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Family Social Capital in Family Business: A Faith-Based Values Theory

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Abstract

When this study was initiated in 2008, the concept of family social capital was new to the family business discipline. This paper summarizes in-depth qualitative research grounded in owning family experience to understand the nature and source of owning family social capital. *Exploratory research* began with roundtable discussions among family business owners, advisors, and researchers to understand how owning families sustain positive relationships characteristic of family social capital. These discussions revealed that some family business owners rely on their family faith to sustain and establish ethical norms. A follow-up review in the family studies literature revealed that many families rely on family faith practices and faith-based narratives to reinforce ethical norms that strengthen family relationships. Based on these findings, researchers developed hypotheses to guide additional research. Four owning families affiliated with different Christian denominations participated in *in-depth qualitative research* that supports hypotheses. Interviews and archival data revealed very similar faith-based practices, beliefs, and values across the four owning families. And additional qualitative evidence indicated positive connections between values-based family social capital and family owner succession, business performance, and community support. Theoretical relationships derived from qualitative data are summarized in a Faith-Based Values Theory of Family Business.

Keywords Family business ethics · Family faith · Family social capital · Qualitative research

Introduction

This paper responds to a call for increased understanding of how owners establish ethical values (Adams et al., 1996; Vazquez, 2018) and family social capital in their family businesses (Arregle et al., 2007; Hoffman et al., 2006; Sorenson & Bierman, 2009). First, this study summarizes exploratory research that found positive connections between faith-based values and family social capital. Hypotheses were developed from these findings. Then in-depth qualitative research of four business families from different Christian denominations found positive relationships as hypothesized between

family faith and faith-based values, and between faith-based values and family social capital.

Family social capital (FSC) refers to relationships of trust, goodwill, and cooperation among family business owners and their employees (Arregle et al., 2007; Hoffman et al., 2006; Sorenson & Bierman, 2009). Research indicates that ethical family norms produce positive family relationships across generations (Duh et al., 2010; Sharma & Sharma, 2011). For example, Sorenson et al. (2009) found that ethical norms and positive values are both associated with collaboration. Together with positive values and ethical norms, collaboration produces positive relationships in business families (see also Rahim, 1983; Sorenson et al., 2009). Because family businesses rely on informal relationships instead of formal rules and structures (Adams et al., 1996; Hoffman et al., 2006; Sorenson, 2009), positive and ethical relationships are crucial to family business interactions.

The findings of this study are consistent with recent studies in a special issue of *JBE* examining connections between family religion and family business. For example, Kavas et al. (2020) analyzed how religious values transfer across generations. They found that religious practice strengthens

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faith-based values. In turn, these values strengthen cohesion and loyalty within the owning family, which also provide bases for shared purposes and consensual decision making (see Rahim, 1983; Sorenson, 1999). Moreover, the Kavas et al. study (2020) aligns with and helps explain Vazquez's (2018) finding that family businesses rely extensively on internalization of owning family values and less on formal rules and regulations in governing their businesses (Adams et al., 1996).

Fathallah et al. (2020) found that family firms that have similar faith-based values may have different logics for their applications in Muslim and Christian controlled family firms. Muslim families used a rules-based logic to promote values in their firms. And Christian families used principle-based logics for promoting values.

Additional research found a connection between values and family identities. This type of research is referred to as "identity work." According to Brown (2017, p. 298) identity work describes ways people create, adapt, claim, or reject potential identities. Dieleman and Koning (2020) find that identities are relational and aspirational, both characteristics associated with family religion, which may lead family members to identify with faith-based values. When business-owning families adopt belief systems associated with religion, they also adopt values and practices of those belief systems. Specifically, the grounded research findings in this study support positive relationships between faith beliefs, family faith practices, faith-based values, and family social capital. Recent research also suggests that business families iteratively reproduce family values over successive generations (see also, Barbera et al., 2020).

Because the concept of family social capital was new to the family business discipline when this study was initiated, grounded research methods were employed to better understand FSC. As will be described below, beginning in 2008 three focus group conferences engaged family business owners, researchers, and consultants in dialog to explore the nature and sources of FSC (see Sorenson & Bierman, 2009; Sorenson, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c; and Sorenson, 2013). In the second conference, family business owners indicated they rely on their family religion to establish ethical values that are supportive of FSC (see also Adams et al., 1996; Duh, et al., 2010; Sorenson, 2013). The in-depth follow-up study described in this paper finds that active involvement in family faith is highly associated with the presence of faith-based values in owning families and their businesses (Adams et al., 1996; Hoy & Verser, 1994). The present study also finds that to sustain family firm values, owning families hire, promote, and reward employees whose values are like their own.

Below, we summarize family social capital research designed to answer this question: How do family business owners strengthen family social capital? Next, we use exploratory research to develop hypotheses, and then we employ qualitative research to test hypotheses. Finally, we summarize our findings in a Theory of Faith-Based Family Business. We also offer additional testable hypotheses based on the theory and research findings.

Family Social Capital Research in Family Business

Family social capital (FSC) refers to social relationships of goodwill and trust within business-owning families (e.g., Adler & Kwon, 1999; Arregle et al., 2007; Danes & Stafford, 2011). The concept of social capital was introduced in the sociology literature (e.g., Coleman, 1988; Lesser, 2000; Putnam, 1993, 2000). Researchers found that forming relationships among strangers develops "social capital" that could be employed for community development (Lesser, 2000). According to Coleman (1988), the subdimensions of social capital are *structural*—information channels among people; *cognitive*—common obligations and expectations; and *relational*—social relationships that enable social action.

Researchers indicate that compared to publicly owned firms, family-owned firms have the potential competitive advantage of existing social relationships within the owning family labeled as "family social capital" (Arregle et al., 2007; Hoffman et al., 2006). Four foundational studies in the family business discipline provide bases for development of the *family* social capital construct. First, using an existing family business database, Hoelscher (2002) assembled measures of structural, cognitive, and relational subdimensions of family social capital (Coleman, 1988) and found a significant positive relationship between family social capital and family firm performance. Second, based on Hoelscher's research, Hoffman, et al. (2006) developed a theory of family social capital. They argued that high levels of FSC provide the following advantages to family-owned firms: reduce human resource and transaction costs, enhance communication efficiency, provide motivation, and enhance business reputation (see also Aronoff, 2004; Tagiuri & Davis, 1996). Third, Pearson et al. (2008) further defined the structural, cognitive, and relationship subdimensions of FSC (Coleman, 1988; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). And fourth, Carr et al. (2011) developed a survey questionnaire for the structural, cognitive, and relational subdimensions of FSC.

The following overview summarizes the nature of two social capital dimensions in family business. The *structural dimension* of FSC refers to connectivity and density of social ties developed through shared experiences (Coleman, 1988). Common family experiences help establish trust, norms, and identity among family members (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Pearson et al., 2008) that enable them to work together (Adler & Kwon, 2000, 2002). Social structure ties within family businesses transcend non-family businesses in both

abundance and intensity (e.g., Arregle et al., 2007; Pearson et al., 2008). The *cognitive dimension* of FSC represents shared meanings (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998), including shared vision and purpose based on common family experiences (Tsai & Ghoshal, 1998). Extensive family history promotes shared perspectives and meanings. The *relational dimension* of FSC refers to familial relationships. Family relationships are strengthened by common identity, trust, norms, and obligations (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Pearson et al., 2008). Thus, the presence of all three subdimensions in families suggests potential for high levels of social capital in business-owning families.

When this research was initiated in 2008, little data-based research about family social capital was available in the family business literature. However, home economics researchers together with the National Cooperative Extension Service sponsored a national study of family businesses (see Danes et al., 2009). Measures in that study included family tension and functionality, both indicators of family social capital (see Danes & Stafford, 2011). Labeled the National Family Business Survey (NFBS), two waves of data (1997 and 2000) obtained a probability sample of family firms in the United States (U.S.). The sample included 1100 households.

NFBS research suggests that levels of FSC differ across families (Danes & Stafford, 2011). For example, business families reported varying levels of family tension, an indicator goodwill and trust characteristic of family social capital. Danes and Stafford (2011) found that 15% of families reported high levels of tension that negatively affected family relationships and business performance. Measures also revealed that 17% of families had very low levels of functionality, limiting ability to cooperate and align on purpose and goals. Thus, NFBS studies suggest that levels of FSC vary across business families. Neither the NFBS studies nor family business research had examined how owning families strengthen FSC. Thus, we engaged research to determine how family business owners strengthen FSC. That research was designed to answer the following research question:

Research Question: How do family business owners strengthen family social capital?

Method

When this research was initiated in 2008, researchers in the family business discipline had not examined how family business owners develop family social capital in their families and their businesses. So, we engaged in exploratory research to develop testable hypotheses. Then, we employed qualitative research methods to test the hypotheses. Below, we summarize our exploratory and qualitative research.

Exploratory Research

Exploratory research regarding family social capital in family business included (1) three focus group conferences to obtain observations from family business owners, advisors, and scholars, (2) a review of relevant family studies research, and (3) examination of applications for Minnesota Family Business of the Year. Below, we summarize our exploratory research and emergent hypotheses that guided the in-depth qualitative case study reported later in this paper.

