

2008

## Enriching or depleting: an investigation of communication and behavior within the family business

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ENRICHING OR DEPLETING: AN INVESTIGATION OF COMMUNICATION AND  
BEHAVIOR WITHIN THE FAMILY BUSINESS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
Louisiana State University and  
Agricultural and Mechanical College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Communication Studies

by  
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May 2008

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I started on this journey four years ago, I hoped to look back with satisfaction and happiness. Thanks to the support, love, and encouragement of many great people in my life, I am able to do so.

I would first like to thank my wonderful parents, William and Harriett, who have always been there for me whenever I needed. I could not have done it without you. I would also like to thank my sister, Jocyntia aka “WonderTwin”, for her great ideas and inspiration for my research and this dissertation. I would like to acknowledge my brothers, Verdell and Jose’, for their love and support. Thank you for taking care of your “little sister”. Thank you to grandmother, Grace aka “Grum”, for your love and encouragement throughout this process.

Thank you to a wonderful committee: Dr. Renee Edwards, Dr. James Honeycutt, Dr. Ed Holton, III, and Dr. Robert Justis. You have provided me with great insight, advice and inspiration. I would especially like to acknowledge my chair, Dr. Loretta Pecchioni. I could not have made it through this process without your direction and advice. Thank you for letting me change my mind a million times and helping me pursue my passion. You are not only a great advisor, but also a great friend.

Lastly, thank you to all of the “Com Studs”, who have made this journey extra special. Thank you to my fellow “Ph.Divas”, Karen, Jes, and Jen. I have had a fabulous time with you and I will forever cherish the memories of our times together.

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the prevalence of family firms, researchers often ignore the significant impact of the family on the business. Thus, if organizational scholars do not account for the family as a variable in their research, they will not account for a significant number of the organizations they purport to understand. The fact that family businesses comprise such a large percentage of organizations proves that the family business context deserves more attention from both organizational and organizational communication scholars. With this in mind, the original intent of this dissertation was to explore the impact of family relationships on communication practices and behaviors within the family business. Initially, the goal of this project was to investigate the ways in which the combination of the family and business systems impacted the communication within the family and within the business. Although this general objective is accomplished, the data collection and analysis process reveals a new angle that explains the findings more specifically. In particular, the data suggests that the broad categories and themes derived from a review of family business literature reflect aspects of family business that are mostly negative. The family business literature does not seem to offer much explanation for the positive experiences within the family business. Since the data mostly reflects positive experience, the prevailing family business research does not adequately explain or fit the data. As a result, the data prompted a new search for literature and research that includes the positive experiences of the family business as well as the negative. This dissertation uses theories of Enrichment and Depletion to compare the prevalence of positive experiences versus negative experiences. Data collection involved case studies of four different family businesses. Participants from these businesses were interviewed and transcripts of the interviews were then analyzed to compare and contrast the enriching

(positive) and depleting (negative) experiences. The findings revealed that although family business members face issues of depletion, the participants overwhelmingly reported enriching experiences within their business. These findings suggest that the enrichment occurs within the family business and should be included within family business and family business communication literature.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

## INTRODUCTION

Scholars have argued that the employing organization and the family are two important domains of a person's life (Fu & Shaffer, 2001; Skitmore & Ahmand, 2003). Family researchers have examined key developmental and relational needs that are satisfied by the family domain while organizational researchers point to needs such as a sense of accomplishment and the ability to provide for oneself and family that employment fulfills. Because of the significance of these two domains, researchers often examine the ways in which work life and family life impact each other. Although the interaction of work and family is a popular topic, research has primarily focused on contexts where the family and business domains are considered separate from one another (Whiteside & Brown, 1991; Davis & Stern, 1980). However, for thousands of individuals, work life and family life are intricately intertwined - these individuals are members of family businesses. The family business is a complex combination of two systems that overlap to form the family business system. In terms of research, the impact of the family business on work and the family is often overlooked. This fact is unfortunate because of the prevalence of family firms.

Recent statistics indicate that family firms constitute over 90 percent of businesses in the United States, account for 49 percent of the country's gross domestic product, and employ 59% of the workforce (Shanker & Astrachan, 1996). Despite this fact, family has been a neglected variable in organizational research. A content analysis by Shulze, Lubaktin, Dino, and Buchholtz (2001), revealed that several journals such as the Academy of Management Review and the Academy of Management Journal excluded the family variable in theoretical frameworks and in research designs. Of the

128 articles from these journals, none use the family as an important variable and only one uses the family as a variable to analyze firm behavior. In addition, studies that specifically examine work-family interactions have not focused on family businesses.

From the few studies that have examined family firms, the impact of the family has a significant impact on organizational behavior. Thus if organizational scholars do not account for the family as a variable in their research, they will not account for a large number of the organizations they purport to understand (Dyer, 2003).

Family business researchers argue that organizational scholars and researchers may ignore the family as an important variable of study because of the biases against family businesses. Family relations are seen by advocates of the rational-bureaucratic model of organization as antithetical to good business practices (Perrow, 1972). Some scholars believe that efficiency and productivity are foregone in favor of familial ties. Consequently, family businesses are seen as a dying breed of organization, not worthy of investigation. Even when researchers include both contexts of the organization and the family, it is usually from a standpoint that places the two in a dichotomous relationship with each other. For example, published articles (Hill, 2005; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000) describe how organizations fail to address the family needs of the employees, or the guilt that accompanies an employee's inability to negotiate and separate "work time" from "family time". The combination of the work context and family context is seen as a detrimental occurrence that should be avoided at all costs.

The fact that family businesses comprise such a large percentage of organizations proves that the family business context deserves more attention from both organizational and organizational communication scholars. With this in mind, the original intent of this

dissertation was to further explore the impact of family relationships on communication practices and behaviors within the family business.

### OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PROCESS

The family business contains unique and complex interactions between the family system and the business system. To capture a holistic view of family business behavior and communication, a qualitative approach is used. Qualitative data are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts (Miles & Huberman, 1994). More importantly, qualitative approaches allow researchers to get beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise conceptual frameworks (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study in particular reflects this aspect of qualitative research.

Initially, the general goal of this project was to investigate the ways in which the combination of the family and business systems impacted the communication within the family and within the business. Although this general objective is accomplished, the data collection and data analysis process reveals a new angle that reflects and explains the findings more specifically. In particular, the data suggests that the broad categories and themes derived from a literature review of family business literature reflect aspects of family business that are mostly negative. The family business literature does not seem to offer much explanation and attention to the positive experiences within the family business. Since the data mostly reflects positive experiences of the participants, the prevailing family business research does not adequately explain or fit the data. As a result, the data prompted a new search for literature and research that includes the positive experiences of the family business as well as the negative.

This new search, prompted by the data, led to a closer review of work-family literature. Work-family research examines the connections between work and family life.

Although work-family research is usually not specifically used as a framework to study family businesses, linkages originating from work-family studies are often used. For instance, topics such as role conflict, spillover, and boundary management are often cited within family business research. A closer investigation of these references to the connections between work and family life within the family business research (see Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) led to more specific research that argues for the inclusion of positive experiences in work-family research.

Some researchers have pointed out that work-family studies have primarily focused on the negative impact of work and family life (Hanson, Hammer & Colton, 2006). Critics argue that focusing entirely on work-family conflict has left a gap in the understanding of work-family interactions (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997; Rothbard, 2001). Again, the initial analysis of the data collected within this study suggested this same idea. It is not clear whether the negative focus of family business research is due to the negative focus of work and family from work-family studies, nevertheless the same argument for the inclusion of positive experiences within the family business, reflect the same argument within work-family studies. Unlike family business research, however, work-family researchers have called for, suggested, and even tested new models to examine the positive experiences within work and family life research. In particular, researchers interested in representing the true nature of work-family life often categorize experiences as enriching (positive) or depleting (negative). These researchers argue for the inclusion of studies that investigate the enriching experiences in addition to the depleting experiences. The enrichment model in particular provides a framework to appropriately categorize the positive responses within the family business. Negative responses can then be categorized as depleting. As a result, both the negative and the

positive experiences of the family members can be accounted for and compared. This new framework created a more specific objective: To determine whether the experiences of the family business participants mostly resembled the enrichment model or the depletion model. The next section examines the connection between work-family research and the family business in more detail.

## WORK-FAMILY RESEARCH AND THE FAMILY BUSINESS

The prevalence of family firms has proven that these two contexts can peacefully and quite successfully co-exist. In fact, the family business may provide an opportunity to extend positive family relationships to the family business and this extension has the potential to meet the needs of identity, security and self-actualization (Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2005). As a result, the field of family business research and work-family research has needs that can be fulfilled with this study. Work-family research needs to first include research that investigates family firms, while family business research needs to include work-family research. Second, work-family and family business research needs to focus on positive interactions that may offset the stress and strain of work-family interactions within the family business. With this in mind, applying work-family research to the family business setting will hopefully accomplish the following objectives for this study:

(1) To represent the true dynamism of the work and family by extending work-family theories to family business research.

(2) To provide balance to family business research by examining the positive aspects of family business ownership through the use of work-family theories and concepts.

(3) To use communication behavior to illustrate the work-family and family business relationships.

First, chapter 2 will summarize the important literature relevant to this study. Both family business and work life research often frame the domains of work life and family life from the systems perspective, therefore, a summary of General Systems Theory is provided. In addition, the literature review will also summarize family business research, family research and work-family research. Chapter 3 presents the research questions and case studies of the four family businesses investigated. Chapter 4 provides a discussion of the findings and Chapter 5 suggests directions for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

## GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY

Family business research and work-family research often uses the systems perspective to describe the actions and interaction of work and family. The systems perspective was originally developed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy (1981). Systems theory advocates for the study of a system as an entity rather than a conglomeration of its individual parts. For example, when studying a family, a systems theory approach argues that the actions of one person will ultimately affect the entire family. Likewise, the systematic study of the organization treats the organization as a system of mutually dependent variables in which the actions of one department, person, division, etc. will ultimately impact the organization.

The family business is ultimately the combination of two systems: the family and the business to create a family business system. The combination of two systems then creates a meta-system. From the General Systems perspective, actions that occur within the family not only affect the family but also affect the family business. Likewise, actions that occur within the business ultimately impact the family as well. Researchers (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) however, have also argued that work life and family life, even for non-family businesses, are part of a meta-system. For example, a bad day at work can affect a person's interactions with family members at home.

The family and family business systems theories presented in this study are mid-range theories that focus on specific contexts which apply concepts from the larger theory of General Systems. These applications help with the investigation of the dynamic interplay among elements of the family, the business, and the family business. The family

business system is explained in more detail; however the next section will address the different definitions of a family business.

## DEFINING THE FAMILY BUSINESS

One reason that the family business has not been more widely accepted as a topic of serious research is that no single accepted definition of what constitutes a family firm exists (Klein, Astrachan, & Smyrnios, 2005). These differences seem to be based primarily on the scope that the definition intends to cover. Some researchers choose to define family businesses according to very specific guidelines related to ownership and governance (i.e., majority of stock owned by family members), while other researchers have defined the family business as any business that is influenced by family members. Because of this wide difference it is unlikely that a definition will be agreed upon in the near future. Table 1 contains a sample of the different family business definitions (Chua, Chrisman, & Sharma, 1999).

Researchers of family business claim that the advancement of the field depends on developing an accepted definition of what constitutes a family firm. Chrisman, Chua and Sharma (2005) further argue that family business researchers should first define the family business, the object of research, before proceeding with their research. Most definitions focus on content, while many early definitions concerned ownership, management involvement of an owning family or generational transfer (Klein, Astrachan, & Smyrnios, 2005). As the following table shows, researchers have proposed a range of definitions to determine a business's classification as a family firm. These definitions are useful to consider when investigating family businesses. An operational definition, however, was selected from this table for use in the research conducted in this study. The selected definition contains characteristics from most of the definitions listed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Family Business Definitions (Chua, Chrisman & Sharma, 1999)**

**Ownership-Management**

Alcorn (1982)	"A profit-making concern that is either a proprietorship, a partnership, or a corporation. ... If part of the stock is publicly owned, the family must also operate the business" (p. 23).
Barry (1975)	"An enterprise, which, in practice, is controlled by the members of a single family" (p. 42).
Barnes & Hershon (1976)	"Controlling ownership [is] rested in the hands of an individual or of the members of a single family" (p. 106).
Dyer (1986)	"A family firm is an organization in which decisions regarding its ownership or management are influenced by a relationship to a family (or families)" (p. xiv).
Lansberg, Perrow, & Rogolsky (1988)	"A business in which the members of a family have legal control over ownership"
Stern (1986)	Interdependent Subsystems (family and the business) [A business] owned and run by members of one or two families" (p. xxi).
Beckhard & Dyer (1983b)	"The subsystems in the family firm system ... include (1) the business as an entity, (2) the family as an entity, (3) the founder as an entity, and (4) such linking organizations as the board of directors" (p. 6).
Davis (1983)	"It is the interaction between two sets of organizations; family and business, that establishes the basic character of the family business and defines its uniqueness" (p. 47).

(Table 1 continued)

**Generational Transfer**

Churchill & Hatten  
(1987)

"What is usually meant by 'family business' ... is either the occurrence or the anticipation that a younger family member has or will assume control of the business from an elder" (p. 52).

Ward (1987)

"[A business] that will be passed on for the family's next generation to manage and control" (p. 252).

**Multiple Conditions**

Donnelley (1964)

"A company is considered a family business when it has been closely identified with at least two generations of a family and when this link has had a mutual influence on company policy and on the interests and objectives of the family" (p. 94).

Rosenblatt, de Mik,  
Anderson, &  
Johnson (1985)

"Any business in which the majority ownership or control lies within a single family and in which two or more family members are or at some time were directly involved in the business" (pp. 4-5).

More recent definitions concentrate on the culture of the family business. With the number of different family business definitions, researchers believe that until an agreed upon definition of what constitutes a family business is established, the credibility of family business research will be in question (Lansberg, Perrow & Rogolsky, 1988). Researchers, however, at least agree on the *premise* that the family influences the business and the business environment influences the family (Chua et al., 2005). That family firms are unique as a result of the involvement of the family through ownership, governance, management, and vision is a basic premise of family business researchers;

that these firms behave, and consequently, perform differently is the reason for research; explaining how and why they behave and perform differently is the objective (Chrisman et al., 2005).

Most family business researchers at least agree that the family involvement in the business is what makes the family business different (Miller & Rice, 1967). Chua et al. (1999) address several key issues that are necessary when addressing the issue of a family business definition

- Researchers believe that the family component shapes the business in a way that the family members of executives in non-family firms do not and cannot (Lansberg, 1983).
- It is difficult to differentiate between family and non-family firms when involvement extends beyond the nuclear family.
- Both theoretical and operational definitions are needed in family business research. The theoretical definition sets the paradigm for the field while the operational definition identifies the observable and measurable characteristics that differentiate the entity, object or behavior.
- Researchers should use inclusive rather than exclusive terms-- broad definitions of family businesses can still identify common bonds among all types of family businesses, while acknowledging the factors that differentiate one type from another.

In addition, the “intent” of the individuals who are part of the firm can help in identifying the family business. The aim of the business to shape and pursue a better future for the controlling, managing or owning family most likely influences the interactions and

behaviors of the family firm versus the non-family firm even though family business researchers cannot agree on a single definition.

Despite the complexity involved with defining the family business, the family should be included as a variable in organizational research, because the family dimension can influence behavior at the individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis (Dyer, 2003). Researching the communication and behaviors of family firms can help to establish a more unified acceptance of one definition.

However, even if a single definition is not achieved, family business researchers can still provide valuable information about family firms. Dyer (2003) suggests that definitional problems of family business are not impossible to overcome as long as researchers:

1. Clearly define family and family firm in a way that includes the subjective variability in meaning that individuals attach to the terms.
2. Be aware and cite definitions used by other researchers when replicating previous research.
3. Gather enough information from respondents to potentially use multiple definitions and varying terms of familiness.
4. Be sensitive to contextual factors that may create unique opportunities to ascertain the influence of family on the organizational setting.

