Applying family logics to organizations' ability to meet individuals' needs

Organization
Management
Journal

Justin T. Scott and Justin W. Carter
Department of Management, University of North Alabama, Florence, Alabama, USA, and

Joe Hair
Mitchell College of Business, University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama, USA

Received 28 July 2025
Revised 10 December 2025
3 March 2026
Accepted 6 May 2026

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to provide a conceptual framework explaining how organizations can satisfy individuals' identity motives by enacting family orientation (FO) cues. The framework introduces family logics as the interpretive mechanism through which organizational members translate FO cues into perceived modes of need-satisfaction, regardless of whether the firm is a family firm.

Design/methodology/approach – Drawing on social identity theory (SIT), the research conceptualized FO as organizational-level cues that can support six identity motives (self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belongingness, efficacy and meaning). Because SIT emphasizes that early-life group experiences in family systems shape how individuals interpret group cues, the authors posit that family-group experiences hold meaningful perspectives for the way individuals engage with other important systems, such as organizations.

Findings – FO dimensions can function as actionable organizational cues, regardless of firms' family orientation. When those cues are interpreted through family logics, they increase perceived identity motive satisfaction, which strengthens identification and downstream outcomes.

Originality/value – Prior approaches emphasize either organizational practices or individual needs in isolation. By specifying a cue-interpretation-motive-satisfaction mechanism and mapping FO dimensions to identity motives, the family logic framework provides a novel bridge that family firm insights make available to all organizations.

Keywords Family firms, Family orientation, Psychological needs, Family systems theory, Social identity theory

Paper type Conceptual paper

Organizations' success largely depends on whether employees experience the workplace as need-supportive. Need satisfaction supports well-being and reduces burnout (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017), and employees who feel supported typically respond with stronger motivation and more innovative performance (Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017; Van den Broeck, Ferris, Chang, & Rosen, 2016). For organizations, various efforts have attempted to clarify and organize individuals' needs. Some examples include the job demands-resources

Organization Management Journal
Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 1541-6518
p-ISSN: 2753-8567
DOI 10.1108/OMJ-07-2025-2648

model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000) and broad assessments of organizational identification (OI; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). These approaches focus on job characteristics, motivational processes, or identification outcomes, but they stop short of specifying how individuals' identity motives are maintained and reinforced through their membership in groups. We address that oversight by focusing on identity motives (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, & Scabini, 2006) and explaining how organizational environments can cue motive satisfaction.

Indeed, organizations and individuals perform better when work contexts repeatedly communicate support for employees' needs. Communicating those messages inherently requires blending organization-level conditions with individual-level needs. Unfortunately, conflating those levels often complicates progress for organizations and their individuals. As an example, many empirical studies yield conflicting results (Conroy, Henle, Shore, & Stelman, 2017; Van den Broeck, De Cuyper, De Witte, & Vansteenkiste, 2010) or simply tie extrinsic and intrinsic rewards to motivation (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Importantly, the rewards, extrinsic or intrinsic, ultimately exist whenever individuals act in ways beneficial to the organization, but organizations remain highly dependent on environmental shifts (Bradley, Aldrich, Shepherd, & Wiklund, 2011). Therefore, those shifts demand organizational responses which exist outside of individuals and their needs. In turn, some organizations remain bound by environmental factors despite what may be best for the individuals in the organization.

Articulating helpful guidance for organizations therefore becomes difficult given the erratic contexts in which they exist. At a global level, though, individuals' needs remain mostly consistent (Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2000). Therefore, it seems most beneficial to consider a needs-based perspective, with the individual at the center, when examining collective performance enhancements in organizational settings. Throughout this manuscript, psychological needs are conceptualized as identity motives (Vignoles et al., 2006). These motives offer a direct link to social identity processes because they capture the identity-related concerns individuals seek to maintain or enhance through group membership. While other needs-based frameworks provide valuable context, the theoretical mechanism developed here relies on these identity motives, and scholars still lack a unified perspective explaining how organizations can consistently satisfy individuals' core identity motives.

To identify a context where identity motives appear to be consistently satisfied, family firms, often characterized by enduring, relationship-centered cues, offer excellent contexts. Among all organizational forms, family firms may be uniquely equipped to meet the identity motives that help people thrive, and they may hold lessons for every other kind of organization. Known for their longstanding economic success (Le Breton–Miller & Miller, 2006; Neckebrouck, Schulze, & Zellweger, 2018), family businesses are notably heterogeneous organizations (Jaskiewicz & Dyer, 2017). Despite those differences, which often can be attributed to varied dynamics and interactions between both family and nonfamily members, family involvement in the firm tends to yield more positive outcomes than negative ones (De Massis, Kotlar, Campopiano, & Cassia, 2015; Zattoni, Gnan, & Huse, 2015). In line with Priem & Alfano (2016), we suggest therefore that organizational scholars may benefit from applying a novel perspective, specifically, how family firms meet individual' identity motives, to broaden the ways all organizations might approach the matter.

To develop this perspective, we graft theoretical models from both psychological and family firm domains. Psychologically, identity motives (i.e. self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness, belongingness, efficacy and meaning) exist within everyone (Vignoles et al., 2000). To that end, social identity theory suggests that identification with groups is predicated by some level of interest in the group (Tajfel, 1981). In other words, individuals identify with groups when groups signal a capacity to meet individuals' identity motives of interest. Therefore, to blend the benefits of the rich theoretical landscape of family firms (Priem & Alfano, 2016) with a more generalizable perspective, we lean on Lumpkin, Martin, & Vaughn (2008). Specifically, we use social identity theory to graft their *family orientation* (FO; i.e. tradition, stability, loyalty, trust and interdependency) into a conceptual framework demonstrating that all individuals gravitate toward groups that meet their identity motives, and that FO represents one model through which organizations, family or not, can satisfy those identity motives.