Beginning in 2008, the Family Business Center at the University of Saint Thomas (U. S.) sponsored three exploratory research conferences in which family business owners, scholars, and consultants engaged in dialog to better understand family social capital. After family social concepts were introduced, participants made observations about the nature of social capital in their own and others' business families (see Sorenson & Bierman, 2009). The second conference held in 2009 addressed how owners promoted FSC in their families. Over half of the family business owners present said they relied on "family faith" to strengthen FSC (e.g., Shepard, 2011). At that time, family business research had not considered either religiosity or family faith as a source for FSC. So, we turned to the family studies literature for insights about potential connections between religion and FSC.

Family studies research indicated that a high percentage of families rely on religion to strengthen family relationships. Specifically, research revealed that 87% of Americans believe in God (see The Gallup Briefing, 2017) and 95% of American married couples were religious (Mahoney et al., 2001). Significantly, religious individuals were more likely to marry, have children, and positively engage in their children's lives (King, 2003; Mahoney et al., 2001; Pearce, 2002; Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2007).

Because the term "family faith" was often used by family business owners in our exploratory conferences, we looked for that term in the family studies literature and found research based on "family faith narratives." Garland (2002) obtained family faith narratives from interviews with families. Multiple family members participated in those interviews. Garland discovered that family members felt ownership of and sometimes contributed to other family members' narratives about family faith. Individual narratives sometimes differed from family narratives. Garland indicated that over time families and individuals "configure and reconfigure" family and individual narratives based on changes in beliefs about God, insights obtained from sources such as the Bible, and personal experiences. Family faith narratives help integrate faith beliefs and practices into the family's way of life.

Based on Garland's research and the conceptualizations of two influential family scholars (Dykstra, 1986; McCubbin

et al., 1993), we offer this definition for family faith narratives: *family faith narratives represent family faith beliefs and values*. Family faith is more fully integrated in families when narratives are part of daily conversations. For participants in our three conferences, family faith beliefs and values were readily evident in family narratives.

For our third multi-stakeholder dialog conference, we followed Garland's (2002) practice of inviting multiple family members from each family to represent "family faith narratives." This conference revealed that business-owning families engage in similar practices to reinforce faith beliefs. Faith practices include church attendance, prayer, Bible reading, and family dialog about family faith beliefs. Faith beliefs center on belief in God. Faith-based dialogs describe beliefs and values that define "who we are as a family" and "how we do things."

In our third conference, two family members from different generations represented their families' Christian, Buddhist, or Jewish family faith narratives. Family members were highly engaged in narratives that described how faith beliefs anchored their families' "way of life." Some indicated that religious worship, rituals, and symbols were included in family owner meetings. For example, Jewish and Seventh Day Adventist families, each with more than 200 family shareholders, engaged in worship services *during* annual shareholder meetings. These family gatherings strengthened the structural dimension of FCS by reaffirming social ties and family identity. Other owning families held family gatherings on "holy days" so that religious symbols, rituals, and discussions could remind them of common beliefs, consistent with the cognitive dimension of FSC. Narratives included accounts of church attendance, prayer, Bible discussions, stories of faith, and rituals (e.g., baptism, communion, weddings). Family faith practices reinforced family faith beliefs. Narratives of those practices define "who we are" and "what we believe," which strengthen the relational dimension of FSC (Hamilton et al., 2017). Based on this exploratory research, we developed the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Family faith practices sustain family faith beliefs.

Since rigorous faith-based family research was not available in the family business discipline, we turned to family studies research for insights. Research revealed connections between family faith and family values. Abbott et al., (1990, p. 446) found that 80% of Christian families from a variety of denominations have common Bible-based values that could strengthen FSC. These values included commitment and loyalty to family; honest, open, and frequent communication; service; showing appreciation to family members; resolving conflict appropriately; spending family time together; sharing family traditions; and trusting, supporting, and caring for one another.

To better understand the influence of family faith on family business values, we examined values statements included in applications for Minnesota (U.S.) Family Business of the Year between the years of 2011 and 2014. We found that family business owners use Christian values to guide their businesses; the values listed most frequently were being honest, having integrity, working hard, and being ethical. Based on these findings and evidence from our three dialog conferences, we developed the following research hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Common family faith beliefs strengthen common family values.

Owners at our 2009 and 2011 dialog conferences provided much evidence of connections between family values and family social capital. For example, Shepard (2011) indicated that the family values of sincerity, honesty, integrity, and accountability guide their fifth-generation family business. To reinforce faith-based beliefs, the business founder provided wagon rides for employees to attend the church of their choice. Faith-based family values provided the core for their "family-firm identity" (see p. 200). Shepard (2011) described how core family beliefs and values were revealed in a family book and documentary that helped reunite owners in their 160-year company.

Another third-generation owner said her family archives contain a book of love letters written between dating grandparents that revealed many common faith-based family values. These values formed the foundation for owning family and employee relationships in their large construction business. Those family values included "integrity, responsibility, and love" (see Sorenson, 2014, p. 7). Their church was prominent in family life. Her grandmother not only promoted faith-based family values in her family, but also among employees, and with non-family business board members. Family social capital was evident in second-generation family members who represented the owning family on their business board, on owning family foundations, and in the community (see Sorenson, 2014).

One second-generation owner described high levels of FSC in her regional family appliance sales business. This family had recently celebrated the founder's life. All family members, then in the third generation, received a biography depicting owning family faith and values. Family social capital was evident in extensive family member participation in the business. All five second-generation children were active owner/operators in the business. And 26 third-generation family members worked in the business. Based on these observations of relationships between faith-based family values and family social capital, we offer this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Faith-based family values strengthen family social capital.

During the three dialog conferences described above, family social capital was evident in high levels of family business owner and leader succession, business performance, and community outreach. All owning families prepared high percentages of family members to become owners and leaders. Owners reported positive business performance and growth in industries that included trucking, corporate building care, national hardware distribution, appliance sales, and food ingredient distribution. Moreover, these businesses provided community support for local schools, sports teams, charities, humanitarian causes, churches, and universities.

Additional research reveals a positive relationship between family social capital and business performance (Danes et al., 2009; Kansikas & Murphy, 2011; Sorenson et al., 2009), family entrepreneurship (e.g., Chang et al., 2009; Rodriquez et al., 2009), and family business succession (e.g., Bizri, 2016; Long & Chrisman, 2014; Steier, 2001). Moreover, because it is based in family relationships, family social capital cannot be duplicated in non-family businesses (Herrero, 2018). Based on the above summary of research, we offer this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: Business family social capital is positively related to a) family leader succession, b) business performance, and c) community outreach.

In summary, our exploratory research provided evidence that many business families rely on family faith to strengthen family social capital. Family faith supports the structural, cognitive, and relational subdimensions of family social capital (e.g., Coleman, 1988; Pearson et al., 2008). Family worship, scripture reading, and prayer increase family contact and communication, which contribute to the structural dimension of FSC. Common faith beliefs provide bases for common vision, purpose, and direction that bolster the cognitive subdimension of FSC. And common faith-based values strengthen family relationships consistent with the relational dimension of FSC. Moreover, integrating faith-based beliefs and values into the family narrative provides bases for strengthening family social capital.

To address the four hypotheses derived from exploratory research, we engaged four business-owning families in an in-depth study of faith-based family social capital. During the third dialog conference described above, we found much convergence of family faith among Christian owners (e.g., McCubbin et al., 1993). So, we limited our qualitative case study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to a sample of four Christian families from different denominations (e.g., Schoch, 2020). Three business families from our last focus group conference were joined by a fourth Christian business family. Interviews were designed to reveal narratives related to family faith, family values, and family social capital (e.g., Garland, 2002; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Short & Payne, 2020).

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research methods (see Dyer & Wilkins, 1991; Kammerlander et al., 2015; Massa et al., 2017; Reay, 2014; Salvato & Corbetta, 2013) were used to examine research hypotheses: (1) theoretical sampling (recruiting participants from a specific population, not the general population); (2) simultaneous and iterative data collection and analyses; and (3) constant comparative methods to examine similarities, differences, and consistencies among owning families (see Charmaz, 2006; Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Holton & Walsh, 2017; Schoch, 2020).

Theoretical sampling helped us understand the lived experience of four faith-based owning families (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Holton & Walsh, 2017; Werner, 2008). Criteria for selecting families for the study were (1) two generations worked together in the business and (2) families self-identified as being highly committed to their family faith. Other considerations made in selecting families included differences in (1) Christian denomination, (2) CEO gender, (3) industry, and (4) business life cycle (generation in business). Two businesses fully transitioned leadership to next-generation leaders during the study. Table 1 describes the four families and their businesses.

Data collection and methods in early, middle, and final stages are summarized in Table 2. Interviews occurred across a two-year time span. Appendices A and B summarize interview protocol and data sources. Both initial and follow-up interviews included two or more active family owners representing senior and next generations. These interviews answered questions raised from initial interviews and provided sufficient data for saturation. We also collected data from secondary sources including (1) pre-existing family histories, (2) self-published books on family faith, (3) family business narratives and founder memoirs, and (4) public source materials from company websites and genealogy databases. Notes and memos generated from interviews were archived.

Early-stage analyses began with open coding (see Saldaña, 2013). Data coding included "in vivo" and descriptive summaries of primary and secondary materials (Holton & Walsh, 2017). Independent coding by three analysts was followed by comparative analyses of independent codes, which grouped like-type codes to form the early categories reported in Fig. 1 as "Second-Order Categories." Additionally, these efforts yielded two important outcomes: (1) a values table and (2) an in-depth case portraiture for each owning family.

