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**In the Family way: an exploration of family business resilience.**

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**In the Family way: an exploration of family business resilience.  
Beech, N.; Devins, D. M.; Gold, J.**

**Abstract**

**Purpose:** The article is to explore the concept of resilience set within a family business context and considers how familiness and the nature of noneconomic factors, such as relationship dynamics influence performance. The work provides new insights into the nature and impact of familiness as a mediating device, uncovering the potential for reframing resilience theory and practice.

**Methodology:** The article draws on a review of the extant literature in the areas of resilience and familiness as a means of developing a deeper understanding of the social-ecological system of the family firm.

**Findings:** The work reveals family business as a complex interrelationship between complimentary social-ecological systems. It highlights the complexity of family business and the challenges of the relational nature of familiness and how this presents additional layers of complexity in the decision-making process and implementation.

**Limitations:** The article draws on literature that is dominated by western culture and may partially or not at all reflect the issues associated with organisational resilience in family firms with such backgrounds and their culturally bound social-ecological systems.

**Originality:** The article seeks to fill a knowledge gap by exploring the key elements of organisational resilience in the context of familiness. The work calls for further research into the nature of familiness connections mediating the nature of family relational dynamics. It further provides a framework indicating how these elements can shape and subvert day-to-day management events, raising implications for theory and practice and calls for deeper empirical research to be undertaken.

**Keywords:** resilience, familiness, small and medium sized enterprises, sustainability, social-ecological systems, family business.

## Introduction

Family businesses continue to be among the most common forms of business organisation today and a driving force behind the global economy. In Europe alone, there are more than 14 million family businesses generating more than 60 million jobs and accounting for 50% of GDP (EFB, 2017) reinforcing the role they play in job creation but also in fuelling innovation and technological progress (Oakey, 1991; Kobe, 2012) whilst accounting for over 70% of the world's production (Ates & Bituci, 2011). They are by most measures an important element of any economy; however, family businesses remain a persistent concern to policy makers who identify challenges associated with their sustainability and economic resilience. The vast majority of family businesses are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) but this can also include large conglomerates that operate in multiple industries and countries (Ramadani & Hoy, 2015; Ramadani et al, 2015). The greatest challenge facing family business survival is building the capability of their socio-ecological system, family and business, so they can recognise, adapt and transform (Folke, 2010) embrace change (Moore and Manring, 2009) and promote long-term sustainability (Ates & Bititci, 2011).

Resilience is seen as a key organisational capability for sustainability in the current turbulent environment. However there remain gaps in knowledge, particularly in relation to underlying issues affecting resilience that often relate more to the softer, less tangible aspects of an organisation such as its culture and leadership (Ates & Bititci, 2011). Much of resilience literature emphasises the detection and activation of appropriate organisational response (Burnard and Bhamra, 2011) to significant external events (Sheffi, 2007) enabling it to adapt to such change. Burnard and Bhamra, (2011) focus on three key domains of resilience of communication, problem solving and adaptability, thereby providing a mechanism that enables resilience, recognition, adaptability and transformation, which can be used as a basis for discussion.

This article conceptualises internal family events on the role that sense-making and the shaping of action plays in development of the cultural and social capital critical to business success (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986) and the nature of familiness (Habbershon et al., 2003). This is particularly relevant for family businesses which can be seen to be comprised of three interlocking and interdependent systems, namely the family, the business and ownership (Taguiri & Davies, 1996). Understanding the

interdependence and dispositional effect of family businesses socio-ecological systems requires multiple levels of analysis and cannot be fully explored if based solely on ownership structure or management roles (Sharma & Norquist, 2008). Therefore, to understand resilient responses requires a focus on values and goals and their links and interaction with surrounding environments (Astrachan, et al. 2002; Astrachan & Shanker, 2003; Distelberg & Sorenson, 2009) and individual actors.

Exploring concepts of resilience and how it shapes organisational responses focuses on the key elements of resilience, recognition, adaptability and transformation in context to familiness. The article highlights that the key to cultivating resilience lies in accommodating the deep relational structure that underpins many family business enterprises which can be more readily surfaced through an understanding of contextual cultural capital. Evaluating social-ecological systems by applying a rational neo-liberalist perspective can be ontologically and normatively constraining by overlooking, distorting and obscuring the complexity of the underlying value systems. Disturbance may not be a single significant external event that triggers a response, and what constitutes an appropriate response can be fundamentally at odds between the family, the owner and the business itself (Fleming, 2000; Levinson, 1971). For example, planning is generally recognised to be a key element of a resilient response, but it cannot be a superficial process and must take account of the deeper family values that are the bedrock of the family as an entity (Distelberg & Blow, 2010). We begin with a consideration of the concept of resilience.

## **Resilience**

Originally, the concept of resilience emerged in ecological literature (Holling, 1973) and has evolved in the business context through the development of a heuristic model grounded in complex systems and seen as an adaptive cycle; growing, accumulating wealth, collapsing and rapidly reorganising (Salvia and Quaranta, 2015). Resilience is identified as the capacity of ecosystems with alternative attractors to persist in the original state through perturbations and disturbances (Folke, 2006; Scheffer, 2009). The effect of disturbance and perturbation can take a system over the threshold of stability of its original state, causing the system to change to a contrasting state emphasising the significance of 'change' through adaptation or even exaptation that moves the ecosystems to a new position (Folke et al, 2010). Here resilience is a broader concept than robustness with the latter referring to the ability to endure

disturbances without adaption or by eventually returning back to the original state (Holling, 1996).

From a general social–ecological systems perspective resilience can be defined as:

"the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to still retain essentially the same function, structure, identity, and feedbacks"

(Walker et al., 2004, p.4).