Our efforts respond to calls to understand how individuals develop social identity (Schmidts & Shepherd, 2015) and extend Thrasher, Dickson, Biermeier-Hanson, & Najor-Durack (2020) by positing that the complex weaving of business and family systems likely establishes a unique context in which individuals' identity motives can be satisfied. As such, our work extends theoretical discussions by using a lens traditionally reserved for a small set of organizations (i.e. family firms) to view all organizations. Additionally, practical and managerial implications include a foundation on which individuals' identity motives might be satisfied, improving their lives and the organizations for which they work. To develop this framework, we adopt the term *family logics* to serve as the mechanism whereby organizational cues are filtered through individuals' interpretations of the routes best suited to satisfy their identity needs. Family logics, therefore, become the SIT-informed interpretive lenses people use to make sense of FO cues, initiating the downstream effect we discuss at the end of the manuscript. Figure 1 portrays family logics' role in linear fashion. Specifically, organizations enact family orientation (FO) cues, individuals interpret those cues through family logics, and that interpretation shapes perceived satisfaction of six identity motives which in turn strengthens identification and downstream outcomes. To prevent construct conflation, we use the following boundaries throughout the manuscript: FO is an organizational-level orientation (Lumpkin et al., 2008); family logics are the SIT-supported interpretive mechanism linking FO cues to motive satisfaction; and identity motives are individual-level psychological needs (Vignoles et al., 2006). Importantly, socioemotional wealth (SEW), an equally influential lens through which to view identity-related decisions in family firms, exists as a distinct family-firm construct focused on family owners' non-economic goals and reference points (Gómez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, Jacobson, & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007). In contrast, family logics are not limited to family owners or family firms. They explain how any member of any organization may experience FO cues as need-supportive. Table 1 helps define the relationships between the constructs outlined in Figure 1; and the following sections outline theoretical and empirical support for the model, including propositions throughout the section.

Literature integration

Social identity theory

Social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1974) outlines a categorization process whereby individuals create their place in society. As individuals interact with societal groups, those individuals generate perceptions of their place in society. In short, individuals find their place in society by becoming what society implied they should become. Within those implications, complex informational exchanges lead individuals to calculate appropriate and inappropriate behaviors and attitudes (Tajfel, 1974). Once calculations have occurred, individuals develop a sense of order for their different group categories. Consequently, and even more critical to this research, individuals likely categorize themselves into certain groups because those groups signal openness to such categorizations.

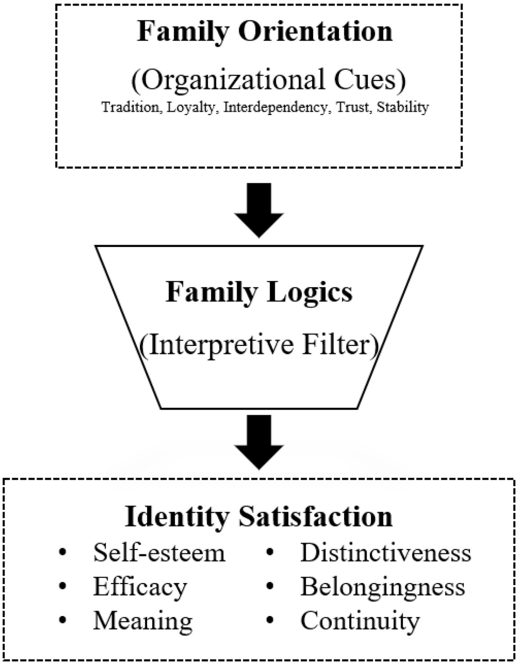

Figure 1. Family logics mechanism linking FO cues to identity satisfaction
Note(s): Authors' own creation

Because of the implicit nature with which social identity operates, it is important to clarify what constitutes a group. Broadly, groups reflect the different categories with which individuals might identify (Tajfel, 1974). For example, owners identify with their firms more strongly than those who simply work for the firm (Johnson et al., 2006), and founders, because they belong to a group of founders, typically behave like they think society expects founders to behave (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). To both positive and negative extents (Conroy et al., 2017), people identify with their organizations because that organization carries some group-affiliation. In addition to contextual factors, potential for identification with groups also requires some level of interest in the group (Tajfel, 1981). In other words, individuals identify with groups when the groups reflect the capacity to meet the needs of interest to the individual (i.e. identity motives).

Such needs are reflective of deeply held value systems constructed early in life (Tajfel, 1981) and those values, in general, perpetuate themselves through enduring cultural systems (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Individuals, therefore, develop identity attraction toward groups that reflect the potential for meeting the needs of the individual. Given the early formation of these identity-related attractions, individuals frequently identify with the family group, regardless of how their family was structured (Tajfel, 1981). Since SIT suggests individuals will be attracted to groups that meet their needs, the family group offers promising potential for developing frameworks illustrative of meeting individuals' needs.

Family systems theory

Where SIT explains why individuals gravitate toward certain groups, family systems theory provides a lens for understanding how those groups develop structures which satisfy needs.