Table 1 Case descriptions

	Adams	Miller	Brown	Smith
Business founder	Founder(s): *Father and son*	Founder(s): *Siblings*	Founder(s): *Sole founder*	Founder(s): *Sole founder*
Founding context	*Edward Adams founded a trucking business in the 1920s when he built his first semi-trailer. In the 1950s a father and son team founded Adams Trucking Services. Since then, the business has expanded nationally. Today, 3rd and 4th generation brothers/cousins work in the business*	*In the 1930s two brothers started a farming business. In the 1940s they started a plywood business. Since then, the family has successfully started a portfolio of cooperating products/services all held under the Miller Group. Today, 2nd and 3rd generations work together across the growing family corporate holdings*	*Mary Brown started her commercial and building management business in the 1980s when she hired her first "employee-family," as labor for a commercial contract. Since then, her son joined her and continues to innovate and grow the business nationally*	*In the early 1990s, William Smith started a home-based business in seed distribution. Other relatives joined him, and he obtained large-scale distribution contracts. Today, 1st and 2nd generation family members work in the business, while the family prepares for leadership and ownership succession*
Current owners	3rd to 4th Generation (*Sibling/cousin partnership*)	2nd to 3rd Generation (*Sibling partnerships/cousin-consortium*)	1st to 2nd Generation (*Mother–son partnership, sibling partnership*)	1st to 2nd Generation (*Multi-generational family partnership*)
Number of owners working in business	*4 family owners/managers in original family business (in succession process)*	*20 family owners/managers working across cooperating corporate family holdings (7 service/product lines)*	*2 full-time owners/managers currently active in original business (founder and next generation) and 2 part-time 3rd-generation family members having worked in business*	*8 full-time family employees across the corporate family holdings (3 cooperating businesses)*
Next-Gen education	*MBA*	*MBA*	*MBA*	*MBA*
Industry	Transport/Logistics	Manufacturing/Construction	Commercial Property Management	Commodities
Size	350 full-time and over 1500 contract employees	175 full-time employees in all businesses	250–500 full-time employees	40 full-time employees
Faith	Evangelical Free Church	First Evangelical Lutheran	Restored Church of Jesus Christ	Roman Catholic
Community care (illustrative listing)	*Employees* Provided employee families emergency funds. Attended employee funerals. *Local community* Built churches. Served on/supported community boards *Extended communities* Built regional management education center. Provided business education in other countries	*Employees* Engaged employees in identifying and filling local humanitarian needs. Made available marriage counseling for managers *Local community* Donated funds to local charities. Engaged employees in community development projects *Extended communities* Provided humanitarian aid. Extended business education to leaders in other countries	*Employees* Recruited immigrant families for employment. Provided financial and educational guidance to help immigrants adjust to this country *Local community* Donated funds to support immigration, homeless shelters, local emergencies, and hospitals *Extended communities* Supported foundations of affiliated corporations. Contributed funds to support immigration and to respond to emergencies in various communities	*Employees* Provide employees free hot lunches. Built recreation center for employees their families *Local community* Provided immigrants cultural foods and ingredients. Donated food to homeless shelters *Extended communities* Provide holiday foods for employees of customers. Provide food support during emergencies

Table 2 Research overview

	Description of data source	Analytic methods	Key findings
Early	Family Business of the Year Award applications, Minnesota U.S. (reference to faith in applications)	Textual analysis, review of application materials including organization mission, vision, and values statements	Over 50% of applicants mentioned faith beliefs in reference to their mission, values, or practices
	Structured interview transcripts (approximately 550 pages of interview transcripts)	Open coding using descriptive and in vivo coding to identify faith beliefs and practices across each case	Identified faith-based beliefs, values and practices across the family and business system
	Family histories and founder memoirs (3 out of the 4 families)	Narrative re-storying to create in-depth case portraitures	Identified transgenerational value narratives (related to core faith-based beliefs, practices, and values)
Middle	Follow-up interviews (13 additional interviews) produced approximately 1200 pages of interview transcripts	Values coding focused on values and context and used to create values tables	Found a common set of faith-based values embedded in owning family practices across all four cases
	Case portraitures, transcripts, and family histories and business documents and tables generated in prior analysis	Longitudinal analysis to examine consistency and change in faith beliefs and practices and values across generations	Found transgenerational beliefs, practices, and values connected to faith across multiple generations. Also found family businesses defined values through practices
Final	Within-case transgenerational coding tables	Longitudinal analysis (cross-case) to examine the consistency and change across all four cases	A common set of transgenerational faith practices, beliefs, and values-based practices across all four business families
	All data and prior coding tables including memos and research notes	Theoretical coding mapping known variables to salient categories to inform theoretical model	When faith is the source of values in business families, it results in a type of relational capital that can be applied by the owning family to the business and greater community

First, consistent with the hypotheses developed in exploratory research, analysts developed coding tables to identify common beliefs, values, and attitudes across families (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 66). Second, to make sense of family and business contexts, values, and practices over time, analysts developed in-depth case portraitures. Following Ollerenshaw and Creswell (2002), analysts re-storied data into a chronological framework that identified key events and traditions related to beliefs and values. Family histories prior to the business founding helped develop historical context. Analysts identified themes that existed across generations.

Middle-stage analyses used focused coding to identify values across all four cases. Analysts used longitudinal coding (Saldaña & Corbetta, 2013) to summarize values expressed in interviews. Important outcomes at this stage included the Transgenerational Tables included in Appendices C1–C3.

Analysts first identified values that existed across context and time. They defined values as "generalized, enduring beliefs about personal and social desirability of modes of conduct or end-states of existence" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 5). Analysts sorted values into categories and indicated whether values referred to the family, the business, or both. Cross-case analyses included values and practices with synonymous meanings aggregated into single-value codes shared across families and businesses. These codes are included in the Coding Overview (see Fig. 1) and used through the remainder of this paper. Second, consistent with hypotheses developed in exploratory research, analysts examined beliefs, values, and practices across time in ancestors, founding generations, and next generations (Saldaña, 2013). Only codes included in two or more generations were retained in Cross-Case Transgenerational Tables (see Appendices C1, C2, and C3).

Final-stage analyses used selective and theoretical coding (see Holton & Walsh, 2017) to determine how salient categories "hung" together. Coding categories were compiled into a quotes table. Once categories reached saturation, they were mapped to aggregate theoretical dimensions (see Fig. 1, Coding Overview). The theoretical dimensions in the coding overview provided the bases for the faith-based values theory.

Findings

The components and relationships of the Theory of Faith-Based Family Business are summarized in Fig. 2. Analyses of narratives produced the four theoretical constructs, research hypotheses, and results. Briefly, the theory is that family faith strengthens family values, family values strengthen business family social capital, and business family social capital produces positive family business
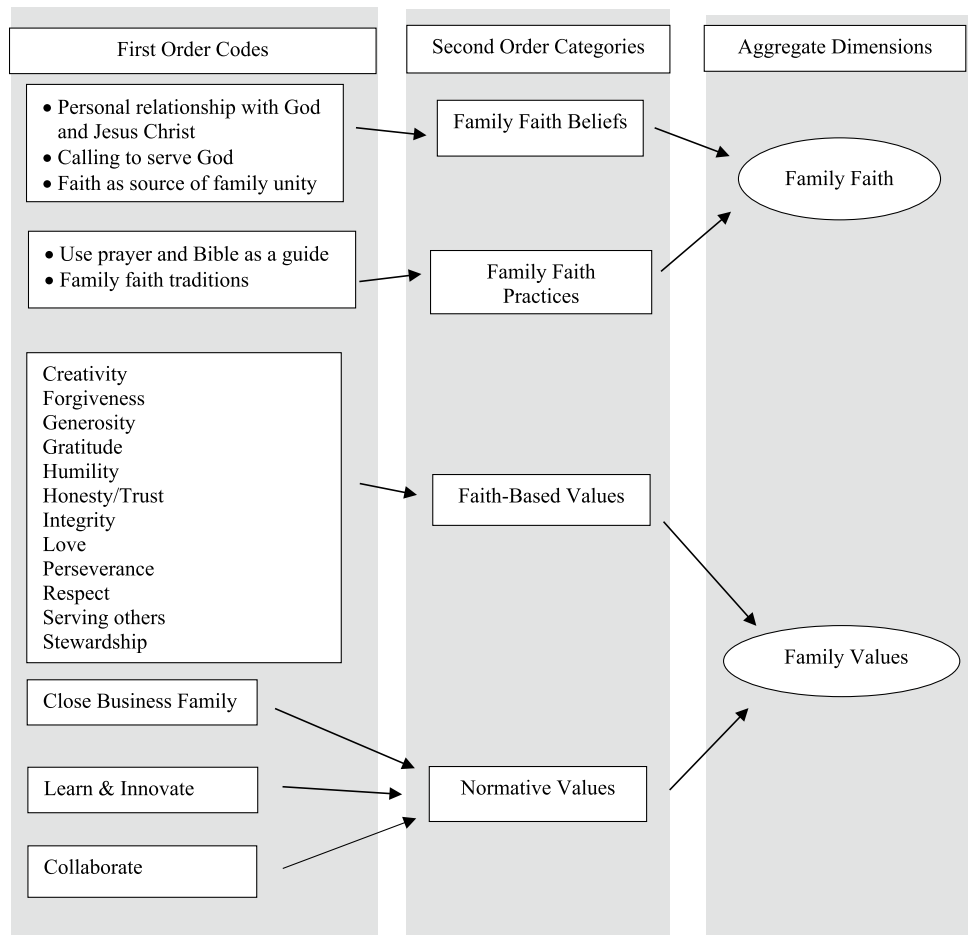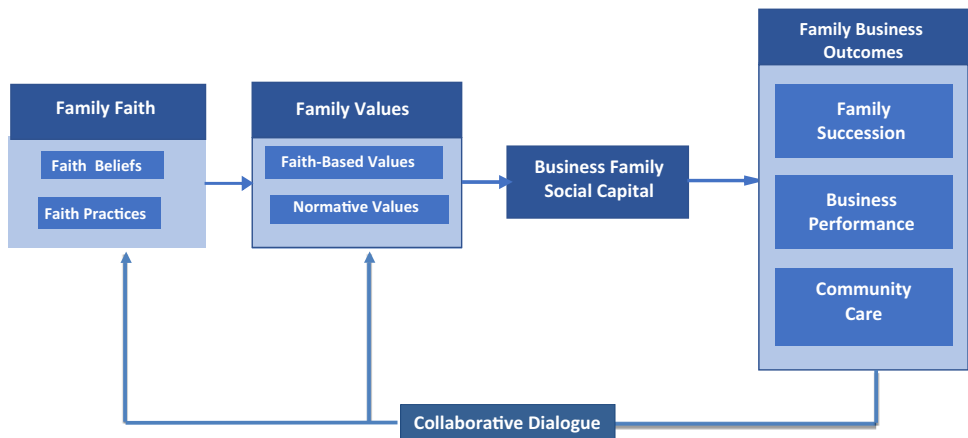
Fig. 1 Coding overview