However, only having a single discipline dependent definition of resilience is problematic as it over simplifies the concept and does not acknowledge the different contexts in which it can be applied. This highlights the need for a more pluralistic approach that the nature of resilience is context dependent and can be reinterpreted and contested. For example, some authors project resilience as a system's capacity to absorb disturbance before it has to adapt to change (Cumming et al., 2005; Gunderson, 2000; Carpenter et al. 2001 Hearnshaw & Wilson, 2013) whilst others see resilience as the capacity to continuously engage in reconstruction (Lance, 2002; Hamel & Valikangas, 2003a, 2003b) and manage a range of variables (McDonald, 2006); others see the key quality of resilience as the action of a positive response that negates extended periods of regressive behaviour (Horne & Orr, 1998). Others promote resilience as conservatism (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013; Sudmeier-Rieux, 2014) which is in stark contrast to a perspective where adaptation is a fundamental characteristic (Stark, 2014). Thorén (2014) even suggests that the concept of resilience is curiously unstable and could mean one thing and its opposite at the same time.

These different interpretations of resilience have led to much confusion as to its deeper meaning with a lack of consensus across a wide variety of definitions and interpretations (De Bruijne, Boin & Van Eeten, 2010). What is apparent is that the nature of context, substance and degree of complexity has relevance and that clear-cut states of stability and attraction can be seen to be an over simplification. The world is dynamic and in part a complex environment creates disturbance and such events that are made up of a blend of intricate circumstances which may have many different causes and effects dependent on the nature of dispositions and responses (Scheffer et al. 2001, Carpenter, 2003). Resilience therefore is a multifaceted

phenomenon and dynamic process (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000) involving the ability to learn and positively adapt but as importantly for actors and systems to have the capability to cope and endure significant adversity (Fletcher & Sarkar, 2013). Resilience has layers and depths of resilience that can transcend eclectic waves of adversity (Glavovic, 2005) triggered by a range of phenomena including sociological, political, and economic functioning of social systems but also by cultural internal and external background (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede and Bond, 1984; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2005), it is a homeostatic device with the capability to maintain critical variables despite disruption and turbulence (Beer 1972, 1984).

Organisational resilience comes to prominence in organisations as their structures, nature and form changes to reflect dynamics and complexities exposing borderless risk within the global landscape (Smith & Fischbacher, 2009). Here resilience is the ability to carry out functions and return to a stable state after major disturbance or stress by considering the before and the during (Cumming et al. 2005; Gunderson 2000; Hearnshaw and Wilson, 2013) possessing a willingness and capacity to adapt to changing contexts (McAslan, 2010) and bounce back (Practical Action, 2010). Such disturbance can be characterised as unforeseen high-impact/low probability (HILP) events (Sheffi, 2005) ranging from value chain disruptions and fluctuating markets to war and natural disasters.

HILP events create environmental turbulence or 'unpredictable change' (Boyne & Meier, 2009) exposing the organisation to different degrees of risk (Waters, 2007) and consequence dependent on responses. Presenting different impacts ranging from minimal risk to organisational survival, such impacts could further have severe consequences at one level but remain undetected or unfelt at another.

Effectively organisational resilience *"is a function of an organisation's overall situation awareness, keystone vulnerability and adaptive capacity in a complex, dynamic and interdependent system"*, McManus, (2008, p23). This stresses the need for coherent resilience capabilities (Dalziell and McManus, 2004) to address multiple, and potentially integrated levels of disturbance at individual, organisational and institutional levels at the same time, is thus reinforced.

What is certain is that the notion of resilience commits the user to a certain set of values and can be seen to be normative in nature and is based on far-reaching ontological and epistemological assumptions about the nature of the underlying system and how it is constructed and operated. Social systems are multi-layered social components within which the entity operates and governs how the system is perceived and understood. The very concept of resilience does not define what action to take to provide a suitable outcome. For example, a civilian community exposed to war could present resilience as dispersing to live in another country or seeing the conflict through to the end; both are potential solutions to an identical situation. Thus, migration can be seen as either a successful adaptation or collapse. In the context of a family business, internal family or inter-family feuds or divorce between key family members or even dispute between the founder and their children can all have different interpretations of success. For example, a family member employee developing a drug dependency will have an impact on the business but also produce a much greater legacy on different family members. As such judgements depend on the values and beliefs that shape the perspective of the actor participants and potentially their broader stakeholder communities, this is an aspect that has relevance in our analysis.

This does raise the nature of organisational vulnerability and how exposed and susceptible a social-ecological system is to risk and harm (Adger, 2006) and how it can respond to a potential range of impacts and moderate the effects on operability to perturbation (Gallop'in, 2006). This area is highly complex and context dependent, linking to expectancy and the perception as to the degree of effect and level of response required to elevate perturbation and therefore values and beliefs. It can be seen to be dynamic in nature (Dalziell & McManus, 2004) as actors move through time and space and will relate to detecting, evaluating and acting on the threat in an appropriate and timely way. These are all dependent on the nature of the socioeconomic system, its culture, its social norms and the hegemonic interplay of its people. Resilience clearly impacts on a system's robustness to change and is an element of both response and vulnerability, which shapes an adaptive capacity to respond and recover thereby continuing to achieve its purpose.

What appears to have significance in addressing abstract concepts like resilience is the nature of both the system's ontology and heterogeneous values and their interplay



as to defining what is perceived as important or central about the systems to which the concept is applied (Thorén & Olsson, 2018). For example, concerns have been expressed as to the way the concepts of resilience are repositioned in neoliberal discourse and governance (Chandler, 2012; Olsson, et al, 2015) and evaluating resilience, seeing neoliberal subjects as autonomous, responsible and rational. Such perspectives project resilience as disengaged and neutral, and are criticised as giving unwarranted scientific legitimacy to a one sided and economically functionalist neoliberalist perspective. This gives little countenance to or obscures other values, interests and agendas and provides little room for intellectual and practical alternatives, factors that are significant in family businesses.