The use of multiple definitions and characterizations of family businesses are useful in demonstrating multiple perspectives and viewpoints that represent the richness and complexity of human behavior in the family, the business, and the family business. The last definition proposed by Rosenblatt, de Mik, Anderson, & Johnson (1985) seems to capture a broad enough definition to allow for multiple perspectives and viewpoints to

define family businesses. For the purpose of this study, their definition is used. Again, these researchers define a family business as “any business in which the majority ownership or control lies within a single family and in which two or more family members are or at some time directly involved in the business” (pp. 4-5). This definition is particularly useful, because it accounts for family involvement, and not merely family employment.

The next section will examine several family concepts and theories that have been useful for understanding the communication of family interactions. As stated previously, General Systems theory is often used within family and organizational research to examine human interactions and family business researchers have also applied systems theory to the family business.

#### FAMILY BUSINESS SYSTEMS

Theory and practice indicate that in family-influenced firms there are complex arrays of systemic factors that impact strategy processes and firm performance outcomes. Due to the systemic interaction of the family unit, business entity, and individual family members, family-influenced firms are unusually complex, dynamic, and rich in tangible resources and capabilities (Habbershon, Williams, & MacMillan, 2003). Simply put, a family business encompasses both the family system and the business system and becomes its own system from the interaction and influence of the two. Recent studies have found that the success of the business depended on family processes and how the family responded to disruptions (Chrisman et al., 2005). Contrary to the assumptions of business theories, the family has a significant effect on a business’s performance (Olson et al., 2003). Some researchers consider the family as an emotional arena that impedes the function of the rational business system. (Olson et al., 2003). Yet statistics show that

both the family and the business deserve recognition and scientific study (Stafford et al., 1999).

The influence of family on business and business on family can be conceptualized and the significant reciprocal influence has been documented (Olson et al., 2003). The concrete resources and interpersonal transactions from either the business or the family system can potentially be a deterrent or a positive contribution to the other system's sustainability at various points in time. For example, individuals within family firms use the interface between the two systems to exchange resources between the two systems. Furthermore, when changes occur within the family business, the systems may be forced to adapt; adaptations may include the current allocation of resources in each system and the agreements related to the intermingling of resources across systems (Stafford et al., 1999). The Sustainability of Family Business model (SFB) illustrates how the two systems function and demonstrates the permeable boundaries of the family and business system (See Figure 1).

The model recognizes each system as a viable social entity by acknowledging both the concrete resources of each system and the interpersonal transactions that occur within each system (Olson et al., 2003). This model demonstrates the interaction between the family and work systems, however it is important to note that scholars have different viewpoints in regard to the work and family domains as separate or unified. These viewpoints are important when considering the family business context. The next section will address different theories of work and family life as well as the implications for family business research. Since family, business, and family business theories presented in this research is derived from General Systems Theory, the next section will address the systems perspective from these contexts.

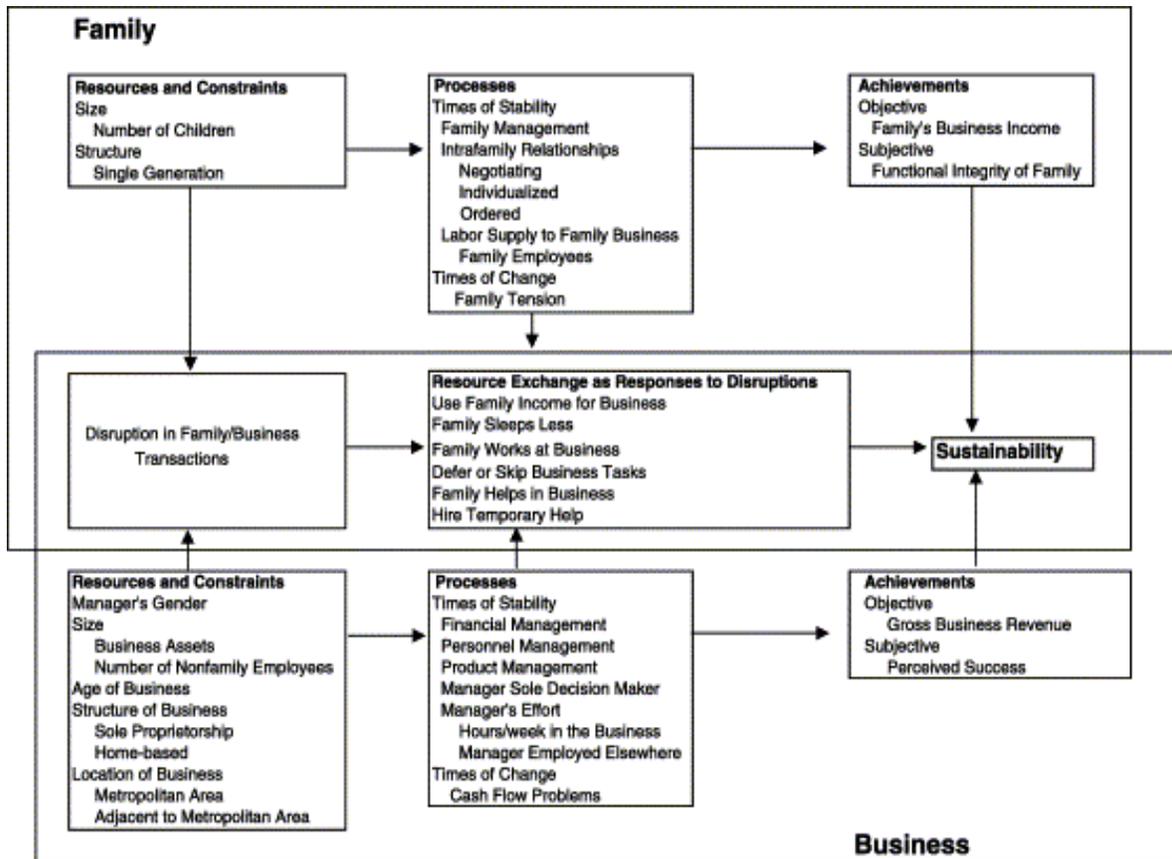


Figure 1: Sustainability of Family Business Model (Habbershon et al., 2003)

## CONTEXTUALIZATIONS OF GENERAL SYSTEMS THEORY

As stated previously, General Systems Theory (von Bertalanffy, 1981) provides the foundation for examining the family system, the organizational system, and the family business system. In addition, researchers of work-family studies have developed GST to reflect specific contexts. These theories are considered mid-range theories. Mid-range theories are more focused than grand theories, such as GST, but have fewer concepts and variables within their structure.

Various researchers have offered [mid-range] theories to explain the relationships between the work and family domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Voydanoff, 2002; Madsen & Hammond, 2005). These models are based on one of two major dimensions within work-family research: work and family as separate; or work and family as unified. The approach to the family and work environment as separate or unified has particular implications for the family business. The family business contains an intertwined and complex combination of the family and work domains. As a result, family business members may feel that these two systems are one and the same. If this is the case, work-family theories that treat family and work as an integrated system are more applicable to the family-business system. As stated previously, family business research and work-family research often focus on the negative impact (role strain, role conflict, etc.) of work and family life.

Studies that focus on the negative effects of work and family interaction are often framed from the perspective that the family and work domains are separate and competing (Habbershon et al., 2003). However a unified systems approach suggests that individuals can balance the demands of work and family life (Habbershon et al., 2003). In

other words, work and family life are components of a zero sum game in which participation in one domain means less participation in another domain.

An individual's perception that work and family are the same may affect whether family business members report enriching or depleting experiences. The major work models and their approaches that are frequently used in work-family studies of enrichment or depletion are: compensation, segmentation, conflict and integrative theory.

Compensation argues that there is an inverse relationship between work and family such that work and non-work experiences tend to be antithetical (Staines, 1980). Individuals are assumed to make differential investments in their roles so that what is provided by one compensates for what is missing in another role. For instance, the connectedness that an individual feels with his or her family may compensate for the coldness that an individual feels at work. However, since the family business is a combination of the family and work domains, family business members may not experience a distinction between the two. For instance, family members may have non-work experiences in which they discuss family matters at the business. Conversely, members may discuss their family business issues at home.

Segmentation assumes that the spheres of home and work are so distinct that an individual can be successful in one without any influence on the other. The two spheres are believed to exist side by side and are completely detached from each other. The view is that the family is the realm of affectivity, intimacy, and significant relations, whereas the work world is impersonal, competitive, and instrumental rather than expressive (Piotrkowski, 1979). Segmentation theory becomes highly questionable when applied to the family business, because the family and the business are combined with each other. However, even employees that are not part of family businesses are often part of

workplaces in which personal relationships are formed and employees feel free to express their individuality. Again, this theory frames the work life domain as two competing systems so that engagement in multiple roles creates strain and stress for the individual.

The conflict perspective argues that satisfaction or success in one sphere means sacrifice in the other; the two domains are incompatible since they have distinct norms and requirements (Zedeck, 1992). However, membership in a family business may cause individuals to view themselves as part of a unified system which entails the family and business domains. For instance, children of business owners will often spend lots of time at work in the business with their parents and siblings from very young ages. For these individuals, the business and the family may seem like one and the same. As a result, success in the business may mean success for the family and vice versa. Again, even employees who are not members of family businesses may not view their membership in their work roles and family roles as incompatible.

The integrative perspective contends that work and family are so closely fused that it is practically impossible to consider them separately (Morf, 1989). For instance, a person's success at work creates an emotional affect that will ultimately affect the family. Or, since the family is financially dependent on income from work, what happens at work will ultimately affect the family. Therefore, the two systems impact each other to such an extent that they cannot be separated from each other. The effects of the two systems on each other can be negative or positive. For example, an argument with a spouse or loved one may impact a person's performance at work as well. Researchers of family business often point to the inability to separate work and family as a hindrance to family business performance (Smyrnios et al., 2005; Ensley & Pearson, 2005). However, family business members can also experience benefits. The similarities between work and home may

reduce strain because individuals may view their roles as similar rather than competing (Voydanoff, 2002). For instance, a father may feel that parenting is similar to managing employees; therefore these roles are more alike than they are different. The integrative model generally assumes a positive correlation between work life variables such as work and life satisfaction. Furthermore, the integrative model is considered opposite of the segmentation model which postulates that there is zero correlation between work and life variables (Morf, 1989).

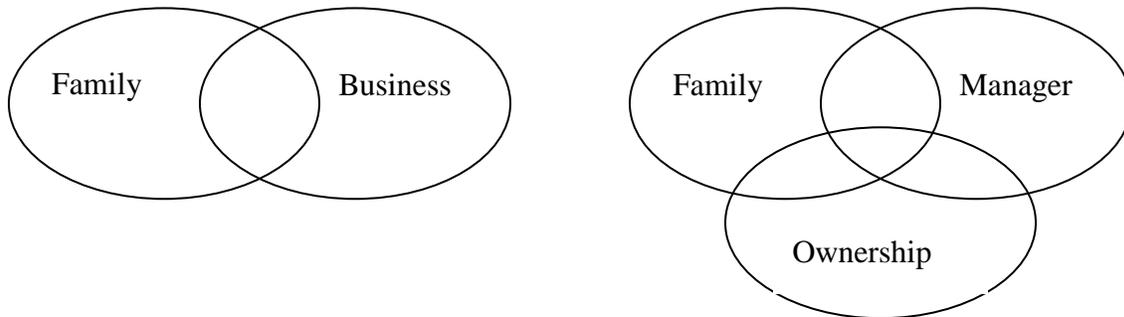
Mid-range theories that view the work and family as distinct are based on an emotional and attitudinal separation of work and family (Morf, 1989). This perception of the work and family as separate is accentuated by the fact that work and family lives are physically separated. However, since the family business is a context where work and family are physically combined, the integrative theory is probably the best mid-range theory to study the family business. The next section will examine family business research that also points to an integrative (Unified Systems) framework.

### UNIFIED SYSTEMS APPROACH

The combination of the family system and the business system create a meta-system of the family business. Researchers have argued that family businesses are often treated at two distinct and separate systems and should be treated as one unified system.

Family business models often depict the family system and the business system as two or three separate overlapping circles. The prevailing view in the overlapping circles models is that the family and business are two complex social systems that, when combined, differentiate family businesses from other organizations by the degree to which the systems boundaries overlap (Stafford et al., 1999). This view is known as a “dual systems approach” and contends that the boundaries between two different social

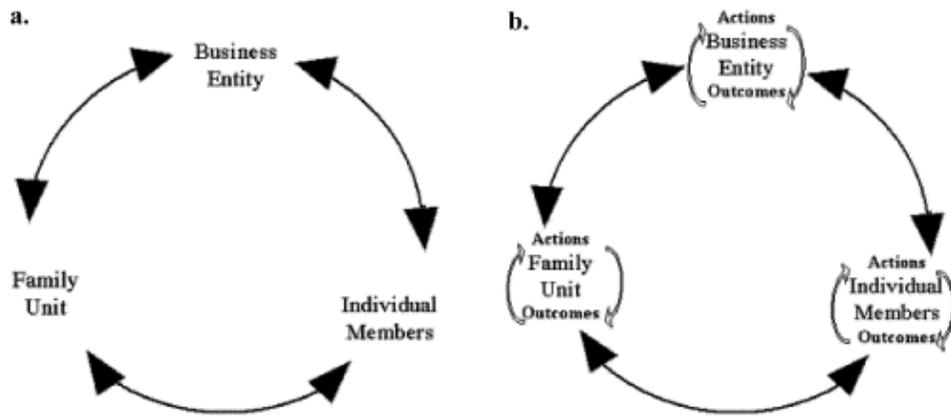
systems need to be managed to offset the inherent contradictions (Davis & Stern, 1980; Lansberg, 1983).



**Figure 2: Overlapping Circles Model**

From this perspective, the family system and the business system are seen as negative tradeoffs instead of a process that can reveal systemic synergy that can lead to strategic competitiveness for the firm (Habbershon et al., 2003). The point of the unified systems approach or model is to show the circular feedback processes with continuous influence to show how events in one system are both a cause and effect in other subsystem components (Habbershon et al., 2003). This study framed the family business from a unified systems perspective of communication within the family business system to capture the complexity of the processes that characterize the family business.

Since the family business is considered a system, the characteristics of the family underlie the functions of a family business. Therefore, studying the characteristics of the family is necessary to understand family business dynamics. The Circumplex Model of Family Functioning (Olson, 1993) provides a framework to study family characteristics that may impact behavior within the family business.



**Fig. 3 Unified Systems Approach (Habbershon et al., 2003)**

## CIRCUMPLEX MODEL OF FAMILY FUNCTIONING

Habbershon, Williams and MacMillan (2003) use the term “familiness” to refer to the interactions between individual family members, the family unit, and the business that lead to systematic synergies. The familiness of the firm is the sum of resources and capabilities within the family firm. In addition, the systemic influences created by the integration of the family unit, business entity, and individual family members create an idiosyncratic pool of resources and capabilities referred to as the “family factor” (Habbershon et al., 2003). The “idiosyncrasies” of the family firm establish the need to include family theories when investigating family firms. One model that is often used to explore family behavior and dynamics is Olson’s Circumplex model (1993). Since the family business is most likely affected by underlying family relationships, this study will use the Olson Circumplex model to help understand the impact of these relationships on the family business.

Olson’s Circumplex model originates within family research and is often used by communication researchers to explore the impact of the family on communication behavior. Both work-family and family business research can use this model to examine the ways in which the family dynamics impact the family business or work life. The following section outlines Olson’s Circumplex model in more detail.

### Olson’s Circumplex Model (1993)

The Circumplex model contains key factors that have been recognized in the development of communication competencies and is also useful as a framework to describe families and their characteristics. The families’ norms and values are seen as the underlying motivation for a family’s behavior. Olson’s Circumplex Model is a beneficial

framework for examining family behavior that may impact the family business as well. Olson proposed three dimensions of family behavior that are vital to their functioning: family cohesion, flexibility and communication.