Fig. 2 Faith-based family business theory

outcomes. Below, we discuss qualitative findings related to the four hypotheses developed in exploratory research. In addition, we provide overall conclusions and implications.

Hypothesis 1: Family faith practices sustain family faith beliefs.

The first dimension in the theoretical model is Family Faith. Family Faith includes Faith Beliefs and Faith Practices (see Appendix C1). Figure 2 suggests an interdependent relationship between subdimensions. Family faith beliefs were associated family faith practices, which included church attendance, Bible reading, and faith discussions. Thus, family faith practices and family faith beliefs were interdependent.

Qualitative data were obtained from *family* faith narratives. Typically, family members supported one another's narratives, sometimes adding their own experiences and perspectives. We selected representative quotations from families to illustrate family practices and beliefs (see Appendix C).

Family Faith Practices

Family faith practices common to all four families were (1) use of prayer and the Bible for guidance and (2) family faith traditions (see Appendix C1).

Use of Prayer and the Bible for Guidance

Individual and family prayer was common in the four families. They prayed before work, family gatherings, and meals. Prayers often included appeals for God's help for families and businesses, and gratitude for help received. One owner reflected, "Every morning they [founder and next generation] are on their knees praying for their family and for their business and for the people that work for them, and every night they go to bed, the same thing, with gratitude." Family members also described individual prayer: "I prayed—in the beginning for years I prayed—Heavenly Father, just send me good people that want work but cannot find it because they don't have the opportunity."

Owning families also read and discussed the Bible (see Appendix C1). One owner indicated that "[the Bible is] the basis of [our] values… a conscience." Another owner said he adhered to Biblical values because they "illustrated again and again with the scriptures… [values as] the rock-solid character and being of God." A third owner described this experience: "My brother once said, … unless we take the Lord into business with us, it will not work. If we will take the Lord into business in whatever we do… the Lord will bless the effort of our hands." I asked, "How do you know that?" He said, "I've been reading the Bible."

Family faith traditions included attending church, discussing family faith, and sharing narratives of faith experiences (see examples in Appendix C1). One owner described his motivation for keeping traditions: "Faith and faith-based values are one generation from disappearing. Sustaining it [faith] is the responsibility of each generation." The four families in this study attended church across their lifespans. In addition, they sang in choirs, hosted church activities, and helped build churches. Parents encouraged children to engage in their faith communities: "I think there was always a high expectation [from parents] about attendance of church… to participate in either serving, teaching [or] fellowshipping."

Family Faith Beliefs

Faith narratives revealed owners' beliefs (see Fig. 1, Appendix C1). Coders organized beliefs into three subcategories: (1) personal relationship with God, (2) calling to serve God, and (3) faith as a source of family unity. Below, we provide an overview of each belief category.

A personal relationship with God was a foundational belief (see Appendix C1). The owners described their relationship with God in personal terms. They described him as a Heavenly Father who wants personal relationships with his children. One owner said, "It's a marked relationship with God that he invites you into…. You can and are to have a personal relationship with Him [God]." Another owner said, "The Lord wants us to bring things to Him in prayer and communicate with Him."

Calling to serve God was described by one owner this way: "Having faith gives you that higher purpose of why you do what you do." A second owner also expressed this obligation: "You have talents, and they are God-given, and you should not waste them." A third owner felt accountable to God, saying, "[Someday God will say to me] you know, I gave you all of this. I gave you the ability to do all these things. Remind me again, what you did with it? Did you spend it on cars? On boats? A fancy corner office?".

Faith as a source of family unity One owner narrative describes how adherence to scriptural truths brings unity. "Lasting unity must be based on truth. The God of the Bible is the source of all truth, does not change, and is the basis for unity. Colossians 1:16–21 says, '[I]n Christ all things hold together.'" Another owner described how adhering to the core values of "integrity, determination, responsibility, excellence, and innovation" creates intergenerational relationships on the "rock-solid character of God." Family archives revealed that faith beliefs were evident in prior generations, including immigrant ancestors.

Based on the preceding summary of family faith practices and beliefs, we offer the following conclusion:

Hypothesis 1 was supported: Family faith practices sustain family faith beliefs.

Qualitative evidence from family narratives consistently found a link between family faith practices and family faith beliefs. Owners frequently quoted the Bible. Their narratives of faith experiences were sincere and specific; their testimonies were convincing. Owners applied specific scriptures to a variety of situations.

The first dimension in the theoretical model, Family Faith, consisted of Family Faith Practices and Family Faith Beliefs (see Fig. 2, Appendix C1). Narratives intertwine family faith practices and family faith beliefs; faith practices strengthen faith beliefs, and faith beliefs motivate the use of faith practices. Family narratives expressed how faith beliefs apply to family and business (see Garland, 2002; Van Buren

& Agle, 1998). The Bible was the common handbook and authority for beliefs. Common faith practices included family prayer, scripture reading, and church attendance. Faith narratives included ancestral faith experiences, beliefs, and practices (Astrachan et al., 2020; Garland, 2002; McCubbin et al., 1993).

The term "family faith" characterizes the four families in this study. "Family religion" often refers to a religious institution. "Family faith" refers to a way of life sustained by family faith beliefs. A theoretical lens for interpreting our qualitative data is Rokeach's (1973) research about *Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values*. Here, we adapt Rokeach's work to the family. According to Rokeach a family belief is any proposition preceded by the phrase, "We (the family) believe that…," defining something as "true or false," "correct or incorrect," and "good or bad" (Rokeach, 1973, p. 113). Consistent with Jastrow (1927), Rokeach asserts

that human minds are primarily "belief seeking" rather than "fact-seeking" (p. 113). Central beliefs influence associated beliefs. Belief in God was the core, central belief for the families in our study.

Hypothesis 2: Family faith beliefs sustain family values.

Coding of family narratives supported the hypothesis that faith beliefs sustain family values. Cross-case coding produced fifteen common family values (see Tables 3 and 4); twelve were faith-based values and three were normative values. We refer to the combination of faith-based and normative values as "family values" (see Fig. 1, Appendix C2). Faith-based values refer to principles for behavior based on faith beliefs. Normative values refer to family expectations that are not tied directly to family faith but are consistent with faith-based values. The fifteen family values

Table 3 Faith-based values

Faith-based values

Three analysts agreed on content and labels for faith-based values and they were categorized as stewardship and relationship values. This table provides descriptive summaries of values. Appendix C2 summarizes coding detail for each of the four owning families that participated in the study

Stewardship values

Creativity was often described as innovation. One owner explained, "We [all people] were made in the image of God the Creator, and all have the capacity for great creativity. As entrepreneurs, we've seen this creativity take shape in our business, …Because we were created by God, we have the capacity for innovation within us"

Generosity was expressed in a variety of ways including tithing, volunteering, and giving back to the community. One owner said, "God has blessed us and in turn we should be a blessing to others (2 Cor. 9:6–15) … giving … our time, talents, treasure and influence." All four families were generous with their employees and communities

Integrity was described by one owner's narrative as "living your values" … "doing the right thing at all times and in all circumstances … [and] conducting ourselves in an upright, honest manner"

Perseverance referred to determination and overcoming challenges. One owner's narrative indicated, "Do hard things." Another owner's narrative referred to the creation: "God didn't start something and not finish it"

Serve others is represented by this narrative statement: "We're a service-oriented culture, serving one another, members of our faith and … within the community"

Stewardship represented felt responsibility. Here are excerpts from one narrative, "Like Adam and Eve we are responsible for preserving and improving a possession [given to them by God] … delayed gratification … and limiting our lifestyle to less than our income… saving, investing, and sharing with generosity" (Ephesians 4:17–29)"