Table 1. FO Dimensions, family logics, and focal identity motives

Family orientation dimension	Family logic (interpreting FO cues)	Identity motives satisfied	Illustrative organizational practices/cues
Tradition	Legacy and shared meaning: cues that connect members to a valued past and a larger story	Meaning; self-esteem; continuity (secondary)	Rituals, onboarding narratives, founder stories, celebrations of milestones, consistent symbols and language
Loyalty	Mutual obligation: cues that membership is enduring and the organization remains supportive	Belongingness; continuity; self-esteem (secondary).	Support during hardship, internal mobility, long-term investment in development, reciprocity norms
Trust	Relational safety: cues that vulnerability is permitted and reciprocity is reliable	Belongingness; efficacy; self-esteem (secondary)	Psychological safety, transparent decision rules, follow-through on promises, leader consistency
Interdependency	Mutual reliance with visibility: cues that people succeed together while individual contributions remain identifiable	Efficacy; distinctiveness; belongingness (secondary)	Team-based work design, cross-functional routines, peer coaching, coordination mechanisms, shared goals
Stability	Future assurance: cues that the organization provides temporal resources to build a coherent identity across time	Continuity; meaning (secondary)	Predictable policies, transparent strategic horizons, employment security signals, continuity of core values amid change

Note(s): Mappings are not intended as one-to-one. A single FO dimension can support multiple motives, and the same motive can be supported by multiple cues. Family logics capture the interpretive process through which members translate FO cues into perceived motive satisfaction
Source(s): Authors' own creation

In the context of studying family groups, family therapists recognized the systematic nature of treating individual issues (Bavelas & Segal, 1982). Before that recognition, issues like schizophrenia or psychopathic disorders had been addressed on an individual level, with treatment targeting the human mind. Systems theory (Bertalanffy & Woodger, 1938; Buckley, 1967) prompted scholars to investigate the surrounding structures and patterns that might influence individual outcomes. The theoretical motive encouraged scientists to look for patterns of organization between effects (Von Bertalanffy, 1972). Those patterns enabled therapists to better understand how individual issues might be affected by systematic motivators.

Emerging from this theoretical lens, Lumpkin et al. (2008) generated their conceptual dimensions of *family orientation.* Beyond their work, the underlying principles of the theory can be seen in similar measures aimed at understanding more about family firms (Doherty & Colangelo, 1984; King, Mattimore, King, & Adams, 1995). Due to the social nature of individuals' identification though, FO's utility may not be limited to family firms alone. Importantly, systematic motivators remain for individuals regardless of their relation to a family firm. While family systems theory adopts organized causes to explain patterns of effects (e.g. family orientation), a similar aggregation also seems plausible for individuals in all firms. That is, FO represented a framework intended for family firms, and SIT suggests families serve as an early reference point for group identity.

Therefore, as an organizational-level rationale, FO shows a framework for satisfying identity motives. To date, FO has been used to consider individuals' needs in the family firm. Individuals' needs, and their identity motives, represent a different level and different contexts though. Notably, not all individuals work for a family firm. However, their earliest life experiences involved some interaction with and support from a family logic. That is, whether traditional, broken, foster or otherwise, all individuals have a family logic with which they associate. Importantly, SIT posits that the earliest fashions whereby needs were met or not met serve as reference points for future needs. Following that line then, SIT suggests individuals may be attracted to groups most capable of meeting their needs. Therefore, SIT serves to explain how individuals' identity motives can be satisfied with organizational facets. Our framework showcases how SIT explains the link between identity motives (individual level) and the organizational level, represented in this research with FO.

Toward family logics

Because SIT supports the explanation for why FO represents a framework capable of meeting individuals' identity needs, satisfaction of those needs can occur regardless of family orientation of the firm. Previously outlined in Table 1, we define family logics as the interpretive filter through which individuals translate FO cues into judgments about whether a group has capacity to satisfy their identity motives, and present the following proposition:

> *P1.* Family logics will interpret organizational cues (FO; tradition, stability, loyalty, trust, interdependency) as perceived modes of identity satisfaction, and will strengthen organizational identification.

Identity motives describe, in general, how most individuals develop and satisfy psychological needs. Since most individuals develop expectations for methods used to satisfy their needs, and those expectations develop early in life (La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000), family groups serve as a model for meeting needs. Given people often seek out and identify with sources that satisfy their needs, it helps to consider themes by which most individuals' needs may be generalized. Vignoles et al. (2006) offered those generalizations with their work on psychological needs and identity motives. Indeed, it could be said that families and workplaces are primary groups responsible for meeting individuals' needs. As this research indicates, the ways those needs are met could be described with a family logic. To provide a stronger theoretical bind between family groups and work groups, the ensuing discussion describes a basis on which identity motives and family-orientation (Lumpkin et al., 2008) can be mapped onto one another, using SIT as the theoretical link between the two.

Just like the earliest satisfaction of needs typically occurs in a family group, most basic adult needs become satisfied through exchange for resources (i.e. money and benefits) required to satisfy their identity motives. That is, people need to work and many spend an average of 33% of their adult lives at work (Paul & Batinic, 2010). Consequently, it seems logical for the workplace to be included as another primary group through which individuals' needs are met. Within this context, therefore, families and workplaces both serve as primary groups responsible for meeting individuals' needs. Moreover, since people are drawn to the characteristics they believe help them create positive future versions of themselves (Vignoles, Manzi, Regalia, Jemmolo, & Scabini, 2008), individuals may be more likely to identify with groups they believe meet their needs, an expectation rooted in social identity theory. Importantly, because individuals' experiences remain varied, the specific connection between FO and identity needs should not be treated as one-to-one linear relationships. In other words, the global nature of individuals' family experiences reflects what FST would call expected patterns. That is, causal effects may exist with different degrees and different temporal aspects, yet they remain connected. Therefore, the elaborations below should be treated as initial attempts to map expected relationships, accepting that there will be overlap. Such overlap would be unsurprising because one cue may be interpreted differently across individuals, and depending on their current levels of need satisfaction, different cues may solicit similar associations. Nonetheless, the succeeding sections illustrate directional expectations when considering family logics in the context of organizations' role in satisfying individuals' identity motives.