Family Cohesion. Family cohesion is defined as the emotional bonding that family members have towards one another (Olson, 2000). The family cohesion dimension (similar to Fitzpatrick's Marital types) describes four levels of cohesion: disengaged, separated, connected and enmeshed. Very cohesive families spend maximum time together, make decisions as a family and are strongly bonded to each other emotionally. Noncohesive families tend to have members who "do their own thing", have their own friends, spend little time together, and maintain more personal than shared family space. Enmeshed families are characterized as experiencing too high levels of consensus and too low levels of independence. Disengaged families act too independently with respect to the family and exhibit little commitment to it.

Within the family business family cohesion may have several implications for the business. For example, a family that is enmeshed may believe that family members should always agree even in the business setting. As a result, family members may suppress opinions that contradict other members and the business may suffer. Conversely, families that experience extremely low levels of cohesion (disengaged) may not feel the need to agree with other family members within the business which can also negatively affect the functioning of the family business. Families that experience a level of cohesion that balances a need for agreement with a need for independence may feel free to express their opinions yet simultaneously strive to reach a consensus with the family that promotes positive functioning within the family business.

Flexibility. Flexibility refers to the amount of change in its leadership, role relationships and relationship rules. The Circumplex model categorizes flexibility as rigid, structured, flexible, and chaotic. Rigid families are likely to have a single controlling individual as the family leader and chaotic families tend to exhibit erratic leadership and ambiguity in family roles. Structured families display an egalitarian style of leadership along with more fluid family roles. Chaotic families display limited leadership with dramatic shifts in roles and rules. Within the family business, the flexibility dimension is particularly useful to examine the leadership within the business. For example, the family business may have a patriarchal or matriarchal leader who makes a majority of the decisions without input or consensus from other members. This pattern may reflect the same roles and rules within the family. Chaotic families in business together may experience a lack of leadership that inhibits the business. Conversely, structured families that balance rigidness and flexibility may have the ability to voice opinions to a certain extent. The “leader” can then consider opinions from family members before making the final decision. In addition, because rules and roles are fluid, family business members can adjust rules and roles to accommodate their family as well as their business needs. For instance, family members may take turns leading projects or divisions within the business; or share leadership with other members. Balanced families exhibit democratic leadership with roles that are stable as well as shared with other family members. Negotiations within balanced families often involve the children. Roles are shared and there is fluid change when necessary (Olson, 2000).

Communication. Communication is considered a facilitating dimension. By this definition communication allows the family members to move on the adaptability and cohesion dimensions (Segrin & Flora, 2006). Positive communication, such as self-

disclosure, clarity, staying on topic, etc., is assumed to facilitate such adjustments in adaptability and cohesion. Negative family communication behaviors such as criticism, denial of feelings, and excessive conflict are assumed to impede a family's adaptability. Within the family business, members may experience positive or negative communication experiences because of their familial connection. For example, positive aspects of communication such as self-disclosure, etc. may extend to the family business and allow members to operate the business more effectively. However, family business members may feel more inclined to express discontent or criticism to their other family members because of their close relationship. Although this can be a positive way to vent feelings, family business members may take other family member's feelings for granted and cause a negative experience that impedes the business. Figure 4 depicts the Circumplex Model.

The Circumplex model is useful to explore the ways in which behavior within a family firm reflects the model's dimensions. For instance, since business members have to balance the business and the family, adaptability is a crucial concept for the success of the family and the firm. In any event, the Circumplex model is helpful for unveiling the interaction between the family and business system.

As the model shows, families are categorized by their level of cohesion, their adaptability and also the communication climate within their family. Families that have a balance within these categories are considered functional or balanced families. However, families that are not balanced may experience problems within their relationships. Since these characterizations are applied to the family, the research featured within this study also examines the impact of these categories as applied to the family business context.



## Flexibility Dimension-Family Rules

Family rules occur at four levels: family paradigm, competitive paradigm, policy-governed paradigm and principled-interaction paradigm. The family paradigm refers to a set of shared assumptions, expectations, and commitments that constitute each family's operational philosophy of governance (Broderick, 1993). The family paradigm represents overarching ideals that fundamentally set the tone for more specific rules in the family. In a competitive paradigm each member looks out for himself or herself, prioritizing a concern for oneself over the group. In policy-governed paradigms individuals follow family-governed policies. In a principled-interaction paradigm, members internalize principles such as mutual respect, empathy, and equity, without being reminded of these principles in specific rules.

Rules created by families may extend to the family business context and are likely to affect the communication and interactions within the business as well as the family. Rules that stem from the principled- interaction paradigm and competitive paradigm may be particularly useful to the study of the family firm. Family business members may have to compete for certain leadership roles and jobs within their business (competitive paradigm) at the same time members are expected to maintain a principled-interaction paradigm in which family members maintain the harmony and peace within the family. In addition, families with principled-interaction paradigms may expect that members feel respect and equity for each other without being reminded of it. As a result, family members may not communicate about such issues, even when communication is needed. Rules that are inferred and often unspoken are referred to as implicit rules. Conversely, rules that are communicated openly or evident in conversation are explicit rules.

The idea that family members are expected to have mutual respect, empathy and equity for one another without being reminded suggests that the principled-interaction paradigm is an implicit rule. The next section will examine flexibility as it relates to family roles.

### Flexibility Dimension-Family Roles

Family power structures are revealed in the roles family members play and the rules they enforce. With *Patriarchal* families, the power is centered on one powerful male, usually a father or grandfather. *Matriarchal* families are similar to patriarchal families except a female is the center of power for the family. The patriarch or matriarch of a family takes on the primary leadership role and makes the decisions and rules, while the rest of the members follow. Families can also have a *child-centered* power structure where the children's wishes dictate the direction of the family's actions. In *democratic* families, the power is not yoked to one individual and all members have some role in the decision-making process. With *dispersed* families, there is no central leader or a clear leader is not identifiable. Research (i.e., Olson, 1993) shows that the democratic power structure is conducive to familial happiness and is characteristic of a "balanced" family.

### Communication Climate Dimension

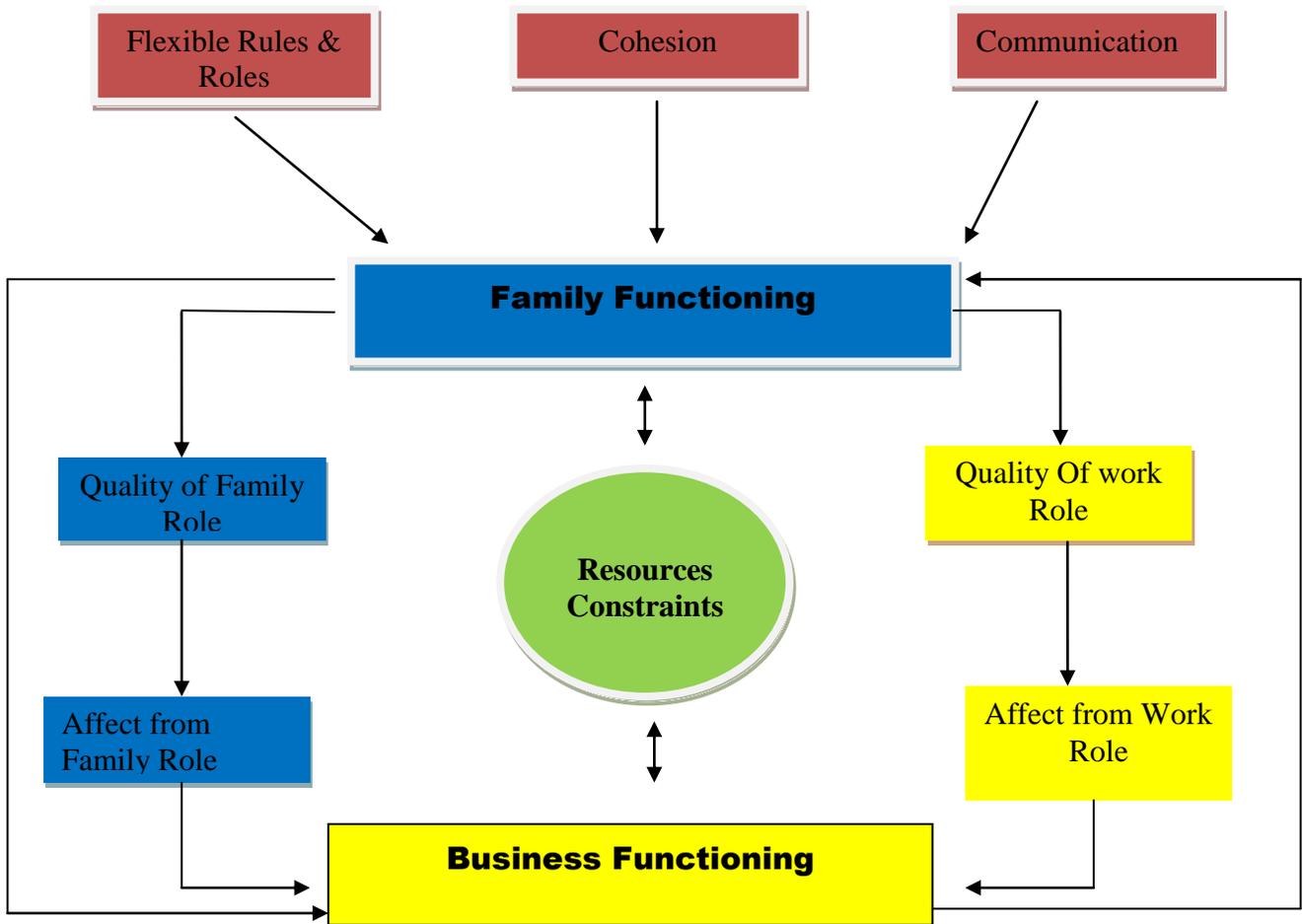
The ways in which a family handles conflict and conflict situations are related to the communication climate of the family (Segrin & Flora, 2006). Communication climates within families are categorized into four different types: pluralistic, consensual, laissez-faire, and protective families (Segrin & Flora, 2006). In pluralistic families communication is open, frequent, and unrestrained, and members are encouraged to think independently. These families exhibit extremely low conflict avoidance and low expression of negative feelings. Consensual families are under pressure to agree. Conflict

episodes in consensual families contain venting of negative feelings but do not threaten the closeness of the members because members also try to deal with the conflict positively. Laissez-faire families have few interactions about limited topics and conflict episodes are rare because they are usually avoided. When they occur, it is usually uneventful because members do not care about approval or support. Protective families emphasize conformity and obedience. They largely avoid conflict, but occasionally vent negative feelings in bursts of hostile and unproductive conflict tactics.

The communication climate of the family is likely to have some impact on the communication of the family business particularly in regard to decision-making, conflict resolution, and negotiation which frequently occur in the business setting. Therefore, the communication dimension is especially useful for studying the communication of both the family and the family business.

The dimensions of Olson's Circumplex Model highlight characteristics of the family such as cohesion, communication, and flexibility (in terms of rules and roles) that impact family behavior. As a result, this study will use the variables contained in Olson's Circumplex Model to examine work-family theories within the family business.

The following model links the dimensions of Olson's Circumplex Model to family and business functioning. As the model indicates, the dimensions of the Circumplex model affect the family. Family functioning affects the quality of the family role and the affect from family functioning. Because this model represents a family business, the family functioning also impacts the quality of the work role and the affect of the work role. As a result, the quality and affect of the work roles and affect from both the family and work roles also feeds into the business functioning.



**Figure 5: Model of Family Business Functioning**

## WORK-FAMILY AND FAMILY BUSINESS RESEARCH

Since Work-family research highlights the interaction of work and family relationships and since the family business is a system in which the family and work domains are intricately intertwined, work-family research is useful to study family business dynamics.

Work-Family research examines the connections that encompass the work and family domains (Voydanoff, 2002; Burke & Greenglass, 1987; Eckenrode & Gore, 1990). The relationships between the work and family arenas, or linking mechanisms, are defined as directional, causal or non-causal relationships that span work and family constructs. Linking mechanisms also address the extent to which individuals intentionally create, modify, or eliminate work-to-family links (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Models such as spillover, compensation, and segmentation have been used to articulate connections between work and non-work lives (Smyrnios et al., 2006).

A unique feature of a family business is its inherent multiple and interdependent roles. Similarly, work-family research examines linking mechanisms that specifically emphasize the interaction of the multiple roles associated with being part of the work system and the family system. Both work-family research and family business research highlight the “role” concept as central to its research. This perspective frames the effects of work-family interactions by highlighting, comparing and contrasting the multiple roles of individuals (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Rothbard, 2001). Involvement in multiple roles is viewed as having negative or positive impact on a person’s well-being. As a result there are two competing arguments about individuals’ participation in multiple roles: depletion and enrichment. For the sake of this study, this research will use examples that illustrate how issues of both depletion and enrichment may look within the

family business context; however employees who are not business owners or members of a family business also experience issues of depletion and enrichment.

### Depletion

The depletion hypothesis is based on the idea that people have fixed amounts of psychological and physiological resources to expend and that they make tradeoffs to accommodate these fixed resources (Rothbard, 2001). Research on role conflict suggests that demands from one role inhibit functioning in the other role which creates strain for the individual. The next section will investigate role conflict more specifically.

Role Conflict (Work-family Conflict). Work-family conflict is a form of inter-role conflict in which work and family role demands are mutually incompatible so that meeting demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet demands in the other (Burke & Greenglass, 1987). Role demands may originate from expectations expressed by work and role senders, as well as from values held by the person regarding his or her own work and family role behavior (Voydanoff, 2002). For example a woman may have a role as a mother and also a family business owner in which her children work. She may feel that her role as mother is to nurture her children, however, within the business there are times she must forego a “nurturing” role for an “owner” role. Her “owner” role requires her to put the profitability of the firm first and there are times in which she may have to express dissatisfaction with her children’s work performance. As a result, she may experience stress because the demands of the two roles are viewed as contradictory. Work-family or role conflict is detrimental because intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are often contingent upon a person’s ability to meet the demands of their roles (French, Caplan, & Harrison, 1982). When work and family demands are in conflict, obtaining rewards in one domain

requires foregoing rewards in the other. There are three types of work-family or role conflict: time-based, strain-based and behavior-based (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Time-based Conflict. Time-based conflict occurs when devoting time to the demands of one domain consumes time needed to meet demands of the other domain. Demands may go unmet when the person is either physically absent from a domain or is mentally preoccupied with another domain. In the case of the family business, the distinction between family and home is less clear; therefore a family business member may feel that time spent on the family business is the same as time spent with the family. Members may desire time and energy spent on strictly “family” time and activities that do not include the business domain. The family business context may also reduce time-based conflict. Because members often spend more time together there may be more opportunity and more time to take care of demands from either domain. For instance, a father and son can take time to talk about a personal issue during the course of the workday.

Strain-based Conflict. Strain-based conflict occurs when strain from one domain makes it difficult to meet demands of the other domain. Strain reduces personal resources needed for role performance. For example, many workers are so fatigued after a demanding work-day that there is no energy left for family members. Because family business members often have such concerns for the well-being of their members, individuals will often increase their work hours or their duties within the business to alleviate the strain and stress experienced by a family member.

Behavior-based Conflict. Behavior-based conflict occurs when behaviors developed in one domain competes with the role expectations of another domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Conflict occurs when the person is unable to adjust

behavior when moving between the competing demands. Behavior-based conflict is a type of spillover in which behavior developed in one domain influences behavior in the other domain. The transferred behavior inhibits role performance in the latter domain and causes conflict. There are different types of behavior based conflict: negative spillover, resource drain, and compensation.

Negative Spillover. Negative spillover refers to the effects of work and family on one another that generate similarities between the two domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). However, spillover is most frequently framed in terms of the negative effects on the individual.