Relationship values

Forgiveness was associated with mercy and grace. For example, one owner indicated, "Grace and mercy are two sides of the same coin, … Recognizing that we are all sinners/human, we should strive to show and receive grace and mercy when mistakes are made." Other owners recognized that none of us are perfect. We all make mistakes that require help from one another

Gratitude was described as thankfulness and appreciation. One owner said about employees, "You probably hear me say every day, 'I can't do it without you. Thanks for being here.'" Another owner thanked God for employees and prayed for them; she promised God she would be "fair, kind and appreciative" to employees God brought to her

Humility was described by one owner as "modesty, selflessness, and love." Other owners indicated that humility means admitting you are wrong and thanking God and others for success

Honesty/Trust was characterized as being truthful, trusting, and trustworthy. One owner described his trust in God: "I am not afraid. The Lord will take care of me." Another owner trusted God to navigate business decisions: "[Trust is] easier when you have a higher purpose and a higher power [God] that can help"

Love was associated with being caring, selfless, and kind. One owner said, "It's my faith. I love them [my employees] and I need them, and they need me, and when we have problems, we just say, 'Okay, we love you.'… It's a healthier way of dealing with life"

Respect was described by one owner heuristically: "It's the Golden Rule. Treat people, no matter who they are, the way you want to be treated." Another owner said, "We always try to be respectful, humble and kind"

Table 4 Normative values

Normative Values: Close Business Family, Learning and Innovation, and Collaboration

Three analysts agreed on the labels and categories for normative values. These values included no reference to family faith and were subcategorized as "close business family," "learn and innovate," and "collaborate"

  Close Business Family. This normative value refers to relationships among owners *and* their employees, who were considered part of the "business family"

    Business family relationships. The business family included family members and employees. For example, teenage family members learned about the business and employees through entry level jobs such as cleaning offices or doing secretarial tasks. And non-family employees became members of the "business family" by participating in picnics, potlucks, or parties. For example, because they were members of the business family, one owning family sent owners to represent the family at employee funerals and held appreciation receptions for retiring employees

  In addition, owners extended support to employees often reserved for one's own family. One owning family established emergency funds for employees, another established a college savings program for children of employees, and a third made free counseling available for employees. Still another owner provided temporary housing for employed immigrant families. This owner spent thousands of dollars onboarding these immigrant families, saying, "I am committed to them [employees] and love them

  We help them with apartments … and financial planning. I have seen their struggles and pray for them"

    Community care includes caring for employees beyond their work role. For example, owners found ways to be supportive of spousal relationships, including providing couple counseling. In addition, company socials included families. And they built relationships by working together as community volunteers. Finally, the family values on which businesses were built created a feeling of "familiness" in the business

  Learning and Innovation. The following normative values were associated with business growth and success

    Learning together began as children became integrated into faith-based values at home. Family faith discussions at home helped set the stage for similar learning discussions a work, particularly as children learned about faith-based values. In the business, employed children joined the business family (owners and employees) at business seminars and lectures where they obtained "a common frame of reference … terminology … and flow of knowledge." One owner said, "If you want to be creative, you have to learn to be a learner, not a knower … Open your mind to new ideas"

    Creating opportunity for self and others promoted individual growth. "We have an obligation to provide opportunities to everybody … So, they can rise up as far as they want to go." One owner expressed the norm this way: "Okay, I'm going to learn and to try. I am going to take this opportunity." Another owner connected innovation with creativity: "We've come up with new technologies that did not exist before … We have 21 patents … Creativity is a core principle. It doesn't sound spiritual to be creative, but it really is"

  Collaboration provided bases for creativity in solving problems in a manner that strengthened relationships

    Developing values-based partnerships indicates that agreements were based on compatible values that helped develop trusting relationships. The four families formalized values to guide them in hiring and retaining employees. One owner said, "One thing about these values … they keep our drivers. The retention of truck drivers [in the industry] is very low … but we have a reputation with drivers [causes] them to stay." Another owner replaced employees in a firm he purchased with employees who had compatible values with his business family. "They [former employees] were all for one and none for all. All for themselves…. It didn't matter to help. It didn't matter to serve the customer … Now we have a new crew"

    Working together to solve problems was expressed by an owner this way: "Our M.O. is, let's talk about it, figure it out. Let's work it through." Another owner described the importance of open communication: "It's hard [having open dialogue] but it's a heck [of] a lot harder *not* having those conversations because that leads to fractures that can be splintering and cratering and dividing relationships." Still another owner described this norm as a "win–win" mentality for developing "collaborative partnerships with stakeholders"

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together with exemplar quotations are summarized below and described more fully in Tables 3 and 4. Appendix C2 provides examples of values as expressed by the four faith-based families. They were based on numerous family quotations, too many to include in this paper. Below, we first discuss faith-based values, followed by normative values.

Faith-Based Values

Because multiple generations worked in their businesses, next-generation family members learned from previous generations. Over time, each owning generation builds on and sustains faith practices, beliefs, and values of the previous generation. Adherence to faith practices (attending church, Bible discussions, and prayer) strengthens faith beliefs. Faith beliefs motivate family members to adopt faith-based values.

Hearing previous generations' narratives of faith-based values persuades the next generation to adopt the same values. One family business owner expressed the importance of sustaining the family faith beliefs and values this way: "We are one generation away from losing the family faith."

Coders identified twelve faith-based values. These values were associated with Bible quotations, statements of faith beliefs and practices, and faith heuristics (e.g., treat others as you want to be treated). Biblical concepts shaped owning family world view: how they treated one another and their approach to business. The four families believed that when they loved God (e.g., Bible, Matthew 22:37) and conformed their lives to God's will, they received God's help. Table 3 summarizes faith-based values, which are subcategorized as stewardship and relationship values. Below, we provide selected quotations to represent each value. Appendix C

provides supporting detail for the four owning families that participated in this study. First, we discuss stewardship and then relationship values.

Stewardship values reflect the Biblical view that stewards manage God's resources for the common good. The six values categorized as stewardship values were creativity, generosity, integrity, perseverance, service to others, and stewardship. Table 3 lists each value together with brief definitions and sample quotations. For example, the value of "stewardship" represented felt responsibility to preserve and improve the family business. The value of "creativity" was often described as innovation. Owners believed that like their Heavenly Father, they have the capacity for creativity to overcome challenges; when they live faith-based values, they receive heavenly help. The value of "generosity" was described as giving back. Since their heavenly father is generous with them, they are generous with one another and their communities.

Relationship values strengthen bonds and connections within the owning family and their employees (see Table 3, Appendix C2). The six values categorized as relationship values are forgiveness, gratitude, humility, honesty/trust, love, and respect. Table 3 includes a description and sample quotation for each value. For example, the value of "love" was described as being "caring, selfless and kind." Love and respect provide a foundation for strong relationships among owners and their associates inside and outside the business. The values of humility and gratitude motivate family members to recognize everyone's contributions. Owners believed that adhering to faith-based values brings heaven's help.

Normative Values

Normative values were not directly tied to the Bible but common across all business families. And they were consistent with faith-based values. Three normative value categories emerged from analyses: close business family, learn and innovate, and collaborate (see Table 4, Appendix C3).

Close business family referred to owning family members and their employees. Teenage children became part of the business family when they accepted basic jobs such as cleaning and filing. Non-family employees became members of the business family through daily interaction and socializing with owners and other employees at picnics, potlucks, and parties. Employees were treated like family; benefits often reserved for owning families were extended to employees, including owner-sponsored college savings programs, marriage counseling, and emergency funds. One owner used personal money and time to on-board immigrants into her business.

Learn and innovate referred to learning together and creating opportunities. *Learning together* meant the business family learned from mistakes and failures. *Creating*

opportunities included both the business family and business partners developing opportunities to progress "as far as they want to go." Owners took informed risks to develop new products and services (see Appendix C, Table 4).

Collaborate included developing values-based partnerships and working together to solve problems. *Develop values-based partnerships* meant that the business family and their partners agreed on common values, which provided a foundation for trusting one another's perspectives and opinions. *Work together to solve problems* involved using open and honest communication to develop "win/win" decisions. For example, one owner spent an entire day working with a vendor to develop a win/win decision that could sustain a long-term relationship.

Based on the qualitative data summarized above (see Appendix C3, Table 4), we offer the following conclusion:

Hypothesis 2 was supported: Family faith beliefs sustain family values.

Evidence from family narratives indicates that similar family faith yields similar family values. The quotations cited above and summarized in Appendix C1 indicate that family faith was the source of faith beliefs, faith practices, and faith-based values in all four families. Family narratives revealed that family practices were highly related to family faith beliefs. In essence, owners believed that when they lived God's values, they received God's help. Even though the four family businesses were in different industries, had varying numbers of employees, and affiliated with different Christian denominations, their Bible-based faith beliefs, practices, and values were very similar.

Discussion Family values define "what is important" and "how we do things" (Rokeach, 1973; Sorenson, 2011c, pp. 160, 230). Based on extensive research about beliefs and values, Rokeach (1973) indicated that some beliefs are stronger and more central than others; he concluded that "a value is a single belief that transcendentally guides actions and judgments across… situations" (1973, p. 160). For the four families in this study, the existence of God is a strong, central belief, which motivated the four families to adhere to God's values at home, at work, and in their communities (e.g., Van Buren & Agle, 1998). They believed that when they kept faith-based family values, they received God's help.