Tradition and loyalty

As posited in the family logics model (Table 1), tradition and loyalty cues primarily signal meaning, self-esteem and belongingness by connecting individuals to a valued collective history and by communicating mutual obligation. Although traditions vary widely in form, they offer individuals positive opportunities. Lumpkin et al. (2008) suggested traditions gave individuals shared meaning with connections to important historical occurrences, specifically as it related to perpetuating family beliefs. Similarly, organizations do the same thing though, regardless of family status of the firm. Rituals and cultural practices in the firm remain critical for communicating organizational values (Schein, 2010), and opportunity to participate in those positive options facilitates space for individuals to associate themselves with positivity, a critical aspect of one's self-esteem (Vignoles et al., 2006). More specifically, individuals can develop optimal self-concepts when they understand their place and contributions in broader historical contexts, building personal efficacy (Judge, Jackson, Shaw, Scott, & Rich, 2007), which is important for the loyalty needs as well.

Loyalty reflects a felt obligation toward the group. More specifically, in the FO context, loyalty suggests people feel indebted to their family simply because of membership (Lumpkin et al., 2008). To connect this to organizational settings, people tend to identify strongly with organizations when distinguishing cultural values and traditions exist (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Organizational traditions therefore create opportunities for individuals to develop self-esteem and cultivate loyalty.

Indeed, most individuals already have some degree of self-esteem. Studied in conjunction with many topics, self-esteem is fundamentally described as the combined effect of individuals' personal assessments (Gardner & Pierce, 1998; Rosenberg, Schooler, Schoenbach, & Rosenberg, 1995). These self-assessments can stem from objects (e.g., people or groups) as a whole, or from specific aspects of those objects (Rosenberg et al., 1995). More significant than these outcomes, however, are the activities individuals believe help satisfy their need for self-esteem. Generally, one's self-esteem is influenced by activities that assess, enhance or verify an individuals' summation of their worth, which usually occurs through comparison with others (Sedikides, 1993). When groups provide such a space, those groups help influence individuals' self-esteem because the group provided a space with which the individuals attach their meaning (Vignoles et al., 2006, 2008).

Not to be confused with self-esteem, efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform behaviors required for specific outcomes (Bandura, 1977). This belief shapes individuals' perceptions of their ability to control or influence events across various areas of life. Generally, people develop higher efficacy when they believe their competencies can shape their environments to achieve desired results. In other words, efficacy grows when people feel capable of influencing situations to align with their intentions (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). While self-esteem represents individuals' backward-looking thoughts and feelings about their experiences and comparisons (Sedikides, 1993), efficacy reflects forward-looking belief they can succeed in specific tasks or achieve desired outcomes (Gardner & Pierce, 1998; Pierce & Gardner, 2004). That belief stems from opportunities to test their abilities, and in organizations, testing those abilities facilitates space for coaching (Williams & Williams, 2017). Thus, while self-esteem is rooted in self-worth, efficacy centers on confidence in one's competencies. Organizations can provide opportunities to satisfy this need, and SIT suggests those opportunities would attract individuals to the organization.

People naturally seek to uncover meaning behind their existence. Though often described as a reason to exist (Baumeister, 1991), such reasons need not be limited to a grand omnibus reason. Core values serve as powerful guides for individuals, particularly when considering their success in organizational settings (David & David, 2003). At a minimum, communicating the significance of activities to individuals justifies their efforts and their reason for existence (Steger, Kashdan, & Oishi, 2008). Together, the organizational-level aspects of FO (i.e. tradition and loyalty) exist as concepts all organizations can realize by facilitating space to meet individuals' important identity motives (i.e. self-esteem, self-efficacy and meaning). Therefore, we position family logics as the filter through which those FO cues become possible modes of identity satisfaction, and propose the following:

P2. Individuals will have increased identification toward organizations that reflect valued history because family logics translate those cues as modes capable of satisfying identity needs related to meaning, self-esteem, belongingness.

Interdependency and trust

As outlined in Table 1, interdependency and trust cues primarily support belongingness and efficacy yet preserve distinctiveness by making individual contributions visible within collective work. To understand why interdependency fulfills psychological needs, two underlying identity motives deserve consideration. Notably, individuals remain motivated to differentiate themselves from others as well as feel close, accepted, and included. Put simply, individuals crave inclusivity as well as individuality (Vignoles et al., 2006). From Lumpkin et al.'s (2008) explanation of interdependency and trust, these dimensions of FO reflect ways organizations might facilitate space where individuals' distinctiveness and belongness needs can be satisfied. Individuals must understand both how their personal contributions matter at work (Ballout, 2007) and how those contributions support the broader group (Lorinkova & Perry, 2019). Together, these empirical results showcase how individuals at work need evidence of individual significance as well as communal importance.

Building on these foundations, most individuals are influenced by a paradoxical need for differentiation (Vignoles et al., 2000). That is, simply being different *alone* will not satisfy the need. Instead, individuals want to be different *enough* to be identified as such, and identification processes therefore involve comparison of similarities and differences (Vignoles et al., 2000). For identification purposes, individuals need reference points to determine who they are, which is why it helps to recognize similarities. Then again, without eliminating who they are *not*, individuals may struggle to understand who they *are* (Vignoles et al., 2000). Distinctiveness operates separately from the activities related to assessing, verifying, and enhancing one's self-esteem (Brewer, Manzi, & Shaw, 1993).

At the same time, individuals need to be attached to some form of relationship (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) or have a sense of belonging. This need is best described as a feeling of acceptance by, or closeness to, someone else (Vignoles et al., 2006). Indeed, most individuals seek out opportunities they believe satisfy a need to be accepted by others, serving as foundational to individuals' development of self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). When unmet, clinical problems often appear (Leary, Schreindorfer, & Haupt, 1995).

