim, H. (2016), "Advancing the corporate governance research agenda", Corporate Governance: An International Review, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 172-180.

Arteaga, R. and Escriba-Esteve, A. (2020), "Heterogeneity in family firms: contextualising the adoption of family governance mechanisms", Journal of Family Business Management, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print, doi: 10.1108/JFBM-10-2019-0068.

Astrachan, J.H. and Kolenko, T.A. (1994), "A neglected factor explaining family business success: human resource practices", Family Business Review, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 251-262.

Bammens, Y., Voordeckers, W. and Van Gils, A. (2008), "Boards of directors in family firms: a generational perspective", Small Business Economics, Vol. 31 No. 2, pp. 163-180.

Bartholomeusz, S. and Tanewski, G.A. (2006), "The relationship between family firms and corporate governance", Journal of Small Business Management, Vol. 44 No. 2, pp. 245-267.

Bavelas, J.B. and Segal, L. (1982), "Family systems theory: background and implications", Journal of Communication, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 99-107.

Beckhard, R. and Dyer, W.G. (1983), "Managing continuity in the family-owned business",

Organizational Dynamics, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 5-12.

Berent-Braun, M. and Uhlaner, L. (2012), "Family governance practices and teambuilding: paradox of the enterprising family", Small Business Economics, Vol. 38 No. 1, pp. 103-119.

Brenes, E., Madrigal, K. and Molina, G. (2006), "Family business structure and succession: critical topics in Latin American experience", Journal of Business Research, Vol. 59 No. 3, pp. 372-374.

Brenes, E.R., Madrigal, K. and Requena, B. (2011), "Corporate governance and family business governance", Journal of Business Research, Vol. 64 No. 3, pp. 280-285.

Broderick, C.B. (1993), Understanding Family Process: Basics of Family Systems Theory, Sage, Newbury Park.

Cadbury, S.A. (1999), "Sir, what are the trends in corporate governance? How will they impact your company?", Long Range Planning, Vol. 32, pp. 12-19.

Cadbury, S.A. (2000), Family Firms and Their Governance: Creating Tomorrow's Company from Today's, Egon Zehnder International, Zurich.

Carlock, R.S. and Ward, J.L. (2001), Strategic Planning for the Family Business: Parallel Planning to Unify the Family and the Business, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY.

Carlock, R.S. and Ward, J.L. (2010), When Family Business Are Best. The Parallel Planning Process for Family Harmony and Business Success, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY.

Carney, M., Van Essen, M., Gedajlovic, E.R. and Heugens, P.P. (2013), "What do we know about private family firms? A meta–analytical review", Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice, Vol. 39 No. 3, pp. 513-544.

Cassia, L., De Massis, A. and Pizzurno, E. (2012), "Strategic innovation and new product development in family firms: an empirically grounded theoretical framework", International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 198-232.

Che, L. and Langli, J.C. (2015), "Governance structure and firm performance in private family firms", Journal of Business Finance and Accounting, Vol. 42 Nos 9-10, pp. 1216-1250.

Chittoor, R. and Das, R. (2007), "Professionalization of management and succession performance – a vital linkage", Family Business Review, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 65-79.

Chrisman, J.J., Sharma, P. and Taggar, S. (2007), "Family influences on firms: an introduction", Journal of Business Research, Vol. 60 No. 10, pp. 1005-1011.

Chrisman, J.J., Chua, J.H., Pearson, A.W. and Barnett, T. (2012), "Family involvement, family influence, and family-centered non-economic goals in small firms", Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice, Vol. 36 No. 2, pp. 267-293.

Chua, J.H., Chrisman, J.J. and Sharma, P. (2003), "Succession and non succession concerns of family firms and agency relationship with nonfamily managers", Family Business Review, Vol. 16 No. 2, pp. 89-107.

de Vries, M.F.R.K. (1993), "The dynamics of family controlled firms: the good and the bad news", Organizational Dynamics, Vol. 21 No. 3, pp. 59-71.

Dooley, R.S. and Fryxell, G.E. (1999), "Attaining decision quality and commitment from dissent: the moderating effects of loyalty and competence in strategic decision-making teams", Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 389-402.

Eddleston, K.A. and Kellermanns, F.W. (2007), “Destructive and productive family relationships: a stewardship theory perspective”, Journal of Business Venturing, Vol. 22 No. 4, pp. 545-565.

Fahed-Sreih, J. (2009), “An exploratory study on a new corporate governance mechanism: evidence from small family firms”, Management Research News, Vol. 32, pp. 50-61.

Fahed-Sreih, J. and Djoundourian, S. (2006), “Determinants of longevity and success in Lebanese family businesses: an exploration study”, Family Business Review, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 225-234.

Fitzpatrick, M.A. and Ritchie, L.D. (1994), “Communication schemata within the family”, Human Communication Research, Vol. 20 No. 3, pp. 275-301.