We can theorise resilience as adaptive-transformative processes (Buzzanell, 2010, 2018) that are triggered by disruption requiring change that initiates the crafting of new norms, the anchoring of important identities and exploiting salient communication networks. This supports adaptive thinking and alternative working activities that stimulate positive and productive foreground action and suppress a background of unproductive behaviours. But who defines unproductive behaviours is of significance and therefore it is important to understand the intersubjective nature of the organisation at micro, meso, and macro levels and how they influence individuals, communities, and organisation sense-making (Buzzanell, 2018; Cunliffe & Coupland, 2012; Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001). Therefore, to see deeply into the complexities of social systems, there is a need to appreciate and share multiple interpretations of reality, to cultivate a long-term shared vision that positivity transforms and transcends the inherent tensions to stimulate effective adaptation and transformation. This enables the social system to both address the initial dilemmas it currently faces but also, through a positive process of learning and adaptation (Edwards, 2009), to build systems that will help them survive and sustain in the future.

### **Burnard & Bhamra, (2011) “Resilient Response Framework”**

Burnard & Bhamra, (2011) “Resilient Response Framework” attempts to conceptualise organisational adaption and resilience during periods of major disruption. It is based on a flexible response perspective of organisations’ sustainability, by viewing organisations as efficacious entities with the ability to absorb complexity and preserve

function despite significant discontinuities (Barnett and Pratt, 2000). The strategy provides organisations with the capability to recover from disruptions caused by unexpected events (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001). Such a strategy provides new ontological, epistemological and normative perspectives, subtly embedded within the organisations' culture, enacted through the collective action of operational processes (Schein, 1992; Shotter, 1993). This works at the collective and individual levels, fine tuning and embedding a 'resilient response' by providing the resilience tools to facilitate subsequent 'positive adjustment' to turbulence. Their conceptual model includes critical phases of detection and activation linking communication, problem solving and adaptability. It explores the linkage between organisational resilience and other business strategy concepts. such as competitive advantage and risk management.

The work surfaces the critical component of event perception (Milliken, 1987) and how the characterisation of an event shapes the nature of perceived uncertainty. This, in turn, directly influences the potential response of an organisation (Papadakis et al., 1999) which can have profound consequence as it can be difficult to identify threats and opportunities with any degree of confidence. Organisation environmental scanning will be influenced through perceptions of encultured individual and collective epistemic norms, a form of myopia (Levitt, 1960) fashioning solution without fully grasping the problem.

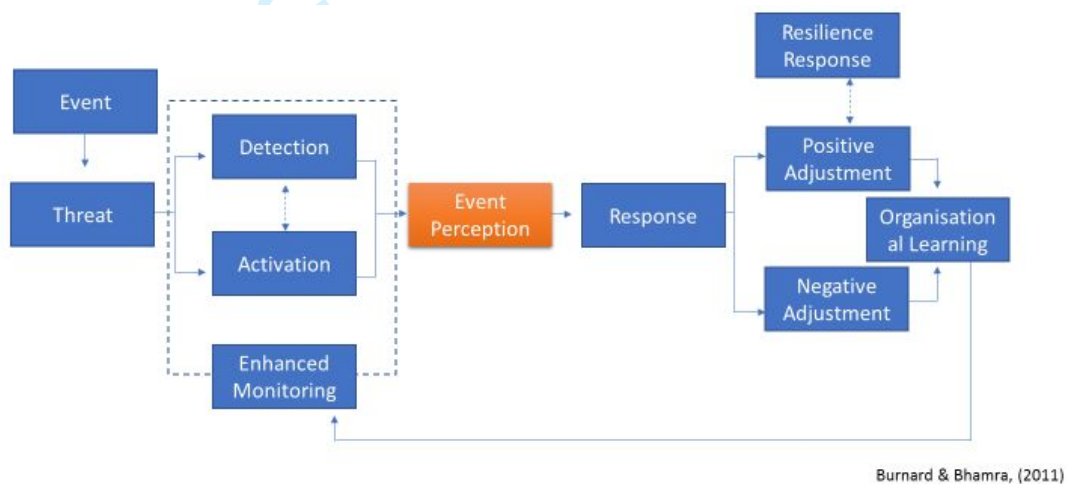
Such personal and collective bias clouds how the decisions are made and how actions are taken without fully realising the consequences, an aspect that can be challenging across a complex and dynamic socio-ecosystem.

This has particular relevance to family businesses as understanding vulnerabilities to both the business and the family is not always apparent and it may take time and skill to surface issues that may be dispositional rather than causal. However, the need for vigilant proactive behaviour to be in place is essential so that effective action can be taken to address potential discontinuities.

A critical element is the resilience response phase which represents the culmination of a proactive resilience approach to both mitigating the threat and its impact on the

organisation. This link reinforces the interconnective nature of cause-and-effect to stimulate adjustment within the organisation: detection and activation which are critical in building adaptive capacity (Carpenter et al., 2001). This in turn facilitates the expansion of response variability and enhances the organisation's ability and commitment to monitor and cope with unknown future circumstances (Staber and Sydow, 2002), so as to identify, engage and reconfigure to accommodate environmental change. It provides a descriptive account of events and actions with a construal domain focus on communication, problem solving and adaptability.

Figure 1: **Resilient Response Framework - Burnard & Bhamra, (2011)**



Guided cybernetics, the science of adaptation (Pickering, 2002, 2004), and complex systems theory cybernetics can be regarded as and is concerned with self-regulating systems of control and communication operating within complex and uncertain environments (Lewis, 1997). Through this, resilience may act as a mechanism of homeostasis, providing the organisational system with the capability to maintain critical variables (Beer, 1972) and stability and coherence of a system's internal environment despite the possibility of turbulent external environmental conditions (Beer, 1985).