In the context of a family group, Lumpkin et al. (2008) argued that trust stemmed from reciprocity. On the grounds of SIT though, and in this context specifically, such reciprocity is showcased when organizations give individuals space to satisfy belongingness and distinctiveness needs through interdependent work. More specifically, the reciprocal exchanges inherent in interdependent work provide the basis for trust. Importantly, Lumpkin et al. (2008) clarified that trust grows when individuals "fulfill expectations, share confidences, [and] support one another" (p. 133). Though originally positioned as a system-level variable stemming from family systems, trust and interdependency also showcase how individuals' belongingness and distinctiveness motives are satisfied. That is, individuals' recognition that their simultaneous reliance on and support for the organization builds trust and interdependency (Gittell, 2002; Hatch & Schultz, 2002). Rooted in the idea that groups capable of satisfying individuals' needs will attract those individuals, organizations with the ability to reflect interdependency and trust remain capable of satisfying individuals' distinctiveness and belongingness identity motives. Therefore, we offer the following proposition:

P3. Trust and interdependency cues will primarily satisfy belongingness and efficacy because family logics translate those cues as spaces where individuals simultaneously preserve distinctiveness and enjoy inclusivity, thereby increasing identification and cooperative behavior.

Stability

As referenced in Table 1, stability cues primarily support continuity by providing temporal resources even when organizations cannot guarantee permanency. Here, perceived stability, not absolute stability, is the key psychological signal. FO suggests individuals appreciate stability because their membership within the family remains mostly unchanged. That is to say, dis-ownership is such a rare occurrence that common thought patterns surround ideas of permanency. Though true for most family groups, for organizations as a group, this aspect proves challenging (Samimi & Sydow, 2021), in part due to increased regularity of contractbased work (Wu & Huang, 2024) and realistic concerns that organizations may face unforeseen challenges and cease to exist altogether (e.g. face acquisition or bankruptcy). Nonetheless, even in those spaces, organizations can, and should (Schultz & Hernes, 2020), offer assurances which help individuals develop temporal resources (Brown, 2015). Importantly, those resources help satisfy individuals' identity motive for continuity.

In organizational contexts, the idea of *continuity* could be associated with founders' desire to pass their family business through to succeeding generations (Miller, Steier, & Le Breton-Miller, 2003). Despite the organizational connection, this idea reflects family stability more so than organizational stability. Therefore, for clarity, our use of the term focuses on broader individual needs, which Vignoles et al. (2006) defined as a need to maintain similarities of one's identity over past, present, and future situations. Of course, changes over those temporal periods would be inevitable. Notably, satisfying the need for continuity does not exclude changes, rather, it warrants protecting deficits (Vignoles et al., 2006). That is, even when changes might occur, a need for continuity can still be satisfied such that capacity exists to construct a meaningful story of one's lifes progressions. Although organizational stability remains more difficult to guarantee than family stability, organizations can still create perceptions of continuity. Since SIT posits that individuals gravitate toward groups capable of meeting certain needs, organizations can enhance attractiveness by preserving the cultural elements and rituals previously discussed (Howard-Grenville, Metzger, & Meyer, 2013). Despite the challenges then, organizations do possess the means whereby individuals' need for continuity can be met with organizational stability. Accordingly, we offer the following proposition:

> *P4.* Individuals will have higher levels of identification with organizations that signal predictability, reliable routines, and transparent future horizons because family logics translate those cues as modes whereby identity motives for continuity might be satisfied.

By applying family logics as an FO-supported lens for understanding how individuals' identity motives can be satisfied, the logic of the framework remains consistent with the foundations of SIT. Traditions provide individuals with meaningful links to valued histories, which support positive self-associations. Likewise, FO dimensions of loyalty, trust and interdependency reflect universally relevant mechanisms through which organizations can help individuals satisfy distinctiveness and belongingness needs. Finally, organizations possess tools necessary to cultivate perceived stability, even in the realistic presence of changes. As shown, SIT explains how FO represents organizational-level aspects with which individuals may identify because those aspects indicate capacity to satisfy individuals' needs, whether the organization is a family firm or not. Nonetheless, because of the natural connections FO holds with family firms, we suggest the following proposition:

> *P5.* Because FO cues remain embedded in enduring ownership and relational systems, family logics will be more salient and the indirect effects proposed above will be stronger on average in family firms than in nonfamily firms.

Discussion

This research broadens Lumpkin et al. (2008) proposition that a deeper understanding of individuals' values enables a firm to reflect those values. More specifically, it suggests that organizations, regardless of family status, possess tools for reflecting those values and that firms can use family logics to explain how individuals' psychological needs can be satisfied through organizational-level concepts (i.e. family orientation). This holds important points for both family firms and nonfamily firms.

As initially positioned, FO considered how family affects business (Lumpkin et al., 2008). Those authors called for FO to be considered with other frameworks though, which we did with this research. By considering the psychological needs framework, this research positioned FO as an organizational aspect, a suggestion Lumpkin et al. (2008) also raised, but did not explore. The family logic framework therefore supports their suggestion that FO could be assessed as a firm-level variable. Specifically, those logics may provide a foundation for developing a needs-based assessment aimed at measuring organizations' levels of FO. Many family business scholars use socioemotional wealth (SEW; Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007) to predict and explain family business phenomena. Despite many positive elements, SEW struggles to conceptualize issues that cannot be categorized as pure gains or losses (Calabrò, Torchia, Gomez-Mejia, Pongelli, & Lohe, 2025). Notably, family firms face many decisive tradeoffs. As an example, revealing family status in branding efforts can positively influence the firm (organization) yet simultaneously bring negative images on the business family (Jaufenthaler, 2022; Jaufenthaler, Koll, Lude, & Prügl, 2023; Jaufenthaler & Scott, 2026), creating tension for decision-makers. To complement SEW then, family logics provide a needs-based mechanism capable of contextualizing such tensions (e.g. simultaneous distinctiveness and belongingness motives) and for specifying how organizational cues are translated into perceived identity motive satisfaction. Since recent findings support psychological needs as influencing how people identify with the family firm (Elsbach & Pieper, 2019), our framework offers a promising path toward a measurable framework of FO including identity-related components. Comparative studies would help determine whether the family status of the firm alters the prevalence of family logics. Support for those expectations, as well as the nature of appropriate measurements, would require more investigation though, which we invite family business scholars to consider.