The four families in this study were on the high end of the continuum of family faith. And like most people in the United States, they identified themselves as Christians. However, surveys indicate that U. S. church attendance has steadily declined, indicating lagging commitment to family faith (Washington DC, Pew Research Center, 2019). Future research using a random sample of business families could determine the extent to which the findings in this study apply to families with varying levels of religious beliefs.

In this study, twelve values were labeled "faith-based" values. The other three values were labeled as "normative"

values. Although normative values were present in all four families, unlike "faith-based values," they were not tied to faith in quotations. However, both faith-based and normative values were present in all four families and their employees, and both types of values were labeled "family values." Faith-based values provided the foundation for building close relationships (see Table 3). And normative values provided expectations for interaction within the business family (see Table 4). Because both sets of values were essential to informal and interactive business operating systems, all were bona fide occupational qualifications for hiring, promotion, and dismissal. Leaders in all four businesses personally directed hiring and evaluation processes to insure employees had values compatible with their "values-based operating systems."

Finally, as will be discussed in more depth later, the normative value of collaboration may invite owning family members and their non-family employees to rely on common moral intuitions as a source for values. Common moral intuitions refer to feelings of what is "right or moral" Sorenson et al. (2009) found that collaborative dialog elicits *common moral intuitions*. Research might examine the extent to which collaborative dialog elicits similar moral values among individual who are and are not affiliated with the family faith.

> Research question: To what extent does collaborative dialogue and family faith promote similar moral values in business families?

Hypothesis 3: Family values strengthen business family social capital.

Business family social capital represents trust and goodwill among owners and their employees. Evidence from all four families in this study indicate that family values strengthen the three subdimensions of family social capital—structural, cognitive, and relational. Below, we discuss each dimension.

The structural dimension of business family social capital refers to communication channels within and across systems (e.g., Hoffman et al., 2006). *Within owning families*, in addition to typical family interaction, all four owning families added communication channels and interaction by attending church, engaging in scripture discussions, and interacting as business owners and managers. *Within business families*, informal business meetings and personal communication increase interaction. For example, owners held informal gatherings with employees such as daily luncheons and frequent picnics. Employees were hired and promoted based on values compatibility, which also help strengthen interpersonal bonds (Uhlaner et al., 2015).

The cognitive and relational dimensions of business family social capital refer to common understanding and values-based relationships (e.g., Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Sorenson et al., 2009). *Within owning families,* family narratives based on the Bible, family experiences, and ancestral stories defined values for the owning family. *Within business families,* employees were hired based on their compatibility with family values. Personal interaction combined with instruction help employees learn applications for family values in the business. Continual emphasis on values guide interaction inside and outside the business to promote common expectations (see Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Discussion Faith discussions within the four owning families often led to faith-based applications for their businesses. For example, one owner described how family gatherings for prayer and Bible discussion led to transgenerational discussions about business owner and leader succession. In effect, family faith and family values became a sort of "reciprocal typification of habitualized action" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 54) in which family faith and faith-based values/ norms form a double helix. Family faith practices strengthen belief in God, which reinforces the commitment of the owning family to follow faith-based values.

While family faith anchored owner values, employees were not included in faith discussions. Nevertheless, social capital in the business family was based on family values, both faith-based and normative. Prospective employees were screened for compatible values (e.g., Peters & Waterman, 1982). When hired, non-family employees were integrated into values-based cultures (Moores & Mula, 2000). The nature of faith-based family values (e.g., love, forgiveness, gratitude, honesty) contributed to a sense "familiness" within the business family (see Habbershon & Williams, 1999).

The concept of "business family social capital" is supported by other family business researchers. One study of over one thousand family-owned firms finds that non-family employees develop social capital like that of owning families (Sanchez-Famoso et al., 2014). Consistent with this study, these "family-like" relationships tend to promote collaboration and innovation. Another study indicates that attempts to replicate "family social capital" in non-family firms are unsuccessful (Herrero, 2018). In summary, this study indicates that business family social capital is sustained when owners promote family values in their firms, and select, retain, and promote employees based on family values.

Hypothesis 3 was supported: : Family values strengthen business family social capital.

Evidence from all four families indicate that family faith promotes family values and that family values are positively associated with business family social capital (see Tables 3 & 4). Common family faith practices yield similar faith beliefs, and family faith beliefs are associated with adopting

family values. Below, we theorize how family faith and family values contribute to owning and business family social capital.

Family social capital within the owning family Trusting and cooperative relationships within the owning family provide bases for family social capital (Hoffman et al., 2006; Sorenson, 2011b). And family social capital enables the family to engage in collective action (Adler & Kwon, 1999; Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993, 2000). The four owning families in this study strengthened family social capital by relying on family faith to develop common family values (see Tables 3 & 4; Putnam, 2000). Family faith helped develop a moral infrastructure for the family (Hoffman et al., 2006; Putnam, 1993; Sorenson, 2013). Based on our qualitative data, we propose theoretical relationships between owning family faith and family values using a 2 × 2 matrix. We theorize that levels of family social capital will vary according to commitment to 1) family faith and 2) family values. High levels of family social capital occur when family members are highly committed to both family faith and family values.

To illustrate, one family business owner in this study hired his older brother as a manager. However, the owner's brother was not committed to the owner's family values. Differences in values reduced the levels of family social capital resulting in the older brother leaving the business. In contrast, two brothers in another family business were both highly committed to and frequently engaged in dialog about their family faith and family values. These two brothers had high levels of family social capital and close working relationships throughout their careers. Thus, we propose that high levels of family social capital exist within owning families when family member owners/operators are highly committed to and engage in dialog about family faith and family values.

Hypothesis: Family social capital is strengthened by family member commitment to and dialog about family faith and family values.

Family faith practices as bases for family faith Bases for developing family faith are family faith practices. Family faith practices develop faith beliefs, which motivate adoption of family values. In this study, senior-generation faith practices motivated next-generation family members to engage in similar practices. For example, one family business owner took morning "prayer walks" and shared these experiences in family dialog. Later, next-generation children voluntarily took prayer walks. When parents provided meals for the community, children participated in and later developed similar community service. When parents and ancestors describe their experiences of teaching and service, some descendants engaged in similar experiences. Thus, we offer the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Senior generation dialog about family faith practices is associated with similar faith practices in the next generation.

Common values within the business family Sustaining family values in the business family, both owners and employees, was a high priority for all four family businesses. Common family values provided consistent guidelines for interactions in the business family. One could visualize the business family within a 2 × 2 framework with owners anchoring one dimension and employees the other. The higher the commitment to family values, the higher the levels of business family social capital. Diligent family faith practices strengthen faith beliefs, which motivate the owning family to sustain family values. Screening prospective employees and promoting them based on family values sustain business family values. Thus, we offer the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Within the business family (owners and employees), commitment to family values is positively correlated with the presence of business family social capital.

Hypothesis 4: Business family social capital is positively related to positive family business outcomes.

Although firm performance was not a criterion for selecting business owners to participate in this study, we observed high levels of three common business outcomes in all four family businesses. Below, we segment discussion of results into hypotheses addressing 4a) family leader succession, 4b) family business performance, and 4c) community care. As will be shown below, qualitative findings support all three outcomes. Illustrative results are summarized below and in Table 1.

Hypothesis 4a was supported: All four family businesses had high levels of family leader succession. Previous research suggests a link between *owner* religiosity and succession intentions (Shen & Su, 2017, see Table 1). A recent study (Barbera et al., 2020) found that common religious values across generations increases "intergenerational solidarity" that likely promotes succession (see also Bengston & Roberts, 1991). In this study, we observed consistent positive relationships between strength of intergenerational family faith and succession of ownership and leadership. Multiple generations within all four families exhibited high levels of both family faith beliefs and practices that helped develop high levels of family social capital in owning families.

Correspondingly, there were high levels of leader and owner succession in all four owning families (see Table 1). Four out of five siblings were senior managers for the Adams family. Twenty next-generation family members held manager/supervisory positions in the Miller family. Both sons

had been senior managers in the Brown family and one son is the current CEO. And a daughter and cousins held senior management position for the Smith family (see Table 1). Given these results across the four families, we offer the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis: Faith-based family social capital in family firms is positively associated with leader succession within owning families.

Hypothesis 4b was supported: All four family businesses reported high levels of business performance. Previous research reveals that the combination of owning family and employee social capital promotes family firm innovation (Sanchez-Famoso et al., 2014, see Table 1). In this study, there was much evidence of innovation and growth (see Table 1). The Adams family established a growing national presence in transportation/logistics. The Miller family developed new patents and expanded their manufacturing and construction operations. The Brown family expanded their commercial property management business and were establishing national presence. And the Smith family had tripled their commodities operations and doubled revenues. Based on these findings, we offer this hypothesis.

Hypothesis: Faith-based business family social capital is positively associated with business performance.

Hypothesis 4c was supported: All four businesses engaged in high levels of community outreach. While we did not seek this information, owning family members described providing support for employee families, local communities, and international communities. Based on the caring support provided, we labeled this form of outreach as "community care," which included support for employees, local communities, and extended communities.