Burnard and Bhamra, (2011) make clear that although the connection is identified in the framework, the linkage currently needs greater clarification and investigation. They also highlight the nature of adaptive capacity as being the ability to recover from disturbance, which may establish new system equilibriums, driven by a 'proactive

approach' an *"innate ability to proactively adjust to environmental uncertainty"* (Burnard and Bhamra, 2011, p 5589) that cultivate the components of resilience. A concept influence from the notion of 'mindfulness' (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001, 2006) providing an insightful adaptive ability to meet the needs of its new environment (Fiksel, 2006), the effective linking of resources to outcomes (Norris et al., 2008). Effectively an embodied cybernetic learning process provides a communication, problem solving and adaption mechanism to enact an effective resilient response in the moment and build capability for the future. Key is the positive adjustment of the system as it grows and learns; a proactive approach during the phases of detection and activation.

### **Strategic Thinking and Decision Making (STDM)**

A key element of resilience is the coherent and rigorous nature of an organisations strategic thinking and decision making (STDM) capability within its leadership team. STDM can be challenging to any team and particularly family businesses as there is a need to detach themselves from the tactical turmoil of daily operational life (Garratt, 1995) so that they are relatively free from existing boundaries (Drejer & Vinding, 2007) which may constrain their individual and collective thought process. Leaders need to enact holistic and synthetic thinking, developing a mindset that stimulates intuition and creativity (Mintzberg, 1998; Drejer & Vinding, 2007) that reflects the organization, its business environment and imagines scenarios and strategy that provide innovative solutions to the challenges they face. This involves thinking across time and understanding the interconnectivity of past, present and future and to be intelligently opportunistic and focus on gaining strategic alignment between existing resources and emerging opportunities (Liedtka, 1998) but with an ultimately long-term bias.

STDM is both the process of planning and thinking (Mintzberg, 1998; Drejer & Vinding, 2007) the realisation of deeper psychological factors affecting the decisions themselves (Hambrick and Mason, 1984). It is more complex than problem solving being holistic, abstract and long-term; further its components are learnt reflectively not practically (Goldman, 2007; Goldman & Casey, 2010), it involves a combination of *"rational and convergent approaches with creative and divergent thought"* Bonn, (2005 p. 337) but also hypothesis oriented asking *"what if?"* to stimulate thinking

(Liedtka, 1998). It also identifies critical success factors (Ghafarian & Kiani, 2010) that enable the generation of new innovations (Heracleous, 1998) building organisational coherence (Porter, 1987) and competitive advantage (Arayesh, 2017).

STDM can be enhanced by a well-designed strategic management system (Thompson and Strickland, 1999) that includes environmental scanning, strategy formulation, strategy implementation, and strategy monitoring, as well as controlling and evaluation (Wheelen and Hunger, 2010). However, there is a distinction between STDM and strategic planning (Mintzberg, 1993; Mintzberg et al., 1998) with the latter focusing on analysis, articulation and formalisation of existing strategies whereas STDM is the conceptualisation and visualisation of future opportunities and the integration of different ideas to determine new goals and objectives (Bonn, 2005). Therefore, for survival, organisational capability must focus on the ability adapt to disturbance and environmental changes (Schaper, et. al, 2014).

Sense-making has a critical role in the detection of threats particularly when operating in complexity with unpredictable, interconnected and conflicting macro, meso and micro change environments (Stacey, 1995, 1996) creating ambiguity and uncertainty (Milliken, 1987). Complexity can be seen to be the nature of the problem, not just the degree of difficulty (Stirzaker, et al., 2010; Stirzaker et al., 2011) and that such problems can be dispositional in nature rather than strictly causal. Resilience systems therefore need the capability of detection of disturbance at weak signals levels (Snowden & Boone, 2007; Snowden, 2005, 2011). This is a highly challenging feat, requiring an insightful and adaptable organisational learning system with institutional embedded 'mindfulness' (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2001) providing the ability to see the consequences of the unobvious and respond appropriately as events unfold. This demands great leadership awareness and vigilance to intelligence scanning and the instigations of systems that are more prepared to withstand and learn from systemic change and discontinuation, providing the capability to adapt to new risk levels (Starr et al., 2003) maintaining fluid stability and allowing systems to adapt more readily to new environments (Fiksel, 2006).

Such deuterolearning systems develop learning about improving the learning system itself (Argyris & Schon, 1996). This places individual and collective demands on the

leadership team, so that they respond in appropriate ways that address the problem, rather than make it worse or procrastinate and that they see an organisational learning process creating an activity system (Engeström and Sannino, 2010) that improves understanding and adapt their mental models (Senge, 1990, 1994, 2014).

Organisations need to develop a proactive cross organisational learning system, one that fashions an adaptive capacity (Carpenter et al., 2001). By aligning and enhancing an organisation's learning capability, it enables an organisation to link and augment human agency and resources to more effectively and sustainably achieve its desired outcomes (Norris et al., 2008). This is achieved by building an aligned knowledge system, one that has the adaptive learning capability to devise appropriate approaches and behaviours to effectively respond to disruptions. Imbedding such capability within an organisation learning system further enhances its resilience capacity by enhancing its management and workforce's readiness and experience to cope with future unknown disruptions (Staber and Sydow, 2002). Therefore, embedding adaptive capacity within the culture of the organisation's system enables it more positively and systematically to engage with disturbance so that the very nature of disturbance will be felt less in terms of an impact on the system as a whole.

This can be challenging for many organisations, however it is suggested that family businesses perform better than conventional forms (Amann & Jaussaud, 2012) as they have broader family-based governance systems that are reliant on the cohesive integrity of intricate of family connections and underpinning cultural norms, this 'familiness' (Habbershon and Williams, 1999). Therefore, familiness creates a greater complexity, exposing other forms of disturbance and approaches to resilience response.

### **Familiness**

Research has demonstrated that family firms can survive and thrive for very long periods of time (Bertrand & Schoar, 2006) suggesting that least some family businesses are especially resilient (Chrisman, et al., 2011) in contrast to more conventional businesses (Amann & Jaussaud, 2011). Further there is evidence that some firms evolve into family firms later in their life cycle (Chua, et al., 2004).