Important implications exist for nonfamily firms as well. Scholars contend FO may exist regardless of the extent to which the firm is involved with founding family members or not (Lumpkin et al., 2008). If true, individuals should be more likely to involve themselves in the firm when the firm reflects what is valuable to the individual, regardless of the firm's family status. Because many existing frameworks emphasize either organizational factors or individual needs in isolation, family logics highlight how organizational-level cues can satisfy individual-level motives and clarify the mechanism through which those cues become psychologically meaningful. Notably, our work only establishes a baseline of mapping the mechanism chain whereby family logics translate FO cues into identity motives, rather than claiming universal dominance of any one dimension. Variation in how people express needs is expected (La Guardia & Ryan, 2007), and working contexts likely shift which cues are most diagnostic (Kim, Misra, & Phillips, 2023). Nonetheless, Propositions 1–5 imply questions related to these issues, and represent a natural agenda for future work.

Beyond the theoretical extensions, several practical ways exist for firms to leverage their inherent strengths to satisfy employees' psychological needs. By emphasizing values such as stability, trust, and loyalty, firms can enhance recruitment and retention efforts, attracting individuals who prioritize a sense of belonging and continuity. Additionally, fostering a culture that reinforces family logics can strengthen employee commitment and satisfaction. Indeed, it appears as if family firms as a group may be uniquely positioned to meet individuals' needs (Proposition 5). That said, nonfamily firms likely stand to benefit from adopting family logics to create a similar environment of stability and trust. Therefore, scholars might also consider comparative studies that help showcase the extent to which family logics' applications and effects differ among firms' orientation.

Conclusion

This research used SIT to showcase how FO, which to date has only been considered in family firm contexts, serves as a framework to satisfy individuals' identity motives. Theoretical and empirical insights suggest that framework includes pathways whereby individuals' needs can be met when organizations, family or not, reflect FO. As such, we used family logics to explain how those pathways emerge. Based on this framework, while family firms do seem naturally positioned to meet individuals' needs, family logics also include plausible applications for nonfamily firms. Indeed, the family logics framework suggests all organizations stand to benefit from studying phenomena in family firms, a proposition offered by Priem & Alfano (2016). Although these logics carry important implications for both family and nonfamily firms, future research is needed to examine how their effects vary across organizational contexts and to assess the extent to which FO-driven mechanisms support employee well-being and identification.

References

Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *The Academy of Management Review*, *14*(1), 20-39, https://doi.org/10.2307/258189.

Ballout, H. I. (2007). Career success: The effects of human capital, person-environment fit and organizational support. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, *22*(8), 741-765, https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940710837705.

Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, *84*(2), 191-215, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.84.2.191.

Baumeister, R. F. (1991). *Meanings of life*, Guilford Press.

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*(3), 497-529, https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497.

Bavelas, J. B., & Segal, L. (1982). Family systems theory: Background and implications. *Journal of Communication*, *32*(3), 99-107, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1982.tb02503.x.

Bertalanffy, L. V., & Woodger, J. H. (1938). *Modern theories of development*, Oxford University Press.

Bradley, S. W., Aldrich, H., Shepherd, D. A., & Wiklund, J. (2011). Resources, environmental change, and survival: Asymmetric paths of young independent and subsidiary organizations. *Strategic Management Journal*, *32*(5), 486-509, https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.887.

Brewer, M. B., Manzi, J. M., & Shaw, J. S. (1993). In-group identification as a function of depersonalization, distinctiveness, and status. *Psychological Science*, *4*(2), 88-92, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.1993.tb00466.x.

Brown, A. D. (2015). Identities and identity work in organizations. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *17*(1), 20-40, https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12035.

Buckley, W. (1967). *Sociology and modern systems theory*, Prentice-Hall.

Calabrò, A., Torchia, M., Gomez-Mejia, L. R., Pongelli, C., & Lohe, F. W. (2025). What are family firms all about? Advancing family business research through socioemotional wealth theory. *Journal of Management Studies*, *63*(3), 1661-1700, https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.13263.

Conroy, S., Henle, C. A., Shore, L., & Stelman, S. (2017). Where there is light, there is dark: A review of the detrimental outcomes of high organizational identification. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *38*(2), 184-203, https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2164.

David, F. R., & David, F. R. (2003). It's time to redraft your mission statement. *Journal of Business Strategy*, *24*(1), 11-14, https://doi.org/10.1108/02756660310508218.

De Massis, A., Kotlar, J., Campopiano, G., & Cassia, L. (2015). The impact of family involvement on SMEs' performance: Theory and evidence. *Journal of Small Business Management*, *53*(4), 924-948, https://doi.org/10.1111/jsbm.12093.

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and the "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, *11*(4), 227-268, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01.

Deci, E. L., Olafsen, A. H., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Self-determination theory in work organizations: The state of a science. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *4*(1), 19-43, https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032516-113108.

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *86*(3), 499-512, https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.86.3.499.