Care for *employees* extended beyond typical remuneration (see Table 1). One owning family provided daily hot lunches for employees and built a recreation center for employees and their families. Another offered free marriage counseling to their managers. A third provided a fund for personal family emergencies. The fourth helped immigrant employees obtain housing, community resources, and education. A complete listing of care extended is beyond the scope of this paper. Table 1 and the following description illustrate the nature of community care.

In addition, the four owning families supported their *local communities* (see Table 1). One family built a regional management education facility. Some owning families contributed funds or developed projects for local charities that supported hospitals, emergency services, homeless shelters, and immigrant support. One owning family provided immigrants access to food from their native countries. Another owning

family collaborated with employees to develop and support initiatives for community development.

The owning families also *strengthened communities.* One built a regional management education center. Others provided support for immigration, emergency humanitarian aid, and resources to help with regional or national disasters. Two business families sponsored international education for leader and management development.

Existing measures do not adequately assess the community care described above. For example, Corporate Social Responsibility or CSR (e.g., Campbell, 2007; Discua Cruz, 2020; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001) is a potential measure, but only the dimension of philanthropy out of five dimensions assesses the kind of community care extended owning families in this study. CSR is designed for publicly owned corporations whose owners have few religious beliefs and values in common. For example, Agle and Van Buren (1999) found little evidence of a relationship between measures of religiosity and CSR in public corporations. In contrast, owners in this study have many religious beliefs and values in common. Researchers might more adequately assess community care by developing surveys that include the kind of community outreach exhibited by the family firms in this study (see Table 1). Based on these observations, we offer this hypothesis.

Hypothesis: Faith-based business family social capital in family firms is positively associated with community care.

Theory of Faith-Based Family Business

Consistent with the Theory of Faith-Based Family Business (see Fig. 2), qualitative data supported the following relationships: (1) family faith is positively related to family values, (2) family values are positively associated with family social capital, and (3) family social capital is highly related to family business outcomes. However, the data were obtained from a limited theoretical sample. A next step for research is to determine the extent to which these findings hold true in the general population of family businesses. Survey research using questionnaires developed from these qualitative data could determine representativeness of findings in this study.

In addition, the theoretical model (see Fig. 2) proposes that *collaborative dialog* is the means used to develop common understanding and agreements between the owning family, the business family, and external organizations. Collaboration is one of three normative values included in the faith-based values theory (see Fig. 1 & Appendix C3). The theoretical model (see Fig. 2) suggests that collaborative dialog enables coordination, adaptation, and agreement *among* organizational owners, employees, and business partners (see Sorenson et al., 2009). Collaborative dialog

develops agreements in ways that are respectful and persuasive, not domineering or authoritarian (Brickhouse & Smith, 1996). Moreover, dialog awakens and elicits common moral intuitions among participants that enable them to find common moral ground (Brickhouse & Smith, 1996) on which to base agreements. While we saw evidence of moral dialog in data obtained for this research, more research is required to determine the potential collaborative of dialog for developing agreements and coordination among owners, employees, and business partners. Thus, we offer the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis: Faith-based families rely on collaborative dialog for developing agreements and coordination among owners, employees, and business partners.

Additional research is needed to examine the theoretical relationships described in this study. Random sample surveys that include family businesses across the spectrum of family faith might be used to test hypotheses and to determine applications and limitations of the proposed theory. For example, further research could determine what, if any, differences exist between families guided by faith-based values compared with families guided by common moral intuitions (e.g., Sorenson et al., 2009). In addition, we labeled the combination of faith-based values (see Table 3) and normative values (Table 4) as "family values." Additional research could determine the extent to which family values represent business family values in general.

Research Implications and Conclusion

The Theory of Faith-Based Family Business was developed from qualitative research. Although each family affiliated with different Christian denominations, this study's findings were consistent across the four owning families. Strong family faith was associated with development of values-based business families. Consistent with the faith-based values theory (see Fig. 2), high levels of family faith helped sustain family values, family values provided bases for business family social capital, and business family social capital contributed to family business outcomes. Below, we discuss research contributions and implications for further research.

This study addresses a call for more theory unique to family business (Zahra & Sharma, 2004) that includes "family" as a variable (Dyer, 2003, 2006) and is based on family narratives (Short & Payne, 2020). This research provides insights about how values influence family firm longevity (e.g., Korianen, 2002), unity, ethical leadership, and positive organizational behavior (e.g., Aragón-Amonarriz et al., 2017; Arregle et al., 2007; Distelberg & Blow, 2010; Distelberg & Sorenson, 2009; Duh et al., 2010; Lesser, 2000;

Sirmon & Hitt, 2003; Van Buren & Agle, 1998). This study also contributes to the family business literature that distinguishes family from non-family business (e.g., Duh et al., 2010). Moreover, it contributes to research about transgenerational orientation (see Diaz-Moriana et al., 2020; Zellweger et al., 2011) and adds insights about family social capital (e.g., Barker et al., 2004; Klein, 2008; Lynn et al., 2009; Pearson et al., 2008).

Our research contributes to and extends the dialog about the impact of religiosity and faith in family business (e.g., Discua Cruz, 2014; Ewest, 2018; Gümüsay et al., 2019; Jurkiewicz & Giacalone, 2006; Lynn et al., 2009; Werner, 2008). Specifically, it addresses the role of family faith in promoting family business ethics (Boyle, et al., 2010; Vasquez, 2018), values, succession (Aragón-Amonarriz et al., 2017; Vallejo, 2008), and business outcomes (Astrachan et al., 2002; Danes et al., 2009; Gomez-Mejia et al., 2007; Hoffman et al., 2006; Pearson et al., 2008; Sorenson, 1999).

As discussed previously, this research has limitations. Although our data met guidelines for qualitative research, our theoretical sample was limited. The four families were devout Christians located in the north-central region of the U.S. Survey research using questionnaires developed from qualitative findings in this study could examine relationships among family faith, family values, and family social capital in larger and more diverse populations.

Conclusion

The Faith-Based Family Business Theory described here was based on existing literature and accepted qualitative research procedures (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Reay, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Exploratory research produced four hypotheses regarding owning families: (1) family faith practices sustain family faith beliefs, (2) family faith beliefs foster family values, (3) family values strengthen family social capital, and (4) business family social capital promotes positive family business outcomes. In-depth qualitative research based on four business families obtained family narratives that supported the research hypotheses. Development of this theory is based on qualitative research norms (Eisenhardt, 1989; Massa et al., 2017; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002; Salvato & Corbetta, 2013). Overall, this study contributes to the family business and business ethics literatures by providing insights about the relationship between family faith and family social capital. And it contributes to the family business literature by further defining family values, processes that develop family values, and the relationship of family values to family social capital. In addition, this study suggests how collaborative dialog sustains relationships among the owning family, the business family, and business partners.

Appendix A: Structured Interview Protocol

Interview Schedule for Faith-Based Values in Family Business

Thank you for taking the time to discuss your faith-based values with us. Please use the following list of questions to prepare for our interview. In your review of the questions, take a few moments to reflect on your family and your business and make notes of specific examples that illustrate how you establish faith-based values in your families and your business.

Family

(1) How does faith influence your family's values?
(2) What are the primary faith-based values in your family?
(3) What beliefs, habits, traditions, or religious rituals help to reinforce these values?

Business

(1) How are family faith-based values reflected in your business?
(2) What do you do to instill your family's faith-based values in the business?
(3) What are the biggest challenges to instilling these values in your business?

Appendix B: Data Sources

Adams Case

Primary Data

Interview I (2nd generation [a] [b] and 3rd generation [c] [d]).
   Interview II (2nd [b]).
   Interview III (2nd [c]).
   Interview IV (2nd [b] and non-family employee).

Secondary Data

Memoir of founder (biography w/archival photos, letters, and direct quotes from founder).
   Book written by 2nd generation about faith and family.

Smith Case

Primary Data

Interview I—Introduction (founder [a] and next generation [b]).

Interview II—Structured interview (founder [a] and spouse/copreneur [c]).
   Interview III—Follow-up (spouse copreneur [c] and next generation [b]).
   Interview IV—Follow-up (founder, copreneur, and next generation).
   Interview V—Founder.

Secondary Data

Online, public source materials.
   Business documents (HR materials, mission, and values statements).

Brown Case

Primary Data

Interview I—Introductory interview *(*founder and next generation).
   Interview II—Structured interview (founder and next generation).
   Interview III—Follow-up (founder and next generation).
   Interview IV—Follow-up (founder).
   Interview V—Group (founder [a], 2nd generation [b], w/ daughter in-law [c], and children [d] [e]).
   Interview VI—(2nd generation).

Secondary Data

Biography and online interviews/writing of immigrant ancestors.
   Online archival documents (newspaper clippings, genealogy databases).

Miller Case

Primary Data

Interview I—Introductory interview (2nd-generation senior owner [a]).
   Interview II—Structured interview (2nd and 3rd generation [b]).
   Interview III—(3rd generation [c] [d]).
   Interview IV—(3rd generation [d]).
   Interview V—(2nd generation [a] and 3rd generation [b] [d]).

Secondary Data

Family and founder biography.
   2nd-generation memoir.
   Online archival documents (newspaper clippings, genealogy databases).
   Business documents (mission, vision statements).