Resource Drain. Resource drain refers to the transfer of finite personal resources, such as time, attention, and energy from one domain to another. Resource drain operates from the perspective that the resources needed in one domain deplete available resources that are needed for another domain (Eckenrode & Gore, 1990).

Compensation. Compensation represents efforts to offset dissatisfaction in one domain by seeking satisfaction in another domain. Zedeck (1992) states that compensation entails shifting involvement between domains in that (1) in seeking rewards in another domain, the person may need to reallocate time and attention to that domain, and (2) shifting involvement from one domain to another will enhance overall satisfaction only if the latter domain provides valued reward.

Behavior-based Conflict. Behavior-based conflict such as negative spillover, resource drain and compensation are framed as if the family system and the work system are two separate domains that are inherently at odds with each other. However, critics argue that the work domain and the family domain cannot and should not be separate. From this viewpoint, the demands of one role and a separate role are often the same

which may lessen conflict between the two roles. In addition, the skills learned in one role can be transferred to another role because of these similarities. For instance, a mother who owns a business may use the same decision-making practices that are successful at work to make decisions at home. In addition, she may use the skills she has learned as a mother to encourage and nurture her employees. The next section will examine other issues in which the work and family domains provide enriching experiences for individuals.

### Enrichment

Research on work-family is framed almost entirely in terms of the depletion argument. As a result, most of the family business research that does examine work-family relationships and linking mechanisms are also framed in terms of their negative impact on individuals within the family businesses. For example, role conflict and negative spillover are often used to highlight challenges related to family business ownership and membership. Because work-family research draws primarily on the depletion perspective, it overlooks another important process by which engagement in one role may relate to engagement in another role, the enrichment process (Rothbard, 2001).

Work-family enrichment is defined as the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life, namely performance or affect, in the other role (Rothbard, 2001). Greenhaus and Powell (2006) also proposed that enrichment occurs when resource gains generated in one role enhances an individual's performance in another role. Enrichment occurs when resources skills and perspectives, flexibility, psychological and physical social-capital, and material resources gained from one role directly improve

performance in the other role. Examples of resource gains are role enhancement, positive spillover, and role accumulation.

Role Enhancement. Role enhancement represents the acquisition of resources and experiences that are beneficial for individuals in facing life challenges (Voydanoff, 2002). For example, skills such as compromising and negotiating learned at work can be used at home to compromise with a spouse.

Positive Spillover. Positive spillover refers to experiences in one domain such as moods, skills, values, and behaviors being transferred to another domain in ways that make the two domains similar (Hanson et al., 2006). In order for enrichment to occur, resources from one role are transferred to another role *and* successfully applied in ways that result in improved performance or affect for the individual (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). For example, decision-making skills used at work can be used to make decisions at home for the family. Work-family positive spillover is the transfer of positively valenced affect, skills, behaviors, and values from the originating domain to the receiving domain, thus having beneficial effects on the receiving domain (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Affect may be transferred between roles in one of two processes. In the first process, values, skills, or behaviors learned in one role influence more general personal schemas and thereby influence other roles. For instance values learned in one role may have a socializing influence on one's general life values and vicariously affect what is valued in other roles.

Some researchers have suggested that family culture may influence work by affecting family members' work-related values, such as their work ethic (Carlson et al., 2006). Skills and behaviors may also be transferred through this process. In the second process, values, skills, and behaviors are directly transferred from one role to another

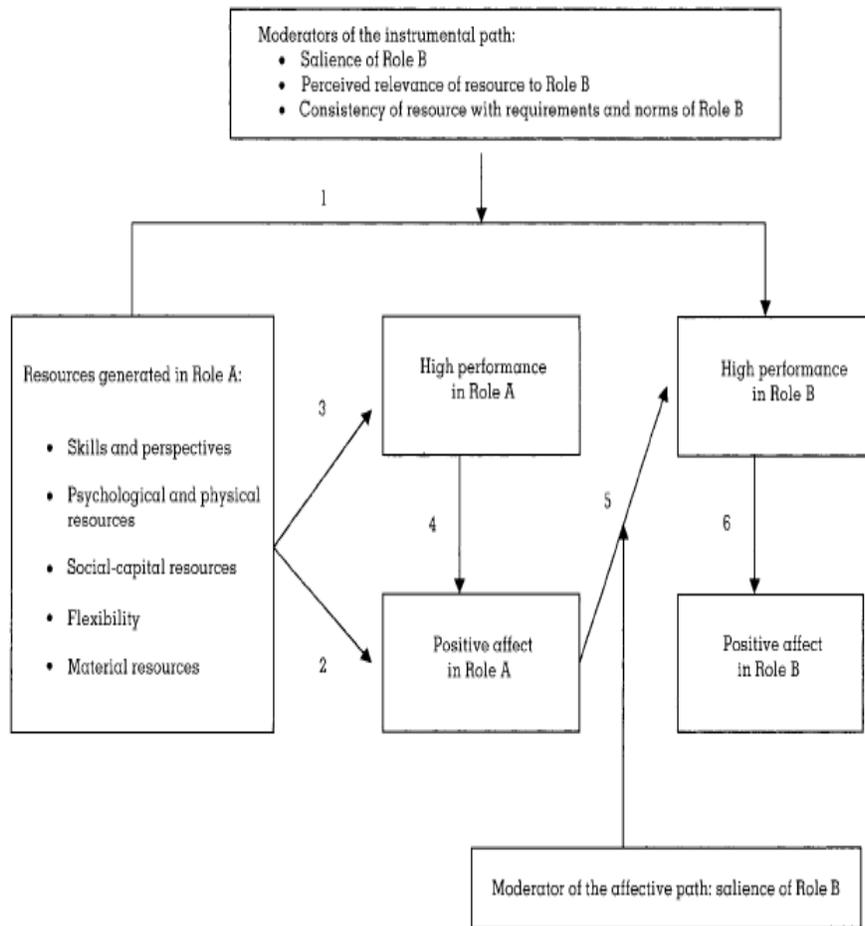
without influencing more global schemas. The second process is more likely to occur when the domains have similar characteristics (Hanson et al, 2006). Furthermore, Brockwood (2002) found that higher levels of work-to-family positive spillover were related to greater family satisfaction. In addition, she found that increased family-to-work positive spillover was associated with higher job satisfaction.

Role Accumulation. While work-family conflict and role conflict research have focused on the depleting aspects of role engagement, research on role accumulation suggests that role engagement may bring resources and pleasurable experiences to the person rather than strain (Sieber, 1974). Thus role engagement may provide enriching experiences because benefits such as role privileges, status, and self esteem can accrue to those who engage in a role. Research has found that people who are involved in multiple roles have the best health and mental well-being (Carlson et al., 2006). One proponent of the enrichment theory has suggested that role participation may lead to energy expansion and pointed to the fact that people tend to find energy for things they like doing (Carlson, et al., 2006). The enrichment argument assumes that a greater number of role commitments provide benefits to individuals rather than draining them. In fact, the enrichment argument assumes that the benefits of multiple roles outweigh the costs associated with them, leading to a net gratification rather than strain (Rothbard, 2001). However, most research continues to frame the problem as one of allocating fixed resources while the enrichment process remains unexplored for the most part. Greenhaus and Powell (2006) propose three ways in which role accumulation can produce positive outcomes for individuals: additive effects, buffering effects, and positive Emotional effects. The next section will describe in more detail the different affects that engagement in multiple roles may have on individuals.

First, work experiences and family experiences can have additive effects on well-being. When the roles are of high quality, role accumulation can have beneficial effects on health and mental well-being (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). In addition, satisfaction with work and satisfaction with family have been found to have additive effects on an individual's happiness, life satisfaction, and perceived quality of life. Research suggests that individuals who participate in and are satisfied with work and family roles experience greater well-being than those who participate in only one of the roles or who are dissatisfied with one or more of their roles (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006).

Second, participation in both work and family roles can buffer individuals from distress in one or the roles. Research has shown that the relationship between family stressors and impaired well-being is weaker for individuals who have more satisfying high-quality work experiences (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Similarly, the relationship between work and stress and impaired well-being is attenuated for individuals who have a more satisfying high-quality family life (Barnett, Marshall, & Pleck, 1992).

Third, experiences in one role can produce positive experiences and outcomes in another role. Some researchers (Marks, 1977) have argued that participation in some roles creates energy that can be used to enhance experiences in other roles. For example, happiness experienced at home may generate a positive mood that is felt even in the work context. In addition, the resources acquired in one role can then be reinvested in other roles. As an individual accumulates a variety of roles, their personalities may be enhanced as they learn to be tolerant of discrepant views and flexible in adjusting to the demands of others (Sieber, 1974). Figure 6 illustrates how experiences in role A can improve the quality of life in Role B. As the model indicates, the resources in Role A or Role B can also transfer to other roles.



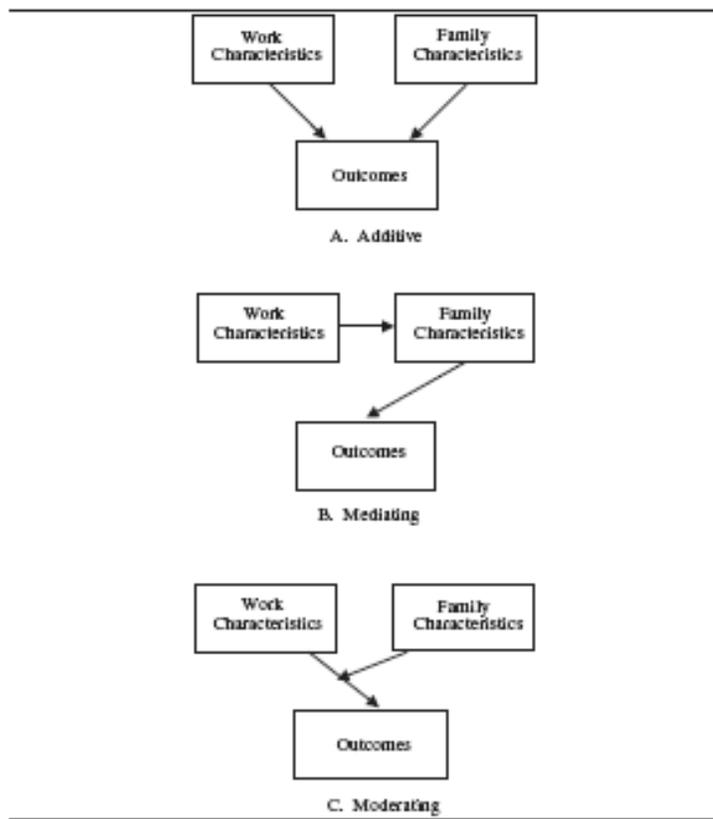
**Figure 6: Model of Work-Family Enrichment (Sieber, 1974)**

In the Work-Family Enrichment model, different types of resources are directly transferred from role A to role B, improving the performance in the latter role (Arrow 1). For example, skills and perspectives, psychological and physical resources, social-capital resources, flexibility and material resources from role A generate high role performance in Role B as well. Thus positive affect is created in role A and role B. In addition, the salience of Role B is shown to moderate the affects of role A. For instance, positive emotions experienced in role A can produce a positive outcome in role b by increasing persistence and motivation in the face of problems and challenges.

Individuals may apply information acquired as a result of social capital in one role to solve problems in another role. In addition to the model of Work-Family Enrichment, the next section explains how individuals can experience enrichment through work-family role balance and adaptive strategies.

## WORK-FAMILY ROLE BALANCE

Rather than resulting in work-family conflict, aspects of the work-family interface may lead instead to work-family role balance or work-family fit. Work-family fit is defined as an assessment between the work and family spheres and may be considered as the acceptability of the multidimensional exchange between a family and work organization (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Work-family fit is not the absence of work-family conflict but implies a positive correspondence between work and family. Role balance is similar to the work-family fit in that role balance is considered as full engagement in the performance in each role. However, the emphasis is on balanced enjoyment and importance rather than balanced demands (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). The following model illustrates the relationship between work and family. This model describes the relationship between the interface of the work and family domains.



**Figure 7: Relationships between the Work-Family Interface and Outcomes.**

As figure 7 illustrates, the relationships making up the work-family are grouped into three categories: (a) additive and independent; (b) mediating in which characteristics of one domain mediate relationships between characteristics of another domain and outcome; or (c) moderating in which characteristics of one domain moderate relationships between another domain and an outcome (Voydanoff, 2001).

### Adaptive Strategies

Most work-family research is framed in terms of its negative impact on individuals, however it is important to point out that framing the work-family interface in terms of its positive outcomes does not presume that negative effects are non-existent. Instead, the premise of theories such as role-balance, enrichment, etc. rests on the belief that families are able to handle conflict and other strains (Voydanoff, 2002). Work-family adaptive strategies highlight the mechanisms that individuals may use to ease pressures of multiple roles. According to Moen and Wethington (1992), family adaptive strategies are defined as “the actions families devise for coping with, if not overcoming, the challenges of living and for achieving their goals in the face of structural barriers” (p.234). Work-family adaptive strategies are actions taken on the part of individuals and families to reduce conflict that arises from work-family role strain (Voydanoff, 2002). These actions may even prevent work-family conflict in the first place. Thus a given strategy can have a negative relationship to work-family conflict (preventive), can be positively related to work-family fit, or can have a buffering effect on the relationship between role strain and work –family fit (Bowen, 1998).

The theories, concepts and models presented in this review of literature are used to explore instances that support the often over-looked work-family theory of enrichment

within the family business. The following section reviews the important theories and concepts discussed in the literature review

## SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

As stated previously, family business researchers argue that organizational scholars and researchers have ignored the family as an important variable because of the biases against family businesses. Scholars interested in pursuing family business research face the challenge of finding theories that they can extend to the family business context. Although scholars use organizational theories and family theories to study the family business, the field of work-family research has not yet been applied to the family business context. Work-family research specifically examines the interaction of work and family life. Since the family business contains both of these systems, work-family theories are useful for studying the family business. In addition, work-family researchers have called for the need to test work-family theories and models in different work and family arrangements. The family business can fulfill this need.

Family business research and work-family theories also share a common critique within their fields. The prevalence of work-family research and family business research are both framed from a negative perspective (depletion theory). Critics of work-family research have argued that focusing entirely on work-family conflict has created a deficiency in the understanding of work and family life (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Carlson et al., 2006). Respectively, family business research needs to explore interactions that create positive experiences (enrichment theory) within the family business as well.

This study will address the needs of both family business and work-family research by using the often over-looked field of work-family studies to explore the often over-looked family business context. More specifically, this study examines interactions

that create positive experiences for family business members through use of the enrichment theory.

Although work-family theories can logically extend to the family business context, research has not yet incorporated theoretical frameworks to examine how the family can impact the business and vice versa. As a result, the true impact and the interaction of the two systems need to be explored. For instance, Olson's Circumplex model is often used to provide a deeper description of family behavior. The dimensions of the Olson model provide variables that are useful to explore the family dynamic within the business. These dimensions are cohesiveness, flexibility in rules, flexibility in roles, and communication. The research questions posed in this study combine the dimensions of the Circumplex model to examine the enrichment theory within the family business.