Doherty, W. J., & Colangelo, N. (1984). The family FIRO model: A modest proposal for organizing family treatment. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, *10*(1), 19-29, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.1984.tb00562.x.

Elsbach, K. D., & Pieper, T. M. (2019). How psychological needs motivate family firm identifications and identifiers: A framework and future research agenda. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, *10*(3), 100289. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2019.100289.

Gagné, M., & Deci, E. L. (2005). Self-determination theory and work motivation. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *26*(4), 331-362, https://doi.org/10.1002/job.322.

Gardner, D. G., & Pierce, J. L. (1998). Self-esteem and self-efficacy within the organizational context: An empirical examination. *Group & Organization Management*, *23*(1), 48-70, https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601198231004.

Gittell, J. H. (2002). Coordinating mechanisms in care provider groups: Relational coordination as a mediator and input uncertainty as a moderator of performance effects. *Management Science*, *48*(11), 1408-1426.

Gómez-Mejía, L. R., Haynes, K. T., Núñez-Nickel, M., Jacobson, K. J., & Moyano-Fuentes, J. (2007). Socioemotional wealth and business risks in family-controlled firms: Evidence from Spanish olive oil mills. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *52*(1), 106-137, https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.52.1.106.

Hatch, M. J., & Schultz, M. (2002). The dynamics of organizational identity. *Human Relations*, *55*(8), 989-1018, https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726702055008181.

Howard-Grenville, J., Metzger, M. L., & Meyer, A. D. (2013). Rekindling the flame: Processes of identity resurrection. *Academy of Management Journal*, *56*(1), 113-136, https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.0778.

Inglehart, R., & Baker, W. E. (2000). Modernization, cultural change, and the persistence of traditional values. *American Sociological Review*, *65*(1), 19-51, https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240006500103.

Jaskiewicz, P., & Dyer, W. G. (2017). Addressing the elephant in the room: Disentangling family heterogeneity to advance family business research. *Family Business Review*, *30*(2), 111-118, https://doi.org/10.1177/0894486517700469.

Jaufenthaler, P. (2022). Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder: consumers' and jobseekers' interpretations of the family business brand. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, *32*(5), 697-712, https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-11-2021-3741.

Jaufenthaler, P., & Scott, J. T. (2026). Introducing the business family brand: Managing brand identity, image, and reputation. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, *17*(1), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2026.100717.

Jaufenthaler, P., Koll, O., Lude, M., & Prügl, R. (2023). Country differences in family firm reputation: An exploration in Germany, India, and the United States. *Family Business Review*, *36*(4), 352-374, https://doi.org/10.1177/08944865231192339.

Johnson, M. D., Morgeson, F. P., Ilgen, D. R., Meyer, C. J., & Lloyd, J. W. (2006). Multiple professional identities: examining differences in identification across work-related targets. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91*(2), 498-506, https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.2.498.

Judge, T. A., Jackson, C. L., Shaw, J. C., Scott, B. A., & Rich, B. L. (2007). Self-efficacy and work-related performance: The integral role of individual differences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *92*(1), 107-127, https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.1.107.

Kim, M. S., Misra, K., & Phillips, J. M. (2023). Individual differences in reactions to work location decisions. *Organization Management Journal*, *20*(1), 17-29, https://doi.org/10.1108/OMJ-06-2021-1281.

King, L. A., Mattimore, L. K., King, D. W., & Adams, G. A. (1995). Family support inventory for workers: A new measure of perceived social support from family members. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *16*(3), 235-258, https://doi.org/10.1002/job.4030160306.

Kuvaas, B., Buch, R., Weibel, A., Dysvik, A., & Nerstad, C. G. L. (2017). Do intrinsic and extrinsic motivation relate differently to employee outcomes? *Journal of Economic Psychology*, *61*, 244-258, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joep.2017.05.004.

La Guardia, J. G., & Ryan, R. M. (2007). Why identities fluctuate: Variability in traits as a function of situational variations in autonomy support. *Journal of Personality*, *75*(6), 1205-1228, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2007.00473.x.

La Guardia, J. G., Ryan, R. M., Couchman, C. E., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Within-person variation in security of attachment: A self-determination theory perspective on attachment, need fulfillment, and well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *79*(3), 367-384, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.79.3.367.

Le Breton–Miller, I., & Miller, D. (2006). Why do some family businesses out–compete? Governance, long–term orientations, and sustainable capability. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *30*(6), 731-746, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-6520.2006.00147.x.

Leary, M. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. *Advances in experimental social psychology*, *32*, 1-62.

Leary, M. R., Schreindorfer, L. S., & Haupt, A. L. (1995). The role of low self-esteem in emotional and behavioral problems: Why is low self-esteem dysfunctional? *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, *14*(3), 297-314, https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.1995.14.3.297.

Lorinkova, N. M., & Perry, S. J. (2019). The importance of group-focused transformational leadership and felt obligation for helping and group performance. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *40*(3), 231-247, https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2322.

Lumpkin, G. T., Martin, W., & Vaughn, M. (2008). Family orientation: Individual-level influences on family firm outcomes. *Family Business Review*, *21*(2), 127-138, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-6248.2008.00120.x.

Miller, D., Steier, L., & Le Breton-Miller, I. (2003). Lost in time: Intergenerational succession, change, and failure in family business. *Journal of Business Venturing*, *18*(4), 513-531, https://doi.org/10.1016/S0883-9026(03)00058-2.

Neckebrouck, J., Schulze, W., & Zellweger, T. (2018). Are family firms good employers? *Academy of Management Journal*, *61*(2), 553-585, https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2016.0765.

Paul, K. I., & Batinic, B. (2010). The need for work: Jahoda's latent functions of employment in a representative sample of the German population. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *31*(1), 45-64, https://doi.org/10.1002/job.622.