Appendix C1: Cross-Case Transgenerational Table—Family Faith

Categories	First-order codes	Smith transgenerational codes	Brown transgenerational codes	Adams transgenerational codes	Miller transgenerational codes
Faith beliefs	Personal relationship with God and Jesus Christ	• We are invited to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ • See Christ as a model for how to treat others	• Have and develop a personal relationship with God and Jesus Christ • See Jesus Christ as a model for how to treat others • Trust in God (everything works out in the end according to God's plan)	• Accountable, responsible to God • Personal responsibility to develop relationship with God and Jesus Christ—each person makes an individual "decision for Christ" • Trust in God—God is a real and present force. Strength comes from this belief which is key to success	• Faith leads to success (in family and business) • Personal responsibility to develop a relationship with God and Christ • Trust in God—God is a real and present influence, things work out in the end when we trust God
	Calling to serve God	• See mission of business to serve God through serving others • With power and choice comes responsibility • Accountable/responsible to God	• See business as a higher calling to serve God • Accountable/responsible to God	• Calling to serve God • People are made in God's image—creative, with free will, and as such should seek ways to serve • Accountable/responsible to God	• See God as partner in the business • People made in God's image—similar to God, we have unlimited creative potential • Accountable/responsible to God
	Faith as source for family unity	• Relationships guided by golden rule—treat others as you want to be treated • Shared faith and values are foundations for marriage and family unity	• Shared faith and belief in God as foundation for marriage and family unity • Faith teaches how to love, forgive, and resolve differences • Family relationships are eternal	• Faith teaches how to be in relationships—guides values, model and teach them—"values are more caught than taught" • Shared faith as a foundation for marriage and family unity	• Shared faith as a foundation in marriage and family unity—"The truth is the way things are from God's perspective" • Eternal life and eternal family relationships
Faith practices	Family faith traditions	• Active in church, serve in roles and in church community • Attending, sending children to faith-based schools • Regular church attendance • Uphold, pass on church traditions—sacraments such as first eucharist, Lent, Advent, and special prayers.	• Active in church leadership and fellowship • Regular, weekly, church attendance • Uphold and pass on family faith traditions—marriage, baptism, family home night, training for priesthood etc.	• Active in church community—started churches, active in leadership • Marry partners of same or similar faith • Regular family gatherings for religious holidays • Regular church attendance—reserve Sunday as a day of worship, prayer • Uphold and pass on faith traditions—baptism, marriage, burial rites, etc.	• Active in church • Regular church attendance—keep the Sabbath • Pass on faith values—living/modeling and talking about them regularly • Uphold family faith traditions—regular family prayers, singing special songs and hymns
	Use prayer and Bible for guidance	• Study of family religion and learning about other faiths • Pray together as a family and as individuals	• Pray when making decisions—ask for God's help and guidance • Study scripture	• Use prayer to guide decision making • Personal prayer and Bible study • Bible as *the* foundation for family values	• Use prayer when making decisions—invite God's influence, "prayer walking" • Use Bible as basis for teaching family values Bible study across families, cousins

Appendix C2: Cross-Case Transgenerational Table—Faith-Based Values

First order codes	Smith Transgenerational codes	Brown Transgenerational codes	Adams Transgenerational codes	Miller Transgenerational codes
Creativity	• ***not directly addressed in conversations with owners	• Learn to be different • Be pro-active	• Be innovative and resourceful • Seek new opportunities	• Reflect our creator • Being innovative and open to new things
Forgiveness	• Show compassion and mercy with others • Help one another overcome mistakes	• Being sensitive to other's suffering • Have/showing compassion	• Grace and mercy when we/others make mistakes • "We are not perfect."	• Show compassion /mercy for others • Know we all sin and are redeemed through Christ
Generosity	• Give to those in need • "Give inconspicuously, because you can and it's the right thing to do"	• Charitable giving • Go above and beyond what is "expected"	• Give and tithe (at church and in community)	• Being charitable • Live principles of tithing • "Joyful giving"
Gratitude	• Appreciate others, tell employees "I can't do it without you"	• Appreciate contribution of others • Be thankful for what you have	• Express appreciation for others	• Be thankful, appreciative of others
Honesty/ Trust	• Be open and honest in your communication	• Be open and truthful • We depend on each other—when there are problems, we "circle the wagons"	• Be truthful in what you say and do • "Trust has to start somewhere"	• Be open and truthful
Humility	• Be modest and selfless—think of others	• "If you are humble and grateful, success will follow"	• Being humble, means you admit mistakes	• Give glory to God • Be aware of strengths and weaknesses
Integrity	• Be fair and lead with values, by example • Hold family and non-family employee to the same standards	• Modeling values • Share stories about what is "right" and important	• Be responsible, hold others to do the right thing • Live your values—"walk the talk" • "Values are more caught than taught"	• Live values • Maintain family name and reputation • Share stories about what is important and how to do the right thing
Love	• Love like Christ—"love one another as I have loved you"	• Have care and concern for others	• Care for others—care for employees	• Show care for others
Perseverance	• Overcome challenges by working together • Don't give up	• Determination to do what is right, even when it's hard • "Do the hard things now, so you don't have to do harder things later."	• Determination, and excellence • Never give up • Take risks • See challenges as opportunities • Responsibility to do the right thing	• Work ethic • Determination • Work through difficulties • Optimism • Stay positive in face of adversity
Respect	• Live by the Golden Rule—treat others as you want to be treated	• "Take care of the people that take care of you"	• Respect—treat people "right"	• Honor and respect others who like us are made in God's image
Serve others	• Serve others is what God wants from us • If you feel the need to serve and act on it, you are living your purpose	• Seek opportunities to serve others • Serve through developing employees and community	• Putting others before yourself	• Serve others • Help others with your time, labor, and talents
Stewardship	• Be modest • Avoid excess • Preserve working capital	• Provident living • Independence • Freedom • Self-reliance	• Take care of what you have been given	• Thrift • Manage resources for the long term

Appendix C3: Cross-Case Transgenerational Table—Normative Values

Categories	First order codes	Smith Transgenerational codes	Brown Transgenerational codes	Adams Transgenerational codes	Miller Transgenerational codes
Close business family	Business family relationships	• Keep family close, frequent interaction • Involve children in business learning • Dedicate time for "fun" at home and work • Multiple generations work together in business	• Stay together as a family • Hold "fun" gatherings at home and business • Involve children in business learning • Multiple generations work together in business	• Much interaction between family owners and employees • Children involved in business learning • Dedicate time for "fun" • Multiple generations work together in business	• "Choose" to develop family relationships • Children involved in business learning • Dedicate time for "fun" • Multiple generations work in the business
	Community care	• Care for employees beyond work role • Volunteer and serve in community • Supportive spousal relationships	• Care for employees beyond work role • Volunteer and serve in community • Supportive spousal relationships	• Care for employees beyond work role ◦ Use values to drive family business—lead by example ◦ Volunteer and serve in community • Supportive spousal relationships	• Care for employees beyond work role • Use values to drive family business • Volunteer in the community • Supportive spousal relationships
Learn & Innovate	Learn together	• Life-long learning (continue to develop and learn) • Learn together (as a family and as a business) • Seek outside expertise and ideas for the business	• Be different—never stop learning • Learn from failure—"know your failure story" • Gain knowledge and inspiration from others (stories of ancestors, other family members, outside experts, peer groups—surround yourself with "smart people")	• Learn together as a family • Open communication about business decisions—solicit employee input opportunities • Seek outside expertise and ideas for the business • Develop new skills • Value education	• Be curious—be a seeker vs a knower • Learn together from mistakes—yours and others • Seek outside expertise and ideas for the business to develop new skills and knowledge
	Create opportunity for self and others	• Grow business both vertically and horizontally • Look for opportunities to add value for customer and for business • "No margin, no mission" • Seek opportunities to develop new products and services	• Grow the business parallel to employee talent—help with education financial planning, make and meet long-term goals, etc. • Seek opportunity for self and others • Take informed risks	• Provide opportunity for employee advancement (e.g., option to lease to own truck) • Seek opportunities to develop new products/services • Transform challenges into opportunity • Take informed risk—"only mistake was doing nothing"	• Provide opportunity for next-generation advancement—innovate, add cooperating product lines/businesses • Seek opportunities to develop new products/services • Transform challenges into opportunities • Take informed risks • Innovate—disrupt the market, don't be disrupted by it

Categories	First order codes	Smith Transgenerational codes	Brown Transgenerational codes	Adams Transgenerational codes	Miller Transgenerational codes
	Develop values-based partnerships	• Hire employees whose values fit with core company values—hire on referral only • Develop trust-based partnerships • Be transparent and serve mutual interests • Value employees—"work with me not for me" • Use core family values to drive the business	• Hire employees whose values fit with core company values • Pipeline of "employee families" • Slow to hire, quick to fire • Value employees—"can't do it without them" • Use core family values to drive the business	• Hire and retain employees based on a values fit • Develop values metric for recruiting and developing employees • Develop trust-based partnerships • Value employee contributions and efforts • Use core family values to drive the business	• Hire and retain employees based on a values fit • Use charter for business deals which is grounded in core values • Develop trust-based partnerships • Value others' opinions—open to other ways of thinking (intellectual hospitality) • Use core family values to drive the business
	Work Together to Solve Problems	• Open, honest communication • Work together to solve problems and find mutual solutions	• Open, honest communication • Work together to solve problems • Can't fix the problem unless we openly communicate about it	• Open, honest communication—work through problems together • Work with others for mutual benefit	• Open, honest communication—work through problems together • Work with others for mutual benefit • Win/win or no deal • Long-term relationships with distributors

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