The research questions for this study are as follows:

**RQ1: Does flexibility in terms of rules lead to enriching or depleting experiences within the family business?**

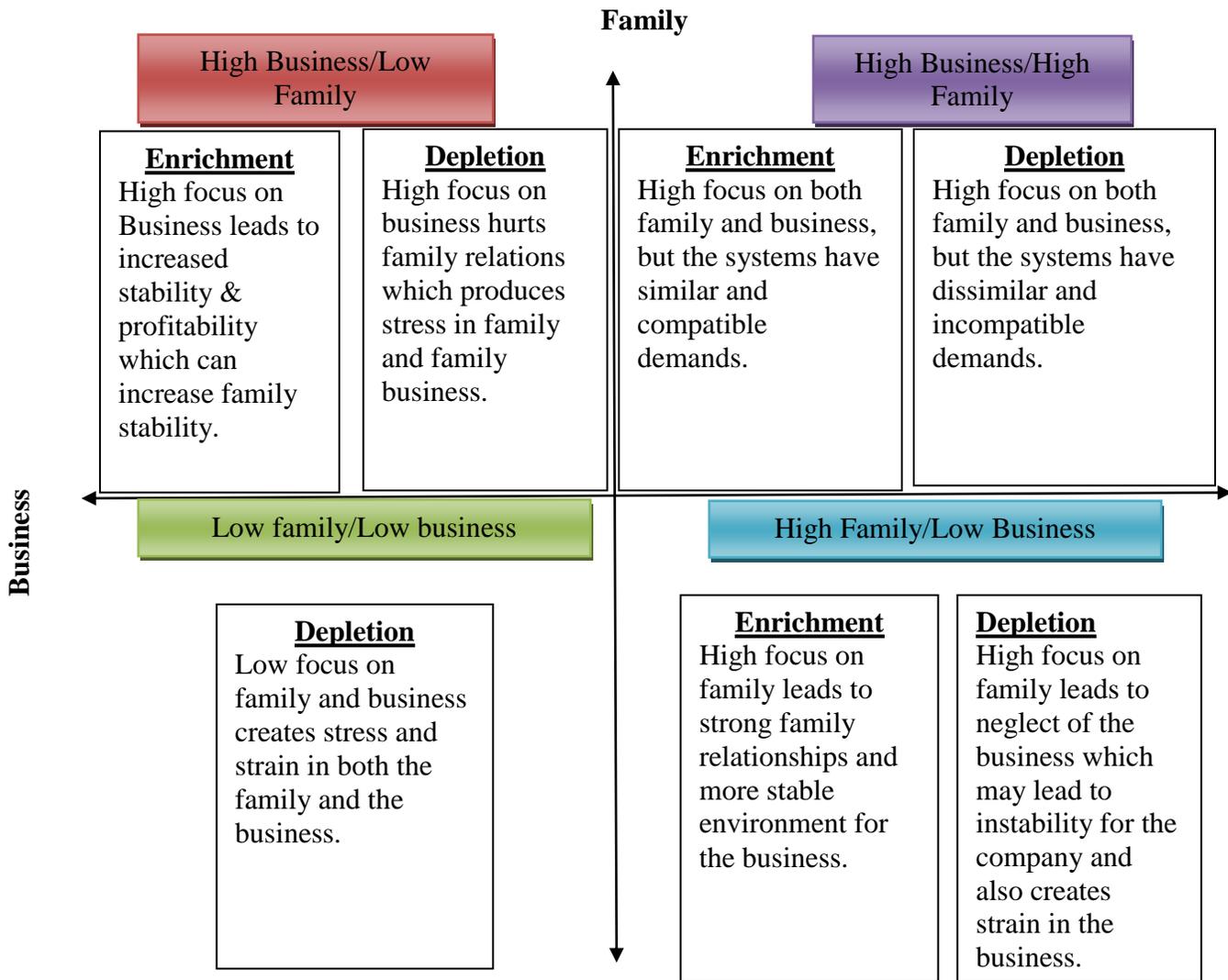
**RQ2: Does flexibility in terms of roles lead to enriching or depleting experiences within the family business?**

**RQ3: Does a family's level of cohesion lead to enriching or depleting experiences within the family business?**

**RQ4: Does the communication climate of a family business lead to enriching or depleting experiences within the family business?**

Figure 8 depicts and describes the possibility of enriching or depleting experiences.

These hypothesized experiences take into account the degree to which a family business focuses on the family and/or the business. The model describes the potential outcomes based on the extent to which members focus on the family and the business.



**Figure 8 Family Business Enrichment and Depletion Model**

## **CHAPTER 3: FAMILY BUSINESS RESEARCH AND CASE STUDIES**

By combining the dimensions of the Olson Circumplex Model (1993) with variables from work-family enrichment theory, this study aims to provide an effective method to explore the true dynamism of the family business context. The following chapters provide case studies of family businesses along with an analysis of data, discussion of findings, and implications for future research. This chapter explains the methods and processes used to study the family business. An overview of qualitative case study research is provided along with case studies of four different family businesses and the research questions used for this study.

## RESEARCHING THE FAMILY BUSINESS

The functions, processes, values, and behaviors explained in the previous section capture the complexity of interpersonal interactions and communication within the family firm. Application of these concepts to the family business can hopefully reveal how the rules, roles, and communication climates of the family and the family business create experiences that are unique to the family firm. As stated previously, since the family business is a unique and complex context that combines the organizational domain with the family domain, work-family theories and concepts are used to explore the ways in which these two systems impact and influence behavior and interactions. Again Olson's Circumplex Model provides the framework to study dynamics such as flexibility (characterized by family rules and family roles), family cohesion, and the communication climate. More specifically, since existing research focuses primarily on the conflict or negative aspects of the family business, this research will examine the ways in which the family business system can provide advantages and benefits for its members.

## Case Study Approach

Several researchers of entrepreneurship and family business studies have called for more qualitative research within the field. Aldrich and Cliff (2003) suggested that more resources be invested in ethnographic approaches in particular, in which investigators spend considerable amounts of time within families, conducting systematic observations and collecting field notes. Chrisman, Chua, and Sharma (2005) have also advocated field studies that detail the activities of family business owners, family managers, and other family members. The debate between qualitative and quantitative methods of study and the need for qualitative research is summarized by Gartner and Birley (2002):

We are not suggesting that the debate is between entrepreneurship research that is descriptive vs. research that is theoretical, or that we think that qualitative research is “good” scholarship, while quantitative research is “bad” scholarship. This is not a debate about whether qualitative research is more “truthful” than quantitative research. Our inkling about quantitative research is more of: “There is something missing here.” Some questions simply do not get asked, or cannot be asked, when undertaking quantitative studies. It is this conundrum (What is missing?) that qualitative research might be better suited for. How then can these “missing” questions be asked? (p. 89)

As family businesses are highly complex organizations, measuring the extent to which a family influences the firm does not capture the influence across varying businesses and different situations nor the complexity of the system as a whole (Klein, Astrachan, & Smyrnios, 2005). This does not mean that quantitative researchers (such as the author) have to abandon the field, nor does it mean that quantitative research has no place in family business research. However, qualitative methods are needed to ensure that

family business scales and measurements display validity and reliability when generalized to the population of family businesses. Conger (1986) also states:

Observational research plays a major role in research on marriage, both for purposes of description and for building theories of the mechanisms underlying the central phenomena occurring within families. (p. 5)

### Selection and Number of Cases

According to Yin (2003), a case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries of the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident.” (p.13). Specific criteria for determining the number of cases for a particular study do not exist and researchers have different opinions about the use of a single case versus multiple cases. Yin (2003) suggests multiple cases to avoid “putting all your eggs in one basket,” while Dyer and Wilkins (1991) argue that an in-depth study of one case may be more valuable than spreading time and resources thinly over many cases. Eisenhardt (1989) recommends 4 to 10 case studies and believes that the researcher should add cases in an iterative process until the incremental improvement is minimal, often called reaching saturation in qualitative research. Following Eisenhardt’s suggestions, this study used a multiple case study approach involving four cases. Using 4 cases reduces the risks of making faulty conclusions based on one study; at the same time this number is small enough to allow an in-depth analysis of family firm communication.

### Research Design

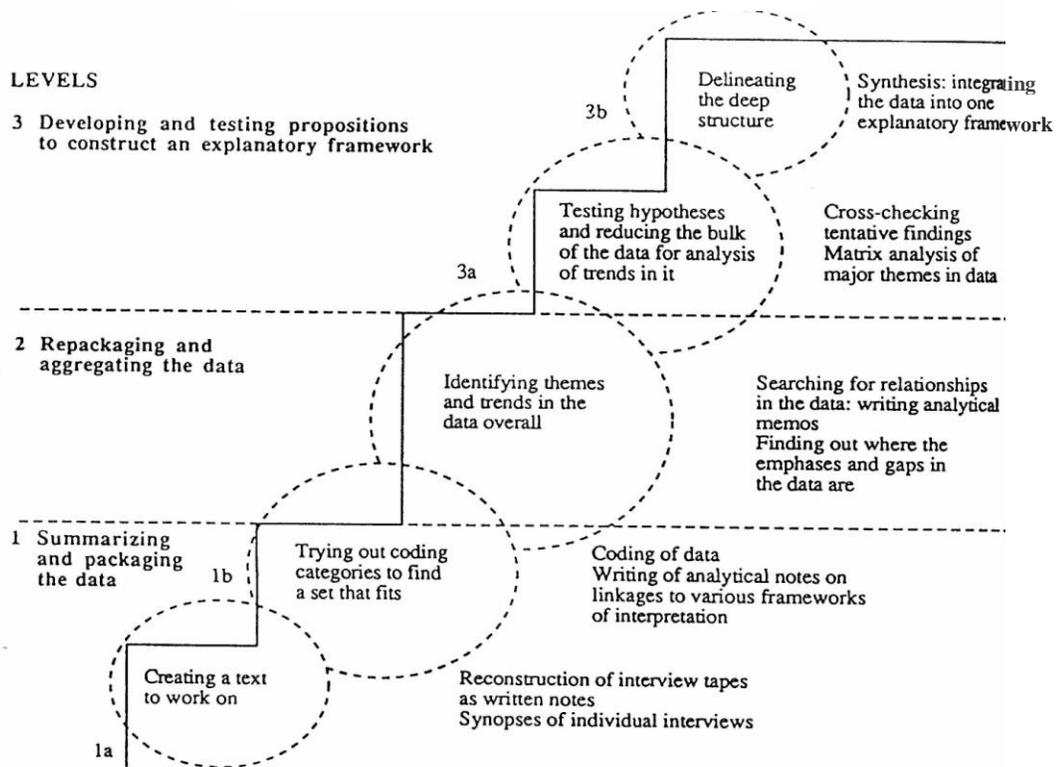
Although quantitative studies are planned for future research, at this point a qualitative approach was used to gain a more in-depth understanding of the variables and possible measures that are most effective for future studies. In addition, family business

research is a relatively new field that needs the rich description of a qualitative design to initially capture the complex behavior of family businesses before proceeding with a quantitative design.

## DESCRIBING AND EXPLAINING THE DATA

Qualitative studies are often mounted to explore a new area and build or emerge a new theory about it, confirm or test an existing theory or explore an unstated or ambiguous problem (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In any of these cases, the process of analyzing data follows a “ladder of abstraction” that begins with first trying out coding categories, then moving to identify themes and trends, and then to testing hypotheses, aiming first to delineate the deep structure and then to integrate the data into an explanatory framework (Miles & Huberman, 1994). From this perspective the data is transformed as information is condensed, clustered, sorted, and linked over time (Gherardi & Turner, 1987). The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction (Carney, 1990; See Figure 9) lays out this process.

As the chart illustrates, the analysis begins with first summarizing the data by trying out codes and categories that explain the data. After the interviews for this study were transcribed, broad categories from the family business literature as well as family literature were used to group and summarize the data based on these categories. For instance, the data were grouped by using categories that combined the dimensions of the Circumplex Model as well as themes identified in Family Business literature. Categories and themes such as work and family balance, rules, roles, etc. were used to test theories that would possibly fit (See Appendix I for themes and categories.) After the data were grouped by broad categories, categories that seemed to relate to each other were combined into one category.



**Figure 9: The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction (Carney, 1990)**

This process helped to identify themes and trends in the aggregated data. The aggregated categories were then re-examined to determine if they would fit either the Circumplex Model or major Family Business themes.

Continued analysis, which involved a constant process of grouping and re-grouping the data, revealed that categories of the Circumplex Model and Family Business Models contained relationships to each other. For instance, the Circumplex model contains a flexibility dimension that refers to the rules and roles within the family. The data were examined to identify instances in which participants indicated (either directly or indirectly) that there were certain rules that they followed in their family life, business life, or family business life. As suspected, the data fit the Circumplex Model. This process was continued until all interview answers were grouped into the dimensions of the Circumplex Model. In this study, the data fit remarkably well with the Circumplex Model and nearly all the data was subsumed into the dimensions of the Circumplex Model.

### Enrichment and Depletion

As stated previously, the main objective of this study was to examine whether or not family dynamics impacted the business and the business impacted the family. The questions for the interview were framed by family business research and literature. However, throughout the data analysis process, it became evident that the current family–business research did not provide a framework in which to explore the positive experiences reported by the participants. This fact reflects the absence of positive experiences within the family business literature. A deeper investigation of family-business research revealed work-family research as an underlying body of research that not only explained the interactions of work and life but also argued for the inclusion of

positive experiences within research. Critics of Work-Family studies argued that the positive experiences of work and family role engagement were being ignored. These critics believe that work and family roles can be categorized as depleting (negative) or enriching (positive). The enrichment and depletion models provided a more complete way to reflect the idea that there are positive as well as negative experiences that occur within the family business. As a result more specific research questions were proposed to compare the occurrences of enriching experiences and depleting experiences.

Participants. Names of participants were obtained from entrepreneurship programs and small business development offices within Southeast Louisiana. Family business members were contacted by e-mail and asked to participate in a study that examined family businesses. Individuals were then asked to submit details of their organization including type of business, size, years in operation, and the number of family members and non-family members. Based on these criteria, four businesses were selected: Special Occasions, TCB Accounting, Louisiana Valve Equipment, and LeeAnne's Café.

The purpose was to select organizations that were family businesses, but yet different in certain variables to examine if and how family business dynamics would differ based on such variables such as organizational size, years in business, ratio of family members to non-family members and issues of succession. For example, two of the businesses are currently going through the process of succession and have children interested in operating the business. The other two businesses are primarily operated by husband and wife teams with involvement from their children who have not expressed interest in owning the business. Two of the businesses have been in operation for over twenty years while the remaining two are 10 years old and 5 years old. In addition the

businesses are from industries such as a retail shop, a global valve company, a café and an accounting firm.

Participants were interviewed separately at their place of business. The interviews were semi-structured and contained prepared questions as well as questions that arose during the course of the interview (Interview Schedule in Appendix II). Interviews during this process were semi-structured and free-flowing to allow maximum freedom to address pertinent issues that arose from the conversation. The interviews were then used as a guide to determine where and when to observe and to elicit participant’s descriptions and explanations of interactions (Dorr-Bremme, 2001). All of the interviews were recorded by a digital voice recorder and later transcribed. There were 20 participants from four different businesses. Twelve of the participants were family members and the remaining eight were non-family members. In the case of small family firms (five people or less), all subjects were interviewed. To increase validity, the interview process focused on interactions and participants’ experiences that disconfirmed theories and concepts as well as interactions that confirm the theories in question. Table 2 summarizes the cases used for this study

**Table 2: Case Study Participants**

Business*	Type of Business	Family Members *	Position	Number of Employees
Special Occasions	Retail Shop	Father-Sam Beaumont Mother-Sandra Beaumont Son-Sam Beaumont, Jr. Daughter- Jane Beaumont Son- Patrick Beaumont	CEO & President Co-Owner General Manager Operations Operations	5 family members 20 non-family members
TCB Accounting	Accounting and Tax Preparation	Wife-Anne Banks Husband-Tom Banks	Owner Owner- Administration	2 Family Members 4 non-family members
Louisiana Valve Equipment	Global Valve Supplier	Father-Richard Roulet Son-Jack Roulet	Owner Manager	2 Family Members @ 70 non-family employees
LeeAnne’s Cafe	Restaurant	Husband- P. Landry Wife- J. Landry Father- G. Landry	Owner-Chef Co-Owner Staff	3 family members 4 non-family members

Businesses with 100 or less employees are considered small businesses; organizations with 100-499 employees are considered medium sized enterprises and businesses with 500 or more employees are classified as large enterprises. The following table (Table 3) summarizes the classification of these businesses as small, medium, or large as well as their respective industries.