The characteristics and behaviours of family firms are different from those of nonfamily firms and there is also considerable variation among family firms across economic systems as they exploit different family resources critical to new venture creation (Steier, 2007, 2009) and can include transgenerational sustainability and succession (Chrisman et al., 2010; Chua et al., 1999). The embedded nature of a family relationship 'familiness' within the business can provide a unique and idiosyncratic bundle of resources enacted through the interactions of family members and the business (Habbershon et al., 2003) which can be a source of competitive advantage (Arregle et al., 2007; Lorenzo and Lipparini, 1999). However, there is also an argument that family control and alternative agendas can lead to managerial entrenchment, that can enable ineffective family CEOs to remain in office (Gómez-Mejía, et al., 2002; Morck, et al., 2005). Further, it is argued that controlling families are prone to use their managerial control to extract private benefits rather than to maximise firm value (Bertrand & Schoar, 2006). From this one can suggest 'familiness' provides a more complex web of relationships and agendas than could appear at first sight, ranging from nepotism, internal conflict and poor governance to collective fidelity, cohesion, duty and collegial acclaim.

'Familiness' is an important concept for discussion in the context of a family-based firm (Chua, Chrisman, & Sharma, 1999; Dawson & Mussolino, 2014; Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Irava & Moores, 2010; Zellweger, Eddleston, & Kellermanns, 2010). Originally the concept of familiness alluded to the resource-based perspective as a specific bundle of capabilities and resources unique to a business (i.e., the essence of the business) resulting from the multiple levels of involvement of a family (Habbershon, 2006; Habbershon & Williams, 1999). However, this has been expanded to provide greater depth to the concept by applying social capital and systems theory (Arregle, et al., 2007; Habbershon, 2006; Habbershon, et al., 2003; Pearson, et al, 2008; Weismeier-Sammer, et al., 2013), this has raised debate concerning what a family business's is and the degree of influence, overtly or covertly, the family or key family members have on both the business's strategic and day to day management. What is apparent is that this highlights the uniqueness and added dimension of such businesses but also the heterogeneity of family context (Chrisman, et. al., 2003; Chua, et al., 2012; Nordqvist, et. Al., 2014; Sharma & Norquist, 2008;

Westhead & Howorth, 2006) and its impact on organisational identity. To capture the nature of what a family business is, one must take account of family involvement and organizational identity; and family essence in terms of actors' behaviours and expectations must be considered to provide an holistic understanding of the concepts and practice (Zellweger et al., 2010).

Familiness presents a deep kinship and embedded trust which is an essential component of effective collaboration. Trust can take two forms, fragile and resilient (Leana & Van Buren, 1999). Fragile trust is based on formal rules of allocation and reward more transactional in nature and therefore does not provide a deep and embedded link to coherent collective action. Resilient trust builds deep expectation, a moral integrity, which binds a group together (Dess and Shaw, 2001) reinforcing group norms and establishing a cultural and social capital base. Family relationships are immersive in nature and grow, which can deepen and mature overtime, reinforcing both family and business norms. Gersick, et al., (1997) suggests a dynamic Developmental Model with three continuously changing and vying facets; the business, the family and the ownership, elements that can be causal and dispositional in nature.

Family systems present alternative, informal and recurring interactions that reinforce an interdependency (Arregle et al., 2007), one that is unlikely to be enjoyed by non-family members. They present alternative communication routes, narratives and values, for example what may be considered valuable is not just profitability but other factors determining the coherence and moral nature of a successful family. These interactions are the building blocks for the social and cultural fabric (Bourdieu, 1986) that strengthen the group's relationships and create a common point of view (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998) and importantly family cohesion can be weakened without it.

What can be exposed is the presence of alternative elements that need to be considered in the planning process (Carlock and Ward, 2001). One that provides alignment of family core values versus management philosophy, family versus strategic commitment, family versus business vision, family continuity plan versus the business strategic plan. Such a context raises the need to see the family business as a holistic system that accommodates a heterodox movement rather than an orthodox



one (Bornheim, 2000), that operates with formalised and non-formalised values and principles, that may be driven by different interrelation epistemological norms. Therefore, to understand the business, one must understand the interfamily relationship and the interface with the business (Habbershon, et al., 2003). Karakoulaki, (2002) suggests a family capital made up of relationship networks and reliance creating a backdrop of family expectations (Carlock and Ward, 2001) obligations, norms identity and moral infrastructure.

Such complexity can be revealed in a multi-family multi-business context with the potential to expose differing personal, family and organisational identities (Cannella, Jones, & Withers, 2015) and the dynamic this creates in relation to strategy, operations and the hegemonic relationships of influence and control, particularly when business interests are not always aligned among members of a single family. For example, how, when, and why assets should be passed on to kin, when to take profits or loss exposes divergent interests and complex intergenerational challenges. Varied ownership patterns may also introduce conflicts among controlling family owners and between family owners and nonfamily owners, who hold minority stakes in the firm (Morck & Yeung, 2003). Further, governance challenges can become even more complex when owners or managers come from more than one family that may, or may not, be related or have different forms of relatedness through marriage.

What is evident is that to do business, entrepreneurs develop proficiency in building relational structures to access external resources and capabilities (Burt, 1992). Firms are not born with familiness, being a firm is insufficient grounds to assume the presence of familiness (Irava & Moores, 2010), relational capability needs to be nurtured (Teece et al., 1997) is continually forming and reforming in response to interactions instilling the family involvement as the essence of familiness (Chrisman et al., 2005, 2012). This essence relates to the embeddedness of the activities between the family and the business systems and how this nurtures a trans-generational vision that may preserve these values (Irava & Moores, 2010), therefore shaping communities of practice, rooting culture, interactive process, belief and psychological intent of members as a common language (Wenger and Snyder, 2000). Communities of practice are "*contexts where individuals develop their practices, including values, norms and identities appropriate to that community*" (Handley et al., 2006, p. 642), this

is a firm and family specific and cannot be easily copied (Buchholtz, et al., 2003; Hatch & Dyer, 2004; Kor & Leblebici, 2005) and provides a unique embeddedness of family identity in the story of the business. Familiness can be paradoxical in nature having both positive and negative outcomes as a consequence of the distinctive and constrictive natures of familiness (Habbershon et al., 2003).