Flamholtz, E.G. (1986), How to Make the Transition from an Entrepreneurship to a Professionally Managed Firm, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Frank, H., Lueger, M., Nos'e, L. and Suchy, D. (2010), “The concept of ‘Familiness’: literature review and systems theory-based reflections”, Journal of Family Business Strategy, Vol. 1 No. 3, pp. 119-130.

Frank, H., Kessler, A., Rusch, T., Suess-Reyes, J. and Weismeier-Sammer, D. (2017), “Capturing the familiness of family businesses: development of the family influence familiness scale (FIFS)”, Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice, Vol. 41 No. 5, pp. 709-742.

Frank, H., Suess-Reyes, J., Fuetsch, E. and Kessler, A. (2018), “Introducing the enterpriseness of business families: a research agenda”, in Memili, E. and Dibrell, C. (Eds), The Palgrave Handbook of Heterogeneity Among Family Firms, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, NY, pp. 263-296.

Gallo, M.A. and Kenyon-Rouvinez, D. (2005), “The importance of family and business governance”, in Kenyon-Rouvinez, D. and Ward, J.L. (Eds), Family Business: Key Issues, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, NY, pp. 45-57.

Gersick, K.E. and Feliu, N. (2014), “Governing the family enterprise: practices, performance and research”, in Melin, L. and Nordqvist, M. (Eds), The SAGE Handbook of Family Business, Sage, London, pp. 196-225.

Gersick, K.E., Davis, J.A., McCollom, M. and Lansberg, I. (1997), Generation to Generation: Life Cycles of the Family Business, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, MA.

Gimeno, A.G., Labadie, G.J., Saris, W. and Mayordomo, X.M. (2006), “Internal factors of family business performance: an integrated model”, in Poutziouris, P.Z., Smyrnios, K.X. and Klein, S.B. (Eds), Handbook of Research on Family Business, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, pp. 145-164.

Giovannini, R. (2010), “Corporate governance, family ownership and performance”, Journal of Management and Governance, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 145-166.

Habbershon, T.G. and Astrachan, J.H. (1997), “Research note: perceptions are reality: how family meetings lead to collective action”, Family Business Review, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 37-52.

Handler, W. and Kram, K.E. (1988), “Succession in family firms; the problem of resistance”, Family Business Review, Vol. 1 No. 4, pp. 361-381.

Howorth, C. and Kemp, M. (2019), Governance in Family Businesses: Evidence and Implications: Report by the IFB Research Foundation, IFB Research Foundation, London.

Jaffe, D.T. and Lane, S.H. (2004), “Sustaining a family dynasty: key issues facing complex multigenerational business- and investment-owning families”, Family Business Review, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 5-18, 81-98.

Jaskiewicz, P., Combs, J.G., Shanine, K.K. and Kacmar, K.M. (2016), “Introducing the family: a review of family science with implications for management research”, The Academy of Management Annals, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 309-341.

Koeberle-Schmid, A., Witt, P. and Fahrion, H.-J. (2012), “Family business governance als erfolgsfaktor von Familienunternehmen”, in Koeberle-Schmid, A., Fahrion, H.-J. and Witt, P. (Eds), Family Business Governance. Erfolgreiche Fu€hrung von Familienunternehmen, Erich Schmidt Verlag, Berlin, pp. 26-44.

Koladkiewicz, I. (2014), “The family meeting as a mechanism of family governance: review of the experiences of Polish family companies”, Management and Business Administration, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 37-55.

Labaki, R. (2011), “The Nova Group case study: family dynamics in a multigenerational French family business”, The International Journal of Management Cases, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 27-42.

Lambrecht, J. and Lievens, J. (2008), “Pruning the family tree: an unexplored path to family business continuity and family harmony”, Family Business Review, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 295-313.

Lansberg, I. (1999), Succeeding Generations: Realizing the Dream of Families in Business, Harvard Business School Press, Cambridge, MA.

Leana, C.R. and van Buren, H.J. (1999), “Organizational social capital and employment practices”, Academy of Management Review, Vol. 24 No. 3, pp. 538-555.

Lee, T.W., Mitchell, T.R. and Sablynski, C.J. (1999), “Qualitative research in organizational and vocational psychology”, Journal of Vocational Behavior, Vol. 2, pp. 161-187.

Lofland, J. and Lofland, L.H. (1971), Analyzing Social Settings, Thomson Wadsworth, Belmont, CA. Martin, H.F. (2001), “Is family governance an oxymoron?”, Family Business Review, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 91-96. Maso, I. and Smaling, A. (1998), Kwalitatief onderzoek: prakrijk en theorie, Boom, Amsterdam.

Mintzberg, H. (1979), “An emerging strategy of ‘direct’ research”, Administrative Science Quarterly, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 582-589.

Michiels, A., Voordeckers, W., Lybaert, N. and Steijvers, T. (2015), “Dividends and family governance practices in private family firms”, Small Business Economics, Vol. 44, pp. 299-314.

Morris, M., Williams, R., Allen, J. and Avila, R. (1997), “Correlates of success in family business transitions”, Journal of Business Venturing, Vol. 12, pp. 385-401.

Mustakallio, M., Autio, E. and Zahra, S.A. (2002), “Relational and contractual governance in family firms: effects on strategic decision making”, Family Business Review, Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 205-222.

Navarro, M.S. and Ans'on, S.G. (2009), “Do families shape corporate governance structures?”, Journal of Management and Organization, Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 327-345.

Neubauer, F. and Lank, A.G. (1998), The Family Business: Its Governance for Sustainability, Macmillan Press, London.

Nordqvist, M., Sharma, P. and Chirico, F. (2014), “Family firm heterogeneity and governance: a configuration approach”, Journal of Small Business Management, Vol. 52 No. 2, pp. 192-209.

Olson, D.H., Russell, C.S. and Sprenkle, D.H. (1983), “The circumplex model of marital and family systems, VI: theoretical update”, Family Process, Vol. 22 No. 1, pp. 69-83.

Parada, M.J., Gimeno, A., Samara, G. and Saris, W. (2020), “The adoption of governance mechanisms in family businesses: an institutional lens”, Journal of Family Business Management, Vol. ahead- of-print No. ahead-of-print, doi: 10.1108/JFBM-07-2019-0054.

Patton, M.Q. (2015), Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods, SAGE, Los Angeles.

Poza, E.J. (2009), “Rediscovering just how much patient family ownership matters”, Family Business, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 52-54.

Reulink, N. and Lindeman, L. (2005), “Kwalitatief onderzoek”, Dictaat Kwalitatief Onderzoek, Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen.

Ritchie, L.D. and Fitzpatrick, M.A. (1990), “Family communication patterns measuring intrapersonal perceptions of interpersonal relationships”, Communication Research, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 523-544.

Schulze, W.S., Lubatkin, M.H., Dino, R.N. and Buchholtz, A.K. (2001), “Agency relationships in family firms: theory and evidence”, Organization Science, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 99-116.

Schulze, W.S., Lubatkin, M.H. and Dino, R.N. (2003), “Toward a theory of agency and altruism in family firms”, Journal of Business Venturing, Vol. 18 No. 4, pp. 473-490.

Simon, F.B. (2012), Einfu€hrung in die Theorie des Familienunternehmens, CarlAuer, Heidelberg. Sogunro, O.A. (2002), “Selecting a quantitative or qualitative research methodology: an experience”, Educational Research Quarterly, Vol. 26 No. 1, p. 3.

Stafford, K., Duncan, K.A., Danes, S.M. and Winter, M. (1999), “A research model of sustainable family business”, Family Business Review, Vol. 12, pp. 197-208.

Suare, K.C. and Santana-Martın, D.J. (2004), “Governance in Spanish family business”, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research, Vol. 10 Nos 1/2, pp. 141-163.

Suess, J. (2014), “Family Governance Literature review and the development of a conceptual model”, Journal of Family Business Strategy, Vol. 5 No. 2, pp. 138-155.

Tower, C.B., Gudmundson, D., Schierstedt, S. and Hartmann, E.A. (2007), “Do family meetings really matter? Their relationship to planning and performance outcomes in small family businesses”, Journal of Small Business Strategy, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 85-93.

Trochim, W.M. (1989), “Outcome pattern matching and program theory”, Evaluation and Program Planning, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 355-366.

Von Schlippe, A. and Frank, H. (2013), "The theory of social systems as a framework for understanding family businesses", Family Relations, Vol. 62 No. 3, pp. 384-398.

Ward, J. (1987), Keeping the Family Business Healthy: How to Plan for Continuing Growth, Profitability and Family Leadership, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.

Ward, J.L. (1997), "Growing the family business: special challenges and best practices", Family Business Review, Vol. 10 No. 4, pp. 323-337.

Ward, J.L. (2004), "How governing family businesses is different", in Steger, U. (Ed.), Mastering Global Corporate Governance, Wiley, Chichester, pp. 135-167.

Weismeier-Sammer, D., Frank, H. and Von Schlippe, A. (2013), "Untangling 'familiness': a literature review and directions for future research", The International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 165-177.

Westhead, P. and Howorth, C. (2006), "Ownership and management issues associated with family firm performance and company objectives", Family Business Review, Vol. 19 No. 4, pp. 301-316.

Yin, R. (1989), Case Study Research: Design and Methods, Sage Publishing, Beverly Hills, CA. Yin, R. (1993), Applications of Case Study Research, Sage Publishing, Beverly Hills, CA.

Yin, R.K. (1994), "Discovering the future of the case study. Method in evaluation research", Evaluation Practice, Vol. 15 No. 3, pp. 283-290.

Yin, R.K. (2009), Case Study Research: Design and Methods, Sage Publications, Newbury Park, CA. Yin, R. (2018), Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods, 6th ed., Sage Publications, Los Angeles.