**Table 3: Family Business Size and Industry**

<b>Business</b>	<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Classification</b>	<b>Industry</b>
Special Occasions	20	Small	Retail
TCB Accounting	5	Small	Accounting Firm
Lee Anne's Cafe	7	Small	Restaurant/Café
Louisiana Valve Equipment	70	Small	Equipment/Manufacturing

Family Business Definition. As stated in the review of literature, for the purposes of this study, a family business is defined by Rosenblatt, de Mik, Anderson, & Johnson (1985) as:

any business in which the majority ownership or control lies within a single family and in which two or more family members are or at some time were directly involved in the business. (pp. 4-5)

According to this definition, the businesses used in this study all qualify as family businesses. For instance, there are at least two family members directly involved in the business and ownership of the company lies within a single family. The next section

provides a more detailed description of the businesses used in this study: Special Occasions, TCB Accounting, Lee Anne's Café, Louisiana Valve Equipment

### Case Study 1: Special Occasions

“Special Occasions” specializes in gifts, cards, specialty gift items and a variety of merchandise for special occasions such as weddings, birthdays, showers, etc. Special Occasions is owned and operated by Sam Beaumont who started the business approximately thirty years ago. Along with his wife, Sam entered into the market with one location in Baton Rouge. After success with that store, the Beaumonts opened two other locations in the Baton Rouge market. Sam and Sandra have three adult children who are also active members of the business. Sam Beaumont Jr. is the eldest of the three, followed by Jane and then Patrick. When the children were young, Sam and Sandra would take them to their business locations. The children began to work and help out at the business at young ages. After college, Sam Beaumont Jr. began working under his father in a more official capacity. Jane Beaumont worked elsewhere after graduation but then returned after a couple of years to take part in the business. Patrick Beaumont also worked at other employment for several years before returning to the family business. At this point, Sam Beaumont is in the process of retiring from his business and handing over the reins to his three children. Sam Beaumont Jr. will then take the role as head of the company. His sister is currently involved in the business on a part-time basis. Sam and Sandra Beaumont with the aid of attorneys have developed a succession plan that provides stock and ownership to their children based on their duties and responsibilities in the company. The family continues to meet once a week at the parents' house to discuss business matters. In addition to the children, the company employs three

managers who operate the three locations along with full-time and part-time employees who work at the different retail locations.

### Case Study 2: TCB Accounting

TCB Accounting was started by Anne Banks approximately ten years ago. Anne Banks began a career in accounting and finance at the age of eighteen. After years of working in the industry, Anne decided to start her own Accounting firm in Ponchatoula, LA. Anne has recently acquired two other accounting firms in the area. Two years ago, Anne's husband Tom quit his job as a machinist and began working in the business. Anne, along with two other staff members, prepares tax returns and handles various accounting issues. Tom checks over tax documents for errors and handles administrative and maintenance issues. The business also employs a secretary. Anne and Tom Banks have two sons (ages 17 and 20) who helped with the business throughout their childhood. However, their sons are not interested in owning the business.

### Case Study 3: LeeAnne's Café

LeeAnne's Café is owned and operated by Jim and Jackie Landry. Jim started the café five years ago in Lafayette, LA. Before opening his own restaurant, Jim worked in his brother's catering business. Jackie Landry works part time as a physical therapist but also helps out in the business. Jim's eighty year old father also works in the business and will often perform such duties as delivering orders, cleaning up and other small duties. In addition to the Landry's, the business employs an additional chef and wait staff.

### Case Study 4: Louisiana Valve Equipment

Louisiana Valve Equipment supplies valves and equipment to manufacturing plants and factories worldwide. After working as a small business consultant, Richard

Roulet decided to start his own business. Richard started Louisiana Valve Equipment in 1973 and his business is internationally recognized as a leading supplier of valve equipment. Louisiana Valve Equipment employs over 70 employees and is located in Baton Rouge, La. Richard's son Jack Roulet also works at his father's company. However, both Richard and Jack thought it best that Jack gain experience elsewhere before working in the business. In addition to Jack, Richard and his wife have another son and a daughter. These children, however, have not yet expressed interest in owning and operating the business. Jack Roulet is being groomed to take over the company when Richard Roulet retires in the near future. Richard Roulet is currently working on a succession plan for his son and his other two children who are not part of the business.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND FINDINGS

The work-family enrichment hypothesis argues that engaging in multiple roles within the work and family subsystems can create experiences that enrich the lives of individuals. The model (p. 49) illustrates that resources from one role can be directly transferred to a separate role. For example, decision-making skills learned at the business can help when making decisions for the family. In other instances, the positive affect generated in performing a role can improve experiences in the other role. For example, an individual may experience positive interactions with his or her family at home. The satisfaction from positive experiences at home can create positive emotions for the individual at work. Family business researchers frame their research in terms of the depletion argument with little or no attention to the positive effects of engaging in these multiple roles. As a result, the research questions posed in this study reflect the researcher's attempt to find communication behavior that supports the family enrichment hypothesis. Furthermore, even researchers of the enrichment hypothesis have not examined the characteristics of the family such as communication climate, flexibility, and rules/roles that can lead to positive experiences within the work-family interface of the family business. The following section will examine instances where members of family businesses are able to handle the obligations of being part of a business and of a family. The Olson Circumplex model is a useful tool to illustrate family characteristics that can lead to positive experiences within the family business. These characteristics are categorized as flexibility (rules & roles), family cohesion, and the communication dimension.

With the Olson's Circumplex Model as a framework the research questions posed for this study are summarized in Table 3.

**Table 4: Research Questions**

<b>RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>
RQ1: Does flexibility in terms of rules lead to enriching or depleting experiences within the family business?
RQ2: Does flexibility in terms of roles lead to enriching or depleting experiences within the family business?
RQ3: Does a family's level of cohesion lead to enriching or depleting experiences within the family business?
RQ4: Does the communication climate of a family business lead to enriching or depleting experiences within the family business?

Results

**Research Question 1: Does Flexibility in Terms of “Rules” lead to enriching or depleting experiences within the family business?**

Categories	Enriching	Depleting
Flexibility-Rules	4	2

Data Analysis revealed that the strength of family relationships is demonstrated through rules pertaining to the family. A general count of the data categories revealed that the participants reported two times (4 vs. 2) more enriching experiences than depleting experiences. Within this sample, the most prevalent overarching rule that is present is “family first”. Rules reflect the family’s beliefs, values, and attitudes which then affects behaviors within the family and the firm. The family first rule suggests that these families put the needs of the family members over those of the business. Because of the family first rule, family members try to keep conflict to a minimum and try to quickly resolve their conflict issues. Participants from all four of the families provided statements

that indicated that the family business operated with the family-first principle. The following examples represent some of the comments that highlight a family first rule.

Sandra Beaumont, who along with her husband and three children own “Special Occasions”, indicates that her family operates with a family first rule with the following statement:

Family just always came first, then the business, but family always first.

Her son, Patrick also supports the idea of a family first rule with his statement:

I would definitely encourage it [working with family members], just understand that family comes first and the business is secondary. It’s just the means that’s supporting the family. That was the main thing that my parents told us, the family is first and just don’t let anything come between the family. If it’s not for you, then don’t do it, don’t hurt your family for the business.

Anne Banks, who owns and operates TCB Accounting with her husband, also indicates that her business is operating with a family first rule:

This place, this company is not eternal and so it’s not as important as your family, your children, if they’re sick stay at home.

There is also evidence that family business members believe that the family first attitude applies to their non-family employees as well. For example, Ms. Reggie, a secretary at TCB Accounting describes a conversation she had with Anne Banks about missing work to take care of her ailing husband:

She says [Anne Banks] that our families come first. Last year during tax time, which was a very busy year for us, my husband had by-pass surgery. I missed a lot of work but yet she never made me feel like I had to work because she was always Ms. Reggie, he comes first, you have to go and you have to take care of him.

The family first rule is also communicated indirectly through attitudes and values that highlight concern for the individual family and non-family members. Often times,

children of family businesses feel pressured into becoming part of a business. However, this sample indicated that the children were given the freedom to choose to become part of the business. Freedom from pressure reflects a “family-first” rule because the happiness of the children is put before a need to keep the business within the family. For example, Richard Roulet reassures that his son is free to do what makes him happy and communicates this attitude with his son:

There’s pressure for him not wanting to disappoint me that’s why I keep telling him you don’t have to do this, while I would prefer it would work out.... It’s not the end of the world. You have your own life to live....you live it.

In this statement we see a family-first attitude being demonstrated by both the father and the son. First the son, Jack, does not want to disappoint his father by not being part of the business. As a result, the father recognizes that this may create pressure on his son. However, his desire to see his son happy causes the father to reassure his son that “it’s not the end of the world.” This statement alleviates pressure on the son. In this statement, the father also indicates that he would like for the son to take over the business, however, he puts the need of his son before his own desire of having his son operate the business. As a result, this statement reflects a family-first attitude.

Research Question 2 examines how issues of role balance, role conflict, and transference can create or detract from an enriching experience.

**Research Question 2: Does flexibility in terms of family roles create enriching or depleting experiences?**

Category	Enriching	Depleting
Flexibility-Roles	6	2

Although the participants reported both enriching and depleting experiences, the previous table indicates that the participants reported more enriching experiences than depleting.

Proponents of the enrichment theory of work-family interface argue that individuals can benefit from multiple roles, especially when these roles are of high quality. Within the data, there are several instances where the participants indicate that their roles as either a family member or family business member are high quality roles. Evidence of high-quality roles were reported in three of the businesses.

For instance, Jane Beaumont, from Special Occasions, talks about the relationship between her and her brothers:

I think there is a real danger if you're not a close family and tearing you apart it can be irrevocable as far as I can tell. For us, luckily we're close and it's brought us closer together. And they may call me at eight o'clock at night to talk about business or to talk about something funny they just saw on TV. It's all interchangeable to us. And there's sometimes we're in the office and the staff's not in the room and the three of us are being silly and watching Youtube.

This statement indicates that Jane and her brothers have high-quality roles as both siblings and business members. The quality of these roles helps to create an enriching experience for the siblings.

In addition Tom Banks, from TCB Accounting, talks about what it is like to work with his wife:

Oh, it's incredible, think about it with your best friend, you get to work with your best friend all day every day and the more we're together the better we get along-We're two peas in a pod and I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Ann Banks, Tom's wife, also provides a similar statement about her husband:

I never could have been as successful as we were without the support of him, you know they say a lot of times that a successful man is only because of the woman behind him, well it was the other way around, he truly was a part of the business from day one.

In addition to high quality roles, the participants also provided evidence that they were able to balance their roles.

(RQ2): Role Balance. Work-family research often argues that the demands of the work role and the family role are at odds with each other. Family business research often focuses on the conflict between multiple roles. However, the data indicates that the roles as family and business members allowed the individuals to balance their work life with their family lives. Participants were able to balance their roles because of the flexibility that their businesses allowed them to have. There was evidence of role balance for all four of the businesses in this study.

For instance, Sandra Beaumont from Special Occasions describes how she and her husband have been able to reduce their duties in the business yet still remain active.

It's been a pleasure because now we don't have the responsibility and my husband is very creative and he is getting to now spend time in promoting the business, like doing the TV ads and the newspaper ads and that's something that frees up the boys and they don't have to be bothered with it.

This statement shows that Sandra and her husband are able to experience a work role that is more satisfying for them at this stage of their lives. Being part of a family business has allowed them the flexibility to reduce their work load and focus on the tasks that are more enjoyable to them personally. Sandra Beaumont also indicates that her and her husband's participation in the business allows more time for the boys to handle other tasks in the business. The parents' involvement helps with role balance because their help may alleviate stress in their work role. Again, the enrichment theory states that emotional states from one role may impact overall emotion within other roles. Therefore, if stress is reduced in the worker role allowing for more positive emotional states, family roles may also benefit from positive emotional affect.

Anne Banks of TCB Accounting also indicates how she and her husband are able to cover for each other's duties when needed:

You know there are benefits to working together every day which is fabulous... and of course during family situations, you know if there's a need, one of us can usually fill that need because the other one can run the company....so there's flexibility there and that's the advantage.

Sam Beaumont also indicates how his daughter was able to enter and leave the business while raising her family.

Jane got married and then she had her babies, graduate school got put on the back burner and she has been in and out of the business with babies and so forth. But she works for us part time and handles training and supporting her brothers in a lot of their functions.

This statement indicates that Jane has been able to leave the business to take care of her family obligations yet she is free to enter the business when she is able to.

Patrick Beaumont also indicates how he had the flexibility to enter and leave the business

I went away to college in Texas, I came back worked with the business, then went back to Texas, San Antonio, did my own thing for a few years. First I started college then I came back that was about 10 years, got back into the family business at that time Jane was exiting out a little bit, because she was working full time and I came in to help my brother deal with the managers and the employees for him.

This statement from Patrick Beaumont indicates that he, his brother and sister negotiate entering and leaving the business. They are willing to enter the business when needed by their siblings. This flexibility allows them to focus more time on a role when needed. When a family business member needs to spend more time on a personal role (such as spouse or parent), the family is willing to accommodate the individual's need allowing the person to spend less time within the business. This willingness to allow participants the time to take care of personal needs also reflects the family-first rule mentioned previously. Giving flexibility to members demonstrates that family business

members care for the personal well-being of the individual and it indicates an attitude that puts the family's needs over the business needs.

Although the purpose of this study is to highlight the fact that family business members have positive experiences, this is an issue usually ignored within the research. The data demonstrates that families with positive family business experiences still have to deal with negative issues regarding their multiple roles. It is important to note that all four of the businesses experienced instances in which participants felt that there was conflict. The following section will highlight these instances of conflict, mostly associated with multiple roles as family members and co-workers.

RQ2: Role Conflict. Family business members are part of a family and part of an entity and while research suggests that individuals are able to balance these roles quite successfully, there are times when roles may conflict each other. The expectations of each role may contradict each other which cause stress and strain for the individuals. For example, Jane Landry from LeeAnne's Café, talks about her expectations about the family.

I think in terms of family, you can trust your family members more and I think that is the ultimate reason why the family is working together.

However, Jackie also states how the family "trust" factor created conflict within her business. Jackie and her husband allowed her mother to open a coffee bar within the restaurant. Jackie's mother was responsible for operating the coffee bar. However, the coffee bar was not successful and later closed. Jackie felt that it was important to put the details of the new coffee bar in writing. However, Jackie explains her mother's reaction when she wanted to get the details for the coffee shop in writing:

We tried to get things in writing but then that was something that she was offended by and nobody was on the same page.

This example illustrates how family members are expected to trust each other, which is often a positive quality. However, the expectation of trust may create hurt feelings when “standard” business practices are applied. As Jackie indicates, asking to put things in writing indirectly communicates “distrust” which offended her mother. Here we see that the role of daughter (trust) and the role of business owner (put details in writing) are at odds with each other. Despite this incident, Jackie also indicates that she does not blame “either party”.

Our expectation of what was going to happen and her expectation of what was going to happen was completely different. I mean it was a disaster, it didn’t work and I wouldn’t blame either party because it just wasn’t good mix.

Jack Roulet of Louisiana Valve Equipment also indicates how it is hard for him to disagree with his father at times because of role conflict:

It can be difficult to disagree with him (father), part of me doesn’t want to prove him wrong just because that’s your father you grew up with that person that can make it difficult.

In this example, John indicates that his relationship as son makes it harder for him to disagree with his father because he doesn’t want to prove him wrong. However John also indicates that he feels free to voice his disagreement in business situations as well:

Even though he is my father, I still try to think about- it’s still a business no matter how much I disagree with him, when he says okay no more discussion this is what we’re going to do and I try to remember that. I’ve been more inclined to argue a little bit more with him just because I’ve been around him my entire life.

In this statement Jack indicates that his history with his father and the fact that he is a son allows him to communicate disagreement with his father more than other employees would.

The participants also indicate times that because of their family relations they have been more inclined to be more critical of their family members. Jackie Banks, from TCB Accounting refers to this in the following statement:

I found that at times we need to be careful of our tone of voice and treating each other, just like we want to treat you or anyone else, instead of just because they are your spouse that doesn't give you the right to mistreat them.