Pierce, J. L., & Gardner, D. G. (2004). Self-esteem within the work and organizational context: A review of the organization-based self-esteem literature. *Journal of Management*, *30*(5), 591-622, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jm.2003.10.001.

Priem, R. L., & Alfano, F. (2016). Setting new directions for the management discipline through family business research. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, *7*(1), 58-62, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2016.01.001.

Rosenberg, M., Schooler, C., Schoenbach, C., & Rosenberg, F. (1995). Global self-esteem and specific self-esteem: Different concepts, different outcomes. *American Sociological Review*, *60*(1), 141-156, https://doi.org/10.2307/2096350.

Samimi, E., & Sydow, J. (2021). Human resource management in project-based organizations: Revisiting the permanency assumption. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *32*(1), 49-83, https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2020.1783346.

Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership*, John Wiley & Sons, *2*.

Schmidts, T., & Shepherd, D. (2015). Social identity and family business: Exploring family social capital. *Journal of Family Business Management*, *5*(2), 157-181, https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-04-2015-0018.

Schultz, M., & Hernes, T. (2020). Temporal interplay between strategy and identity: Punctuated, subsumed, and sustained modes. *Strategic Organization*, *18*(1), 106-135, https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127019843834.

Sedikides, C. (1993). Assessment, enhancement, and verification determinants of the self-evaluation process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *65*(2), 317-338, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.65.2.317.

Steger, M. F., Kashdan, T. B., & Oishi, S. (2008). Being good by doing good: Daily eudaimonic activity and well-being. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *42*(1), 22-42, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2007.03.004.

Tafarodi, R. W., & Swann, W. B., Jr, (1995). Self-liking and self-competence as dimensions of global self-esteem: initial validation of a measure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *65*(2), 322-342, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa6502_8.

Tajfel, H. (1974). Social identity and intergroup behaviour. *Social Science Information*, *13*(2), 65-93, https://doi.org/10.1177/053901847401300204.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories: Studies in social psychology*, Cup Archive.

Thrasher, G., Dickson, M., Biermeier-Hanson, B., & Najor-Durack, A. (2020). Social identity theory and leader-member exchange: Individual, dyadic and situational factors affecting the relationship between leader-member exchange and job performance. *Organization Management Journal*, *17*(3), 133-152, https://doi.org/10.1108/OMJ-04-2019-0719.

Van den Broeck, A., De Cuyper, N., De Witte, H., & Vansteenkiste, M. (2010). Not all job demands as equal: Differentiating job hindrances and job challenges in the job Demands-Resources model. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *19*(6), 735-759, https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320903223839.

Van den Broeck, A., Ferris, D. L., Chang, C. H., & Rosen, C. C. (2016). A review of self-determination theory's basic psychological needs at work. *Journal of Management*, *42*(5), 1195-1229, https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316632058.

Vignoles, V. L., Chryssochoou, X., & Breakwell, G. M. (2000). The distinctiveness principle: Identity, meaning, and the bounds of cultural relativity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *4*(4), 337-354, https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0404_4.

Vignoles, V. L., Manzi, C., Regalia, C., Jemmolo, S., & Scabini, E. (2008). Identity motives underlying desired and feared possible future selves. *Journal of Personality*, *76*(5), 1165-1200, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2008.00518.x.

Vignoles, V. L., Regalia, C., Manzi, C., Golledge, J., & Scabini, E. (2006). Beyond self-esteem: Influence of multiple motives on identity construction. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *90*(2), 308-333, https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.2.308.

Von Bertalanffy, L. (1972). The history and status of general systems theory. *Academy of Management Journal*, *15*(4), 407-426, https://doi.org/10.2307/255139.

Whetten, D. A., & Mackey, A. (2002). A social actor conception of organizational identity and its implications for the study of organizational reputation. *Business & Society*, *41*(4), 393-414, https://doi.org/10.1177/0007650302238775.

Williams, S. D., & Williams, J. R. (2017). Employee narcissism's implications for performance management: A review and research directions. *Organization Management Journal*, *14*(4), 198-212, https://doi.org/10.1080/15416518.2017.1383880.

Wu, D., & Huang, J. L. (2024). Gig work and gig workers: An integrative review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *45*(2), 183-208, https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2775.

Zattoni, A., Gnan, L., & Huse, M. (2015). Does family involvement influence firm performance? Exploring the mediating effects of board processes and tasks. *Journal of Management*, *41*(4), 1214-1243, https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206312463936.

About the authors

Justin T. Scott is an Assistant Professor of Management at the University of North Alabama. He primarily teaches strategic management, and helps students uncover the mechanisms that truly drive the performance they hope to achieve. He earned his PhD in Management from the University of South Alabama, and much of his research includes components of family firms. Justin T. Scott is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: jscott29@una.edu

Justin W. Carter serves as an Associate Professor of Management at the University of North Alabama, where he also earned his MBA. His academic credentials further include a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership and a PhD in Human Capital Management. Specializing in supply chain management and business strategy within his teaching portfolio, Dr Carter's research endeavors predominantly focus on the utilization of business simulation games and fostering positive organizational behaviors. He can be reached at jwcarter@una.edu.

Joe Hair is the Director of PhD Program in Business Administration, Mitchell College of Business, University of South Alabama, USA. Joe is ranked no. 1 globally in Multivariate Data Analysis, Marketing, SEM and PLS-SEM. Joe has co-authored over 140 editions of his books and has published 170+ articles in scholarly journals such as the *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science*, *Organizational Research Methods*, *Harvard Business Review*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Theory & Practice*, *Decision Sciences*, *European Management Journal* and others.