The major challenge for academics and practitioners alike is that although traditional corporate models recognise general stakeholder diversity, they do not adequately account for the various permutations of stakeholders and often diverse interests that manifest in family-influenced firms. Additionally, the literature focuses on developing structures for conventional solving problems at the family level and the business level in a parallel fashion (Carlock & Ward, 2001), which may provide inadequate solutions summoning the need for insightful and deeper investigation into how these socio-ecosystems and relationships interact across multifamily and multi-business levels both explicit and implicit in nature.

## **Discussion**

Based on the evidence presented in this review of the literature, several theoretical propositions relating to the nature of the family, the family business and organisational resilience can be raised. Taking an explorative approach, we highlight key elements within the literature base that can be examined within the scope of the study (Yin, 2009).

The work identified that resilience can be applied to ecological systems (Holling, 1973), socio-ecological systems, communities and individuals (Burnard and Bhamra, 2011) that holds a dynamic property linking to a system's capacity of response (Gallop'in, 2006). Such systems are determined by a set of dynamic capabilities and resources that form an organisations adaptive capacity (Norris et al., 2008) generating an ability to learn from disruptive events (Holling, 2001).

Organisational systems are capable of self-organisation (Thietart and Forgues, 1995) and can present a variety of responses to disruptions that can offer the potential for positive adjustment (Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2007). However, the degree of disruption

can dramatically increase complexity and environmental uncertainty (Comfort et al., 2001). Organisations have a range of stability landscapes that are composed of multiple stability domains (Walker et al., 2004) which present a diverse range of different stability states that can be operated.

System boundaries can be set within organisations that determine the degree of fluctuations within parameters (Levy, 1994) thereby forming processes and dynamics that create and retain resources (Vogus and Sutcliffe, 2007). This determines and enables activation of a range of appropriate resilient responses to a disruption so as to mitigate the disruption (Gunderson, 2000; Walker et al., 2002) and reconfigure to address a threat (Burnard and Bhamra, 2011). It cannot be assured that a system is in a desirable configuration to address a specific disruption which will have consequences, however key is that a resilient system is able to adapt and rebound. Through the enactment of an appropriate resilience response, organisations will be able to learn and develop appropriate capabilities that improve future and overarching state preparedness (Burnard and Bhamra, 2011).

The literature points to a need for a more sophisticated and strategic level of thinking with a focus towards developing sustainable adaptive systems that are capable of appropriate resilient actions in achieving a positive organisational adjustment. This has been made more acute as business environments have become more complex and dynamic and the nature of organisational success has become fragile and subjective (Hamel and Valikanagas, 2003); this includes facing the challenges of developing resilience capabilities that can adapt and cope with the consequences of organisational transformation. This further exposes the importance of developing individual psychological capital (Youssef and Luthans, 2007) to enhance personal resilience capability as well as, and distinctly different from, functional skills across the organisation.

Familiness relates to idiosyncratic collections of capabilities resulting from the systems interactions (Habbershon et al., 2003) distinctive to a firm as a result of family involvement (Habbershon & Williams, 1999) a relational capability embedded with feelings and emotions (Morgan & Gómez-Mejía, 2014). Familiness builds socioemotional wealth (Berrone, et al., 2012) and is heterogeneous in nature in

leading the firm (Chirico & Nordqvist, 2010; Chrisman, et al., 2012), setting priorities linking to the familiness agenda (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007) that may be noneconomic objectives in line with the preferences of the dominant family coalition (Berrone et al., 2012). This can include personal loss and grief, preserving the family essence and involvement (Chua, et al., 1999), generational control intentions (Chua et al., 1999; Chrisman et al., 2005) sustaining family control and identity within the business and perpetuation of the family dynasty (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007) all of which can engender deep and conflicting family emotional entanglements and legacy.

Familiness can be seen to be in the business but not of the business, having its own idiosyncratic uniqueness, presenting a sub or alternative socio-ecosystem dynamic that is not fully overt or controllable through conventional and overt managerialist systems, but one that can subvert even the simplest strategy.

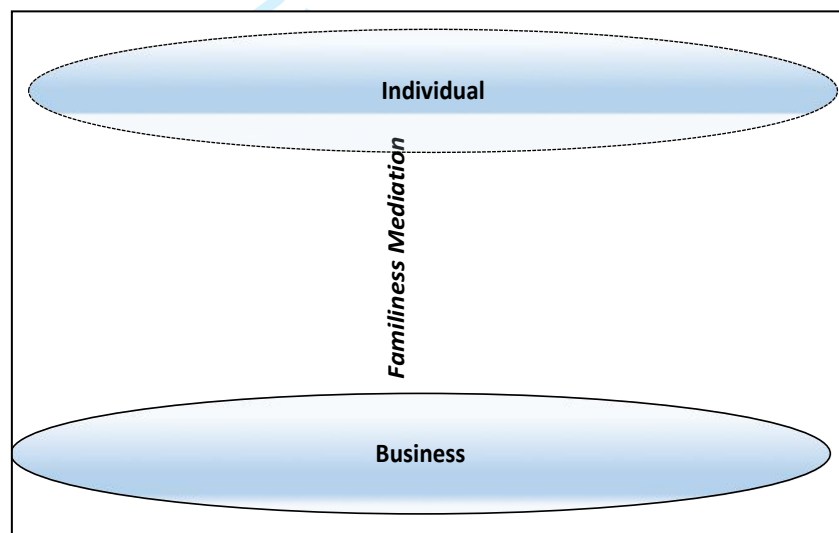
This raises the call for the conceptualisation of a framework that draws attention to both formal and informal channels operated by the family in a business context, presenting social-ecosystems culturally embedded, entwined and reinforced through day-to-day social interactions between actors, across multiple levels and contexts. This exposes the presence of potentially differing agendas (Habbershon et al., 2003) and perspectives at the individual, family and organisational levels that can distort and reconfigure foreground and background activities.

To gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of a family business we need to devise a framework that identifies both a family and business culture as cohabiting elements complimenting but also competing for resources set within a broader civic cultural context, a holistic 'proactive approach' a living organisational learning system; family and business. Familiness as a pervasive presence, experience and power created and reinforced through the social interactions of family members. This is generated through both formal and informal networks between family members, non-family members, their external stakeholders and broader environment; reinforced by and reinforcing family social capital, reputation and status (Zellweger et al., 2012). Such networks create a community of practice providing the social capital and emotional wealth within the organisation. This raises the call for a framework that identifies the formal foreground and explicit structures, process, systems and activities but that also surfaces the implicit background network systems, protocols and

activities that are embedded within family business day-to-day life. Recognising the combined effect of foreground and background contexts which are sustained through a complex network of interactions and events that can both enhance or detract resilience from capabilities is important in constructing resilient systems.

Figure 2 and 3 expands on the formal and informal channels operated by the family in a business context that can provide a deeper understanding of the influence of the family foci, which shapes the nature of familiness as an enduring and pervasive membrane mediating the family and individual family members' relationship with the business.

**Figure 2 Familiness Mediation between the Individual and the Business**

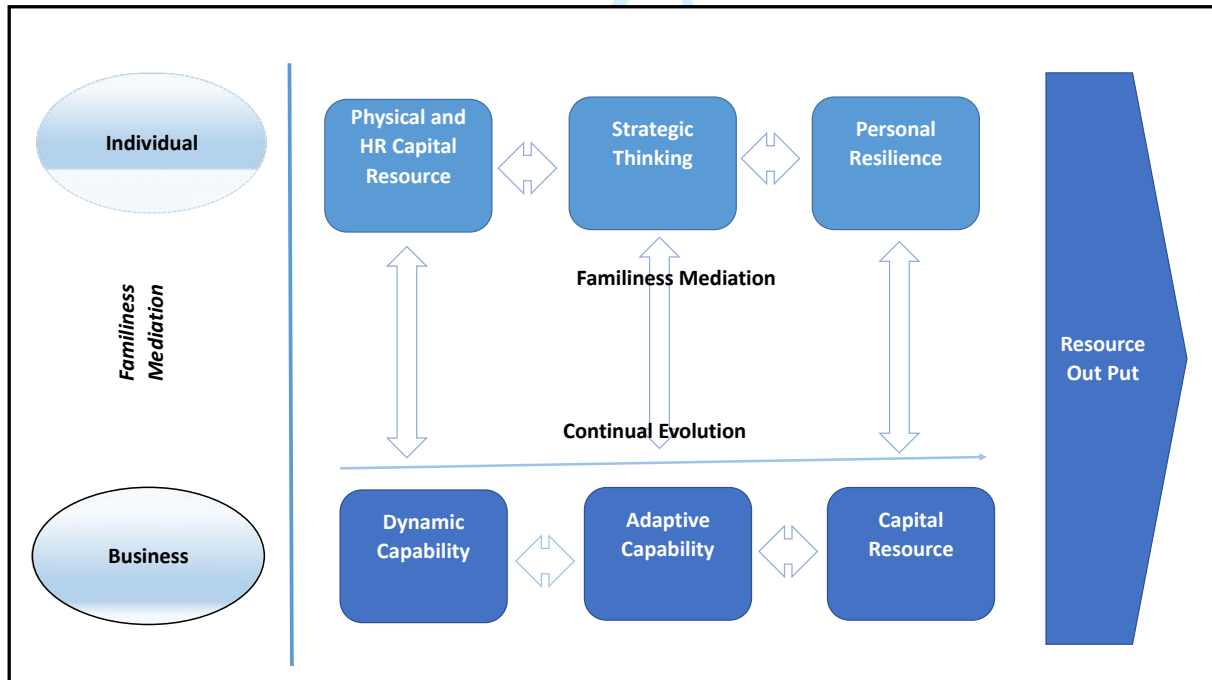


The nature of familiness and the embedded relationships will produce relatively unique experiences to each member but build social cohesion within the dominant family epistemological and normative values and perspective. In addition, it will provide them with subtle knowledge, influence and hegemonic privilege that is both fully and partially hidden from non-family members. Familiness Mediation produces social systems and interactions reinforcing a family dialogue and presence both inside and outside of the business environment that presents a more complex social-ecological system that may not be exposed to non-family members and providing alternative interpretation of events, risk and disturbance. This can include sole and substantial family disturbance for example loss of a wife or a child to cancer to a key member of

the family management team. Such events may be seen as background business but as a foreground to the family and specific members which will have a consequential impact on an individual's life prioritisation, motivation, leadership and how they see the business. This can also have a secondary impact of initiating intra-interfamily rivalry. Such family disturbance can have a range of effects from taking attention away from the day to day operation, loss of strategic desire and focus to grow the business, to the complete loss of interest in the business concerned. Such impact clearly can have the effect of placing the business as a secondary or subsidiary element to the essence of the family.

Further, the diverse nature of family presence operating across multiple levels within the business and the family can circumvent conventional management processes and provide alternative narratives, agendas and perspectives that can shape decision making as it cognitively influences different family members within the business.