Patrick Beaumont, from Special Occasions also illustrates this same issue in his family:

My brother or family members when they get aggravated, you can't slip and let it out on a manager, so you just get ready to buckle up because he's going to let it out on you- it's just easier to let it out on your family member than an employee.

Tom Landry, from LeeAnne's Café, indicates this same attitude when asked about protecting his family members' feelings:

Well, I have to be less careful with their feelings. The way the economy is now, it's been booming, the economy is so good that employees can get jobs somewhere else today. The family can't go anywhere, we blow up at each other and it's all good the next day.

Both of these participants illustrate that family members express more frustration with their family members. Although the family members are less inclined to protect their family member's feelings, their ability to express frustration indicates that the family members have strong enough relationships to understand when other members need to vent. However, this can also be problematic for family members as well. Sam Beaumont, Jr., points out an incident where he took out his frustration on his mother:

You have to be careful, because they're your family; you still have to watch how you talk to them, I remember this one time that I became angry with my mother. I felt really bad afterwards, and I was like this is your mother you can't talk to her that way. My father called me and told me, it's okay if you disagree with your mother, but you can't disrespect her.

Nicholas a non-family employee at TCB Accounting, also describes his previous experience working at his parents' carpet business. Although Nicholas indicated that he

and his parents have a good relationship, he did not enjoy working with his family and decided to work elsewhere. Nicholas states:

Working with my parents, I actually hated it- because they weren't scared to pick on me because I was their son it was a little bit different that way in that it could interfere with relationships.

(RQ2): Roles and Transference. Roles within the family and work domain each have related resources and skills that make up or accompany a role. The enrichment theory argues that resources from one role can be transferred to duties and responsibilities associated with roles in another domain and that the transference of these resources alleviates the stress and strain that sometimes accompany multiple roles.

For instance, Anne Banks, of TCB Accounting indicates that the decisions made at home have influenced her and her husband's decision making process within the business:

We apply the same thing we use at home when raising the children, or making decisions, when we had to make major purchase decisions or finances or anything like that... We'll talk about it and if one person has a stronger opinion than the other, even renovating a home or something like that. If one has a stronger opinion when we go with the person who has the stronger opinion.

This statement indicates that Anne Banks and her husband have developed decision-making skills within their family. This decision-making process is a resource that is then used as a tool to also make decisions within the family business. When asked if raising children and raising a family enabled her to make decisions in the business, Anne responded:

Definitely, because we carried over what worked for us and applied it here and if it didn't work we try to leave it behind.

This statement indicates that Anne and her husband use their experiences in the family role to guide the decisions made in the business. Anne states that whatever works "we

carry over and apply it to work.” This supports the work-enrichment model which illustrates that individuals transfer skills from one role or domain to use in another role.

Tom Landry of TCB Accounting also indicates this transference of resources from the family domain to the work domain in his statement:

Your company needs to hold a standard, you know like when you raise your children because if you don't hold that standard, you compromise and whenever you compromise, good things aren't going to come from it. So like your children you hold them to a certain standard, same thing with your employees. If we didn't hold them to a standard we would have a bunch of people doing whatever they wanted to do.

Again, the participant indicates that he uses skills he has developed as part of his role as a father to help him manage the employees within the business. Again we see that a resource learned in one role has transferred to Tom's role as a business owner. These examples show how engagement in more than one role can have benefits that engagement in only one role may not have. For instance, an employee who is not a spouse or a parent may not have had the types of decision-making experiences that accompany raising a family, which is a resource to use within the work domain. In addition, some researchers argue that the similarities between work and family, termed work-family fit, mitigate the negative impact of engagement in the two domains.

The data set provides several occasions in which the participants parallel their experiences as a family with the same experiences within their businesses. For example, Richard Roulet indicates that raising a business is similar to raising a child.

The business is totally defenseless, it's like a child and that's the way the small business owner, that's the way I think about it. I have to give it everything it needs, I have to protect it, I have to see that it grows in the right areas so that it's a viable entity.

For Richard Roulet, raising a business is similar to his role as raising a child.

In this case, Richard may experience less role conflict because he views his role as a business owner and a father as one and the same.

In addition, participants' attitudes and beliefs seemed to affect the way the participants perform their family and business roles. More specifically participants indicated instances in which they performed family and business roles with the intention of keeping the family close. Family closeness and connectedness are represented by the Family Cohesion Dimension of Olson's Circumplex Model. The next section will now address Research Question 3.

**RQ3: Does a family's level of cohesion lead to enriching or depleting experiences?**

Family Cohesion. Family Cohesion refers to the desire of the family to maintain a strong family unit. Family cohesion can buffer the negative effects of running a business because of a desire for the family to remain strong. While strong family cohesion is indicative of functional families, too much family cohesion can have negative effects. Family members may feel the need to suppress opinions and ideas that contradict the family. Therefore, family members have to balance cohesion with the independence of individual family members. The participants' responses indicate that they experienced mostly enrichment in regard to their family's level of cohesion.

Category	Enriching	Depleting
Cohesion	10	4

To maintain cohesion, families will often engage in activities that promote closeness and connectedness. Three of the four businesses indicated family activities and rituals to maintain familial closeness.

For example, when asked “What have you done to make the family business work for you?” Sam Beaumont responded:

Well, I think I go back to my wife, one of the things that she did from the time they [the kids] were little, we always had time to have meals together, breakfast was kind of crazy, but we tried to do that. Always, dinner, if we had to go to a basketball game or any other function, even if we got home at eight-thirty, she tried every night to have a sit-down meal with all of us, I think that was very important with us. All the televisions and games, families are so pulled apart that they don't have much time, the fact that we could just sit at our meals and discuss the issues of the day, whatever it was going on like school and work, everybody had a lot of input and I think it was very important for learning how to work together and get along.

Sam Beaumont's statement directly indicates that family cohesion was important to him and his wife by their commitment to sit down and have dinner as a family every night. In addition, Sam also acknowledges that this practice was important for learning how to work together as a family. A positive aspect of family cohesion is that a family has opportunity to develop knowledge and skills that can then be used to use not only in the family dimensions but in the business as well. Sitting down and discussing matters over the dinner table helps to develop an attitude that promotes input and inclusion from each of the family members. These practices can then be used within the business to express opinions and make decisions as well. It is also interesting to point out that the Beaumont family has weekly meetings in which they meet at the parents house around the dinner table to discuss issues related to the business. Here we see a direct parallel between the family context and the business context as represented by the family's sitting around their dinner table to have discussions.

Ann Banks, from TCB Accounting describes activities that she and her husband, Tom, instituted to keep the family connected.

We have family night once a week. Twice a week, we get together and eat to maintain the family nucleus.

Tom Banks, from TCB Accounting, also states:

I used to take my kids one day out of the school year where it would be Dad and Josh or Dad and TJ day. I would say you can take off from school and we can do whatever you want- It's great everybody should do it and not sacrifice that night for anything even if you have to switch it.

Both Ann and Tom indicate that they both actively seek ways to keep the family connected. These activities demonstrate their desire as parents to ensure that they maintain a strong parental and supportive role for their children.

In addition to the activities and rituals, there is evidence that participants took active steps to maintain open communication with their family members and co-workers. The next section will examine the ways in which the communication climate created an enriching experience for the participants.

**Research Question 4: Does the communication climate of the family business lead to enriching or depleting experiences?**

Communication Climate. The Olson Circumplex Model categorizes family according to the communication climate. Positive communication, such as self-disclosure, clarity, staying on topic, etc., is assumed to facilitate such adjustments in adaptability and cohesion. Negative family communication behaviors such as criticism, denial of feelings, and excessive conflict are assumed to impede a family's adaptability. The participants' responses indicated more enriching experiences than depleting.

Category	Enriching	Depleting
Communication Climate	5	2

Since positive communication creates a more functional family environment, the family business will probably benefit from a climate that is positive and where individuals feel free to express their opinions openly. The data set provides several instances that

indicate an open and positive communication climate or the importance of a positive and open communication climate for a family business.

Natalie Smith, a non-family employee of TCB Accounting, points to the need for good communication when asked about the difficulties of operating a family business.

I think it depends on your relationship. My husband and I could not have a business together. I think it takes a special couple, a special relationship because you have to have good communication because you don't want to bring your personal issues into the business you have to be able to separate. If you get in an argument you have to be able to leave it at home."

Tom Landry also addresses the importance of a positive communication climate when operating a business:

I think the most important thing is communication, between employees, owner, boss, or supervisor. You need to communicate, because if you don't .....that's where the problems come in.

Even families with open and positive communication climate still have to deal with issues of conflict. Indeed the presence/expression of conflict may serve as evidence that family members are confident enough in their relationships and therefore, not threatened by conflict. Furthermore, family researchers contend that conflict among family members is not necessarily a negative occurrence, especially when members are able to effectively deal with the conflict. The participants express the importance of handling conflict within the family or the business. Anne Banks describes the ways in which she and her husband have dealt with conflict.

There's going to be family issues and church issues and work issues and you try not to carry it and overflow. I can't say that we've mastered that yet, but I can say that there is an immediate pursuit of resolution and the longer we let it sit the worst it is, no matter what the topic of discussion is whether it's work or home.

Tom's response seems to parallel his wife's in terms of conflict resolution:

We always say we can't go into work like this...so we make a valiant effort to solve our problems before we go to work, before we leave home, before we go to bed, it's just natural for us, it's communication.

Nicholas, a non-family employee of TCB accounting, also describes the way in which Tom and Anne are able to handle conflict.

Well, they never yell, I've never seen anything like that and I've worked here for a year. But they both mention their point of views and try to improvise and compromise and try to come out with the best thing for the client or the company, whatever the conflict is.

The above examples illustrate that the family business members of TCB accounting feel free to share their opinions with each other. Each of the members values each other's opinion and a climate of compromise exists for the members. Even when conflict arises, the family members try to quickly deal with the conflict issues so that the family business and the environment are not negatively impacted. Tim provides another example of this attitude.

Well, it's a relationship that's open on both ends, you can't be close-minded. You have to be open-minded, you can't be a dictator. If you have an idea here and you have an idea here, let's meet in the middle and discuss both ideas if we come to an agreement that a particular idea is the best way to go, then we go with that idea.

The purpose of the previous section is to illustrate characteristics that can make a family more stable and functional. Family business and work-family theories pay little attention to the strength of the family as a contributing factor to work-family happiness and family businesses. Table 5 (p. 86) summarizes the Research Questions and their results.

## SUMMARY OF RESULTS

In summary, the results indicate that the family business participants featured in this study reported behavior and attitudes that indicates enriching experiences within their businesses. The following table groups the categories derived from the data and details the number of themes within that category that are considered enriching or depleting.

**Table 5: Research Questions and Results**

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:	RESULTS:
RQ1: Does flexibility in terms of rules lead to enriching or depleting experiences?	Participants indicated that they operated with a “family-first” rule that influenced their behavior in the family and the business. For the participants, the “family first” rule provided enriching experiences.
RQ2: Does flexibility in terms of roles lead to enriching or depleting experiences in the family business?	Data provided evidence that participants experienced enriching experiences such as role balance, role accumulation, and increased satisfaction from high-quality roles
RQ3: Does a family’s level of cohesion lead to enriching or depleting experiences?	The participants indicated that their families contained a level of cohesion that allowed them to remain connected to each other as family members
RQ4: Does the communication climate of the family business lead to enriching or depleting experiences?	The communication climate of the family-businesses was open. Members were allowed to express their opinions, ideas and even their frustration with other members.

**Table 6: Summary of Categories and Themes**

Categories	Enriching	Depleting
Flexibility-Rules	4	2
Flexibility-Roles	6	2
Cohesion	10	2
Communication Climate	5	2

As the chart indicates, the sample reported more enriching experiences than positive experiences for the categories investigated within the study.

In regard to RQ1, participants indicated that they operated with a family first rule. This rule allowed them to display flexibility that benefited both the family and the family business. In line with the Circumplex model, the family first rule is indicative of a family paradigm, which is defined as an overarching ideal that sets the tone for more specific

rules in the family. For instance, because of the family first rule, participants allow other family members to have flexibility and time to deal with personal needs outside the business. In addition, the Circumplex model proposes that families experience a competitive paradigm in which members have to compete; or a principled-interaction paradigm in which family members are expected to maintain peace and harmony within the family. The family first rule seems to represent a principled-interaction paradigm in that members made active attempts to keep the peace within their family businesses. As with family cohesion, the family first rule can also have negative implications if there is too much focus on the family and not on the business. For instance, if a family engages in business practices that are detrimental because of the family first rule (i.e., hiring incompetent family members), then the business may suffer. However, the participants in this study were able to display a family first attitude that created experiences that were beneficial to the operation of their business.

For RQ2, participants also indicated that they were able to balance their roles as family members with their roles as business members. Enrichment theory argues that multiple roles lead to benefits such as role accumulation, role balance, and transference. Participants indicated that certain resources associated with one role (i.e., decision-making practices at home) aided them in the performance of another role (i.e., decision-making practices within the business). As a result, participants' responses demonstrated an enriching experience from engagement in multiple roles.

For RQ3, the participants provided evidence that supported a level of cohesiveness that supported an enriching experience for the members. Most of the participants actively sought practices that ensured that the family maintained a certain

level of cohesiveness (day with the kids, eating dinner together) despite the hectic schedule that accompanies operating a business.

For RQ4, the open communication climate of the family businesses created enriching experiences as well. Most of the participants indicated that they were able to express their ideas and opinions to other members of the business. In addition, some members indicated that they were able to communicate frustration or “vent” to their family members. Chapter 5 will take a closer look at these findings and provide a more in-depth explanation of the results presented in this study.

## **CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

As stated previously, family business research is typically framed in terms of the negative effects that combining multiple roles may have on an individual. The purpose of this dissertation was not to argue that family business members do not experience problems such as role conflict, role strain, etc. Rather, the purpose was to demonstrate that there are aspects of working in a family business that are positive for its members. Family business research can draw from work-family interface theories that examine the effects of multiple roles on individuals. As with family business research, work-family interface theorists have framed their research from the perspective that engaging in multiple roles has a depleting effect (depletion theory). More recently, some researchers have answered the call for work-family interface research that examines the positive benefits when engaging in work and family roles (enrichment argument) (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Carlson et al., 2006; Hanson et al., 2006). With this in mind the purpose of this study was to examine ways in which work-family interface theories can be used to study the behavior and communication of family business members. Just as work-family interface theorists have argued for a need to address the positive aspects of the work-family interface, there is also a need for family-business research that addresses the benefits of the family business. The data collected highlights the often overlooked benefits that may accompany working in a family business. In addition, this study examines characteristics of the family culture and family communication that create family and family business satisfaction.

Olson's Circumplex Model was used as a framework to study family variables that may impact the family's ability to handle their multiple roles. The next section discusses the results related to the Circumplex Model.

## OLSON'S CIRCUMPLEX MODEL

Work-enrichment theory examines instances in which multiple work and family roles lead to satisfaction for individuals. However, the likelihood that individuals will experience enrichment in their roles may be based on characteristics that make their family strong. Olson's Circumplex Model helps to identify key family characteristics. Again the dimensions of the Olson's Circumplex model are: Flexibility (Roles and Rules), Family Cohesion and Communication Climate.

Flexibility (Roles). According to work-family enrichment theory, there are benefits that are gained when individuals engage in multiple roles versus one role. The participants from the sample provided evidence that supported this theory. Participants indicated that they were able to use the experience gained in their family roles. For example, one participant indicated that his experience creating standards for his children paralleled creating standards for his employees. In addition, work-family fit argues that similarities between work and family roles or work and family domains may prevent or reduce strain for an individual engaged in multiple roles. Our sample provided evidence that indicated that the work and family domains were similar for them. For example, several of the participants indicated that operating a business was almost like raising another child. This statement indicates that the participants were in a sense prepared for the difficulties and challenges of a business because it was similar to their experiences of raising their children. At least for these participants, there is a similarity between raising a family and raising a business which can serve to ease pressures associated with performing two different roles.