**Figure 3 Familiness Mediation Components**



Through this mediated relationship, resilience capability can be developed further (Figure 3) shaping the individual's physical and HR capital, developing their skill to recognise, adapt and transform in context to disturbance, building family and

interfamily reliance, knowledge sharing and network leverage, and thereby enhancing the business 'Dynamic Capability'. The personal ability can help the individual navigate the business and its working environments as both formal and informal learning and mentoring. This has the potential of building greater 'context specific' proficiency as the individual family member learns the multiple 'crafts' in the employment of personal skills across multiple hemispheres of the social-ecological system effected. Effectively this embeds the established family norms through a socialisation and idiocultural process, sharing social norms through group interactions from which the construction of strong relationships produces a shared and evolving understanding of the family essence and power structure.

This includes the fashioning of 'Strategic Thinking' but influenced from a family centric or influenced perspective, an aspect that may not be realised by non-family members linking to objectives that may have non-economic objectives entwined within the strategy. In turn, deep family support and harmony will be enhancing the individual's 'Personal Resilience', building confidence, efficacy and fashioning a positive outlook. This in turn will influence the 'Adaptive Capability' of the organisation and its ability to resilience recognition, adaptability and transformation in context of both the business and the family. It is the combination of resilience of firstly, the family and secondly the business and how the former reacts to address the disturbance either directly or through the direction and employment of their agents 'non-family members' and the 'Capital Resources' they have in-hand to gain the appropriate 'Resource Output'.

## **Conclusion**

SME family businesses are complex and multidimensional in nature with interlocking and interdependent systems (Taguiri and Davies, 1996; Bronfenbrenner, 1979) which can be conflicting, causal and dispositional in nature, sensitive as to the way the family defines itself (Distelberg and Sorenson, 2009).

Conventional frameworks such as Burnard & Bhamra, (2011) "Resilient Response Framework" of the underlying system in part value laden that may project systemised rationality in building resilience within an organisation that can address the complexities of the social world and its descriptive simplicity may over simplify the very



nature of disturbance, learning, social adaption and transformation. It brings forward a broader pluralist approach that recognises that representations such as scientific theories, concepts, and models, are inherently partial (Kellert, Longino, & Waters, 2006; Thorén, and Olsson, 2018).

Whilst Burnard and & Bhamra (2011) highlight the importance of communication, problem solving and adaption mechanisms to enact an effective resilient response, such conventionalised frameworks can shift attention away from phenomena such as objectified, institutionalised and embodied state (Bourdieu, 1986) or the nature of social intersubjective interplays. Consequently, the value leadeness essence of the framework highlighting select features of our social world at the expense of others therefore needs greater focus towards the political and hegemonic nature of holders of different forms of capital and the power cultural and social capital exert needs greater exploration (Levy et al., 2015) as it places great normative and/or ontological assumptions about that system and organisational being and the very nature of complexity. Further, such a reductive approach can influence perceptions as to the nature of such dynamic events and can provide superficial blanket prescriptions or generic tools which can both over simplify and overgeneralise and can lead to conflicting outcomes (Miller, et al., 2013). Projecting strategic planning provides reactive solutions, a collection of triggers and drivers (McCann et al., 2001) employed to maintain an equilibrium. However, it does not expose the nature of family being dynamic and symbiotic entailing compromise, dialogue and balance seeking (Nonaka and Toyama, 2002) and this includes the relationship between the family top management and the firm (McConaughy et al., 1998).

Frameworks can be used to raise important insights and questions regarding resilience, yet the assumption that it is a natural property of a system provides it with an air of scientific and rational objectivity, when resilience is primarily a social system or a system with social components (Thorén, and Olsson, 2018) with embedded social values. Due to the social nature, the use of the concept and evaluation of success or not relies on the background normative and/or ontological homogeneity categorised assumptions which define suitable outcomes. However, such suitable outcomes are determined by perspective and therefore awareness of the underlying values are an essential part which needs to be epistemologically grasped as actors negotiate their



dilemmas and how these are culturally, socially and psychologically formed and have interplay at micro, meso and macro levels.

The very notion of resilience, appreciating a pluralist approach and acknowledging the limits of that approach, needs to be tempered to accommodate the system. For example, social-ecological systems are complex adaptive systems (Bird & Tobin, 2017) derived from conventional ecosystems but also social element creating social-ecological intersubjective complexity, therefore requiring greater depth of scrutiny as to the nature and their workings. Applying conventional modules, frameworks and tools can be over simplifying these challenges. Therefore, greater conceptual understanding of resilience in context to familiness is needed, exploring and highlighting the nature of the system and its linkages to the firm-specific cultural and social capital as well as the external focus of what is disturbance. Accepting a broader ontological pluralist vision of the complexity underlying systems has relevance but it may be less productive in providing solutions.

This article's contribution is that it identifies that, even though conventional resilience frameworks provide descriptions of organisational practices such conventional managerial perspectives have limitations. The work highlights the challenge of adopting appropriate ontological and epistemological approaches for both interpreting organisational activities and implementing resilience systems, a perspective that appears more challenging when considering complexities within family firms.

Further care should be taken not to heavily focus on the boundaries between which families and businesses are managed, as by doing so may prevent internal conflict but this perspective can create an inward focus and provide a distraction (Gersick, 1997) from the external environment and hinder the development appropriate adaptive resilient response.

The work highlights the need for an alternative conceptual perspective of the nature of familiness, its subtle backgrounds and foregrounds that establish the critical connections underpinning the intersubjective nature of family relationship dynamics. It highlights how such events shape and can subvert day-to-day management events which raises implications for resilience theory, practice and research. Further, it

suggests that instead of focusing on the development and application of generic frameworks, new research needs to consider deeper questions as to what the challenges are facing the diverse nature of family ownership and control and calls for greater empirical research on the impact familiness has on the firm's resilience capability.

Finally, the work observes that family businesses can demonstrate superior performance in comparison to their non-family peers (Anderson & Reeb, 2003; Bouzgarrou & Navatte, 2013; Adhikari & Sutton, 2016; Wang & Shailer, 2017) and as such gaining great understanding into the nature of familiness could provide greater insights in towards organisational resilience as a whole.

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