In addition to similarity of roles, the quality of the roles may affect the amount of stress and strain experienced in a role. Work-family enrichment theory argues that when

individuals engage in multiple roles that are high quality for them, they will most likely have a positive experience when performing these roles. As a result, the family business is an incorporation of two high-quality roles that can enable participants to balance the demands of their multiple roles. For instance, one participant reported that working with his wife was a positive experience because they are best friends. This example suggests that the couple is experiencing high quality roles as co-workers and as a couple.

The flexibility within the family business may allow participants to experience higher role quality. For instance, the participants of this study indicated that their membership in a family allowed them greater flexibility in terms of their careers. Members were able to enter, leave, increase their time, or decrease their time spent working in the business if needed. For example, one member indicated that she was able to reduce her hours to focus on raising her family. However, when she was ready to work full-time again she was able to return to the business.

The family business also provides greater opportunities for more flexibility in regard to retirement. For example, one couple indicated that they were able to reduce their hours, yet remain active in the business and focus on more creative aspects of the business such as advertising and promotion. Because the members share a familial concern for each other, efforts are made to accommodate the family members' situations in life. On the reverse side, participants also indicated that family members were available to increase their hours and availability for the business when needed. For example, a sibling re-entered the business after her brother indicated that he could use her help to open an additional retail store. As a result, business owners are able to gain additional labor from their family members.

- Flexibility (Rules). The flexibility dimension of the Olson's Circumplex model also focuses on the rules of the family. Values, attitudes and beliefs are at the basis of these rules. The sample provided examples of rules for their families, however many of these rules were subsumed by one over-arching rule that governed their behavior and communication: Family-First.

Participants from all the family-businesses indicated that for them the well-being of their family was most important. The business was a means of support for them and their family. The family-first rule is indirectly communicated by the fact that their parents put their children's happiness over their desire for them to enter the business. The children were free to pursue their own dreams and even encouraged by their parents to "do what made them happy" even if it meant that the business would not remain in the family.

- Family Cohesion. The sample participants indicated that they engaged in practices that sustained family togetherness or cohesion. For example, several of the participants indicated that family meals, family night, and other social activities were important to keep the family connected to each other. A cohesive family environment can create an enriching experience for the family business because the family expresses concerns for the feelings and happiness of its other members. As a result, the family may adapt its rules, policies, procedures, and even work-schedules to fulfill the needs of its members, thereby making it easier to balance family responsibilities and work responsibilities. The rules and roles of the family are also demonstrated by the communication climate within the family and the family firm described below.

- Communication Climate. The sample participants indicated that the communication climate within their family business was open. Members were able to

express their opinions and participate in decision-making. Several of the participants indicated that opinions and ideas were encouraged from family and non-family members. The sample participants also indicated that “good” and “open” communication was needed to ensure a successful family business. An open communication climate can lead to an enriching family business experience within a family firm because members feel free to express their ideas or their concerns. When needs and concerns are communicated, other members can then address these needs, which may minimize conflict within the business and create less strain for the family business members.

Sample participants reported that they were more open to communicate frustration with their family member rather than non-family members. Open communication of frustration may be due to an understanding that individuals from a “strong” family know that their family members love them unconditionally and are able to overlook these moments. As a result, this family relationship allows members to vent their stress and frustration which can lead to role ease rather than strain. According to Olson’s Circumplex Model, the participants can be classified as consensual families in which members can vent and express negative feelings without jeopardizing family closeness.

Of course, family business participants can take their relationship for granted and they have to be careful of their family members’ feelings despite their frustration. As a result, family business members may feel open to express frustration; however members also have to be careful not to take their family members for granted because of their relationship.

## LIMITATIONS

As with all research there were limitations for this study. First, the design of the interview process was from a self-report perspective. As with any self-report design,

whether interview or survey, there is the possibility that respondents do not accurately respond to the questions. Inaccurate self reports can be due to a respondent's misunderstanding the question or the desire for the respondent to provide socially desirable answers. In this case, additional observation may have assured the validity of the respondents' answers. However, even observation is not perfect. For example, observation may create a Hawthorne effect in which individuals change their behavior because they are being observed.

Second, the family businesses for this study were self-selected. With self-selection, it is possible that family businesses that were experiencing high levels of conflict and less satisfactory experiences did not respond to the request for participants because of the problems they were experiencing. In addition, future research will seek to expand the number of sample cases and use a sample that includes a more diverse range of businesses. The following section examines additional directions for future research.

#### DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The current investigation examines instances of family enrichment theory and the communication within the family business. Although this study utilizes a qualitative approach, future studies will incorporate a quantitative design. Throughout the current study, potential hypotheses were developed to examine communication behavior and the enrichment theory from a quantitative perspective. The following hypotheses were developed from this study and are closely related to Olson's Circumplex Model. According to Olson's Circumplex model, families that are considered "balanced" among the dimensions are classified as "healthy". The hypotheses will examine a possible link between families classified as "healthy" and the likelihood of enriching experiences within the business.

H1: Balanced” family cohesion” is positively correlated with enriching experiences within the family business.

H2: Balanced “flexibility” in terms of rules is positively correlated with enriching experiences within the family business.

H3: Balanced “flexibility” in terms of roles is positively correlated with enriching experiences within the family business.

H4: An open communication climate do you mean in the family is positively correlated with an open communication climate within the family business.

H5: An open communication climate in the family is positively correlated with enriching experiences within the family business.

H6: High quality family roles are positively correlated with high quality work roles.

#### FUTURE STUDIES OF FAMILY BUSINESS SUCCESSION

Although the data findings and analysis reveals issues of succession and succession planning, future studies will specifically address the important impact that enriching experiences have on the succession process. Recent statistics indicate that fewer than 30% of family businesses make it to the second generation and only 10% make it to the third generation (Lansberg, 1999). Although 1/3 of family business literature examines succession, knowledge of how to successfully pass down a business needs more investigation (Venter, Boshoff & Maas, 2005).

Most research concerning succession highlights the financial and economic problems that families may experience during succession. In addition, one of the main reasons for the high failure rate among first and second generation family businesses is their inability to manage the emotional process of generational succession (Venter et al., 2005). In addition, there is strong evidence that the quality and strength of the

relationship between the successor and his/or her children leads to a positive succession outcome (Handler, 1989). For instance Goldberg and Woodridge (1993) and Goldberg (1996) concluded that effective successors have significantly better relationships with their fathers than less successful successors. In addition, there are empirical findings that support the idea that the success of a succession is strongly influenced by mutual respect, understanding and complementary behavior between the founder and the next generation (Venter, Bashoff, Maas, 2005). In addition, Seymore (1993, p. 276) reported a significant correlation between the quality of the work relationship and succession planning for manager-owners. These findings suggest that enriching experiences may play an important role in their ability to effectively handle the succession process. In addition, the findings highlight the fact the succession process is not merely an “economic” occurrence. Instead, the quality of family relationships is also an important variable that should be considered in succession planning and succession research. Researchers who do not include aspects such as family harmony, family cohesion and family adaptability ignore an important piece of the succession puzzle.

In addition, organizational research, particularly entrepreneurship and small business research, measures the organization by its ability to withstand succession. Businesses that do not experience succession are often considered unsuccessful and therefore ignored in research. For instance Astrachan (2003) argues that most start-up and first-generation families were “severely neglected” in research although half the population of family and pre-family businesses are in the first generation. With family relations it is often hard to divide a company equally among family members, especially as the family grows to include grandchildren and spouses who may become part of the business. As a result, businesses that do not make it through succession are sometimes

viewed as failures. Most studies assume that businesses are intended to pass down through multiple generations within the family. However, families in this study seemed to view the business as a way to provide for the immediate needs of their family. From this standpoint, the business was a financial resource to support the family. When the financial support is no longer needed, the participants will sell off or close the business. Although children of the business owners can take over and continue the business, as with Louisiana Valve Equipment and Special Occasions, the parents may not pressure their children to continue the business. In other words, after the family has been raised and provided for, the business is not as important. This viewpoint needs to be considered when addressing sustainability issues in the family business. The sale or closure of a business may reflect a family first orientation rather than a business failure.

In addition to the new directions of this research this study began with three broad objectives to accomplish. The next section reviews these objectives and their results.

## REVIEW OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

As stated previously, the purpose of this study was to accomplish the following objectives:

- (1) To represent the dynamism of the work and family by extending work-family theories to family business research.
- (2) To provide balance to family business research by examining the positive aspects of family business ownership through the use of work-family theories and concepts.
- (3) To use communication behavior to illustrate the work-family and family business relationships.

The first objective was accomplished by demonstrating that the work-life research (after the data analysis process) is a beneficial explanatory framework that highlights the complexity of family and business interactions within the family business.

The second objective was accomplished by demonstrating that participants reported experiencing positive interactions within their family businesses. This objective was achieved through the successful application of the enrichment theory which demonstrated a close fit with the data.

The third objective was accomplished by using direct and indirect communication to further demonstrate that the work-life theory of enrichment is useful for the further study of the family business.

These objectives and their subsequent results, provide further evidence that the family business is a unique form of business worthy of further study from multiple fields of study including Work-Family Theories. In addition, researchers that seek to study the family business need to examine the positive as well as the negative experiences within the family business.

## COMMUNICATION AND THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Although this study highlights the family business and work-family enrichment theory, the communication underlying these theories deserves special attention. The data collected for this study is rich with examples of direct and indirect communication. For instance, the “family-first” rule was communicated explicitly, and also communicated implicitly through the actions of its members. For example, allowing members to put their personal needs first indirectly communicates the “family-first” rule. Some participants also indicated that open communication was necessary for a successful family business. More specifically, participants discussed open communication within

specific communication practices such as decision-making, the expression of conflict and conflict resolution. In addition, communication is a resource that is often transferred from one domain to another and future studies will further examine how communication helps to create role-balance, role-negotiation, positive spillover, and resource transference within the family business.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to highlight instances in which membership in a family business created beneficial experiences that supported the enrichment hypothesis of work and family interaction. Most researchers of the work-family interface models choose to frame their arguments in terms of depletion or enrichment, as if the categories are mutually-exclusive, however, the family business contains experiences that are positive and negative. Although this study highlights the positive aspects of family business membership, family business members experience difficulties and challenges from their multiple roles as well. However, since most family business research highlights the negative aspects of the family business, this research focused on the experiences that support the enrichment hypothesis.

The application of work-family theories to the family business context not only enriches family business studies but also challenges assumptions and dated attitudes about work and life. The following passage illustrates the negative framework in which work life is often framed (Morf, 1989):

Television, popular literature, and rock lyrics pervade the personal and private life sphere with messages like “you can be anything you want to be.” The work sphere, in stark contrast, demands that the majority of people be satisfied with simple jobs, often jobs in

which they produce the same item or perform the same responses a hundred or a thousand times every day (p. 1)

From this perspective, the work world is devoid of enriching experiences and is a cruel necessity that employees have to suffer through. This passage certainly does not account for instances in which individuals start their own businesses or work with their families. In these cases, it is not easy to separate the personal domain of the family from the professional domain of the business. Although this passage is somewhat dated, it may point to an underlying assumption that continues to frame work and family negatively.

Prior research of both work-family theory and family business theory frame the demands of work and life as two incompatible domains that are a source of stress and strain for individuals. Although this is the case in many instances, the findings reported in this study support the idea that there are benefits associated with the work-family interface. In particular, there are qualities of the family business that can help members deal with the stress and strain that accompany multiple roles. For instance, because family business members work and live together, they can fulfill two roles at the same time. Children who grow up within family businesses may not feel that their experience in the business is distinct from their family experiences. In many cases, family business members have integrated their work and family lives to such an extent that the separation of work and family is impossible.

Researchers of family-business and family business consultants need to examine the qualities of a family that lead to an enriching experience. For example, families whose members operate with a family-first rule seem willing to adapt and adjust to keep members of the family satisfied. This attitude results in a give and take from the family business members and allows the members to balance their work roles and their family

roles. In addition, family members participate in activities that emphasize the family bond. These activities help the family maintain a “family-first” attitude which helps to foster concern and care for each other.

The case studies presented in this research highlights the values, attitudes, and expectations about family and business. Research needs to explore how family businesses challenge accepted beliefs about the work and family domains. Further studies that examine the enriching experiences as well as the depleting experiences are needed to create balance within work-family and family business research.

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## APPENDIX I: CATEGORIES AND THEMES

### Dissertation Categories & Themes

- I. Rule: Family First
  - a. Mutual Respect
  - b. Steps actively taken to resolve conflicts to protect the family
  - c. Conflict Resolution
  - d. Children free to pursue other goals in life
  - e. Engage in family practices to keep them close
    - i. Family night
    - ii. Grandparent's day
- II. Communication:
  - a. Open communication
  - b. Communicate Frustration with family members
  - c. Decision-Making
  - d. Leadership
- III. Flexibility
  - a. Roles
    - i. Blending and Meshing of Roles
    - ii. Role interchangeability
  - b. Work and Family Balance
    - i. Spending time together
    - ii. Creating distance and space
    - iii. Skills used in home transferred to business
    - iv. Metaphors of home and work
    - v. Strong family history transfers to family business
- IV. Stressors
  - 1. Hostile communication
  - 2. Succession issues
    - a. Pressures for fairness- which is related to family values and concern for kids (Raoul Robert's interview)
  - 3. Issues of children's spouses coming into the business
  - 4. Pressure to agree (Lola's café)
  - 5. Assumptions and expectations with family & not wanting to hurt feelings (Lola's café- not wanting to put coffee shop idea in writing)
  - 6. No one to help with personal side of the business such as succession
  - 7. Role conflict- Raoul Interview & negative side of that
    - a. Wife role vs. Son role.
  - 8. Surrendering Control- Lee & Sid
  - 9. Awareness of who can work together and who can't- Opinion about mother from John Robert and comment about son vs. wife role from Raoul.

## APPENDIX II: SCHEDULE OF QUESTIONS

### Family Business Interview Questions

1. Background of company/History
  - a. Who founded
  - b. When founded, etc.
  - c. Was it a family firm from the beginning or were relatives included later?
2. Description of the Family
3. Who is involved in the Business?
4. What is your role/position in the organization?
5. What's it like being involved in a family business?
6. What's the most positive /negative aspect of a family firm?
7. How do you make decisions for the business?
8. How do you make decisions for the family?
9. Does your communication in the business reflect the communication in the family?
10. How do you feel your business is different from a non-family business? The same?
11. Is your communication more casual or more formal- do you think that it is affected because it is a family-operated business. Is this good or bad?
12. Do you try to keep the two areas separate?
13. Do you perceive yourself as having two different roles? How do you handle the different roles of being a family member and a co-worker? (Family Role Performance)
14. Have there been any times in which the roles have conflicted? How do you handle it?
15. How do you handle disagreement? Is it easier or harder because you are a family member?
16. What effect does working in your business have on your relationship with your spouse/partner ? Child?
17. Do you treat your family members as family or more like business partners? Has this created any problems?
18. Is it easy for you to step back and let your children take the reins of running the company?
19. What have been your biggest events/changes in your family? How does this affect your business and vice versa?
20. Do you handle non-family employees the same as family employees? How is it different? How is it the same?
21. Do you think there is more or less stress when working with a family business?
22. Who is going to take over the business? How will you handle succession?
23. Will this cause conflict within your family?
24. Have you sought support from others when handling family and business stress?

## VITA

Joyceia Marie Banner is a native of Wallace, Louisiana. After graduating from Ascension Catholic High school, she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in marketing from Louisiana State University in 2000. Joyceia continued her education at Nicholls State University where she earned her Master of Business Administration in 2001. In 2004, she enrolled in the doctoral program at Louisiana State University in communication studies. Her research examines the role of communication within the family business and entrepreneurship process. Joyceia has accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Management at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas.