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Tracing the Roots of Constructive Conflict Management in Family Firms

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Abstract

The overlap between family and business systems creates a particular bundle of resources, which is a specific familiness that may determine how family firms positively or negatively manage their conflicts. In this article, we review the current research on conflict management and family firms and suggest theoretical propositions about the influence of familiness in constructive conflict management in family firms. We propose that specific levels of structural, cognitive, and relational dimensions of familiness configure a specific arrangement of resources that we conceptualized as collaborative familiness, which enhances constructive conflict. We discuss the main implications of this conceptualization in terms of its theoretical contributions, further research, and practice.

Introduction

Family firms play a significant role in the development of economies and societies (Basco, 2015; Memili, Fang, Chrisman, & De Massis, 2015). These entities are unique and more complex than other types of organizations due to the family's involvement in ownership, governance, and management (Chrisman, Chua, & Steier, 2005). Furthermore, family firms are governed by the sum of emotional relationships and economic interests (Daspit, Chrisman, Sharma, Pearson, & Long, 2017) that emerge from the reciprocal influence of family and business, resulting in a particular identity (Weismeier-Sammer, Frank, & von Schlippe, 2013) and hence a particular *familiness* (specific bundle of resources) that can be positive or negative (Habbershon, Williams, & MacMillan, 2003). Due to family firms' complexity, conflict is considered a major cause for their disappearance (Davis & Harveston, 2001; Lansberg, 1983). However, current evidence points to the positive role of conflict in the continuance of family firms through promoting change (Claßen & Schulte, 2017; Sharma, Chrisman, & Chua, 1997) and innovation (De Clercq & Belausteguigoitia, 2015). Understood as "a constructive force" (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2018, p. 3), conflict can be perceived by family firms as an opportunity to survive, evolve, and remain sustainable in the long run.

Most studies have focused on the causes and effects of conflicts (Frank, Kessler, Nosé, & Suchy, 2011) rather than on the processes involved in conflict management (Kidwell, Kellermanns, & Eddleston, 2012). Thus, current evidence is still insufficient to understand how family firms may constructively manage their conflicts (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b; Tjosvold, Wong, & Feng Chen, 2014). Indeed, the question of how the uniqueness of family firms may affect their willingness to constructively manage their conflicts remains understudied, offering many opportunities for new contributions to the fields of both family firm (Holt, Pearson, Payne, & Sharma, 2018) and conflict management (Caputo, Marzi, Pellegrini, & Rialti, 2018). Given these gaps in the literature, we aimed to propose a framework for understanding how the uniqueness of family firms may influence constructive conflict management. A central assertion in this theoretical paper is that through "*collaborative familiness*,"[1] family firms are prone to manage their conflicts constructively. *Familiness,* from a social capital perspective, can be understood as a relational environment in the family business that influences how the members will manage conflict (Pearson, Carr, & Shaw, 2008). When the various dimensions of familiness (cognitive, structural, and relational) configure a specific collaborative familiness, it has a positive effect on the constructive dynamics of conflict through promoting mutually beneficial relationships among family business members and an engagement in open-minded debates to resolve their conflicts (Tjosvold et al., 2014). To address our research question, we engage in a literature review and formulate four propositions regarding the possible effects of collaborative familiness in constructive conflict management processes. Finally, we discuss the theoretical contributions, we propose a further research agenda and we develop practical implications for managers and practitioners in both family business and conflict management. We conclude with the limitations of our work.

This paper makes several contributions. First, it advances knowledge on the uniqueness of constructive conflict in family firms. Second, it expands the familiness framework by developing its connections with constructive conflict in family firms. Third, it contributes to the literature on conflict management and family business, constructing a bridge between both of these equally relevant fields (Caputo et al., 2018). Fourth, it brings insights for further research on how constructive conflict is rooted in family firms.

Conflict in a Unique Setting: The Family Firm

Although the topic of conflict in family firms has captured the attention of academics from a variety of backgrounds (Smyrnios, Poutziouris, & Goel, 2013), the study of *conflict management* in family firms is still in an early stage of development (Debicki, Matherne, Kellermanns, & Chrisman, 2009; Frank et al., 2011; Sharma, De Massis, & Gagne, 2014). The theoretical frameworks used are sparse (Frank et al., 2011), and relevant knowledge of the conflict management field has yet to be integrated into the family business field (Caputo et al., 2018).

There is a broad consensus on the uniqueness of family firms, given families' involvement in different arenas (Chua, Chrisman, & Sharma, 1999; Rau, Astrachan, & Smyrnios, 2018). Family business "is a business governed and/or managed with the intention to shape and pursue the vision of the business held by a dominant coalition controlled by members of the same family or a small number of families in a manner that is potentially sustainable across generations of the family or families" (Chua et al., 1999, p. 25). Family firms are integrated by different social systems—family and business—with different logics (Lansberg, 1983). According to Reay, Jaskiewicz, and Hinings (2015), the family logic is oriented toward benefiting family members while the business logic is focused on profitability. These contradictory logics, along with the wide influence of the family in ownership, management, and governance roles (Lansberg, 1983) throughout the life cycle (Danes, Leichtentritt, Metz, & Huddleston-Casas, 1999), add complexity to conflict management in family firms (Sorenson, 1999; Waldkirch, 2015; Zachary, Danes, & Stafford, 2013). Given these unique characteristics, which arise from the overlapping systems in family business, conflicts may be related to a mix of issues regarding justice, role ambiguity, work/family balance, identity, and succession (Danes et al., 1999). The time orientation of family firms is also distinctive because pursuing continuity over generations entails transiting along different generational stages in which family

[1]We coined the term "collaborative familiness" to understand how relational resources of family firms are combined in a special configuration, which can positively affect constructive conflict management in this context.

needs and dynamics change (Lansberg, 1999). In these transitions, conflict is expected, and conflict management is critical (Filser, Kraus, & Märk, 2013).

Thus, family influence that is based on the family logic is the key to understanding the behavior of family firms. Specifically, family influence includes the presence of noneconomic goals, such as family harmony, family social status, and socioemotional wealth needs (Chrisman, Chua, Pearson, & Barnett, 2012; Gómez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, Jacobson & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007), which shape their family and business identities. This overlap has been related to role ambiguity (Kidwell et al., 2012; Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008) and consequently to role conflict (Chandler, 2015; Memili, Chang, Kellermanns, & Welsh, 2015) because of the concurrence of family and business roles, which normally are contradictory. Indeed, role conflict is acute in family small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in which firm performance depends on the participation of family members (Memili, Fang, Chrisman, & De Massis, 2015). In these types of organizations, business goals are linked to owners' personal goals and respond to their personal needs, values, beliefs, and philosophies (Kotey, 2005). It is natural that family members have divergent goals and expectations (Kotlar & De Massis, 2013) that greatly influence their activities and hence lead to possible conflicts. However, the divergences and different perspectives are not necessarily indicative of conflict; still, they do suggest the necessity of developing a constructive conflict management approach to convert these controversies into better solutions and stronger relationships (Tjosvold, 2008).

Conflict Management in Family Firms

How conflict is conceptualized determines whether conflict is seen as a negative or positive influence in organizations (Tjosvold, 2006). If conflict is defined as a win–lose product of competing goals, people will be less willing to adopt a constructive style of conflict management (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b; Tjosvold, 2006; Tjosvold et al., 2014). If, instead, conflict is understood as a cooperative task (Tjosvold, 2006), people will be more prone to engage in constructive conflict management (Tjosvold et al., 2014).

In the family business field, conflict has been conceptualized from a broad perspective and even ambiguously (Tjosvold, 2006) (see Table 1). The prevailing approach understands conflict as referring to opposing interests, rivalry (e.g., Levinson, 1971), and incompatible goals (Tjosvold, 2008) between family and business systems (e.g., Lansberg, 1983). We contend that, in the family business field, it is necessary to convey a definition of conflict focused on the cooperative nature of conflict resolution (Tjosvold, 2008), which allows conflict to follow a constructive course. Contending a constructive approach implies switching the perspective assumed from one that conceives conflict in family firms as a risk factor for family firms' ability (e.g., Davis & Harveston, 2001; Lansberg, 1983) to another that views conflict as an opportunity to "dig into issues, understand problems, create solutions, and strengthen relationships" (Tjosvold, 2006, p.87). A limited amount of research has explored this positive role of conflict in family firms (e.g., Chirico, Sirmon, Sciascia, & Mazzola, 2011; Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2004, 2007).

An important stream of literature recognizes family relationships as a relevant antecedent of conflict because of their influence on how emotions interfere in family business performance (Lansberg, 1983). For instance, according to Pieper, Astrachan, and Manners (2013), conflict can emerge when family members use business to solve family issues that were not well managed. Other roots of conflict in family firms may include deficits in family communication or excessive dependence on the parents (Pieper et al., 2013). In the early stages of a family firm, a certain amount of paternalism—understood as the loyalty, care, support, and protection by parents toward their children—can be positive because parents can transmit knowledge and guide their children in the firm. However, in later phases, an excess of paternalism can lead to an autocratic climate that could hinder the work of the next generations in the firm (Chirico, Nordqvist, Colombo, & Mollona, 2012). Moreover, relational conflicts can lead to problematic and unethical behaviors by family members that harm firms (Kidwell et al., 2012). Eddleston and

Table 1
Different Approaches to the Study of Conflict in the Family Business Field

Approach	Main findings	Example studies
Conflict erodes family firms	Conflict is pervasive in family firms. Interpersonal conflict is one of the main threats to family firms. Destructive conflict is associated with business failure.	Levinson (1971); Lansberg (1983); Kaye (1991); Harvey and Evans (1994); Ward (1997); Davis and Harveston (2001); Großmann and Schlippe (2015)
Exploring the existence of types of conflict	Task conflict results in productive outcomes. Relational conflict is more prevalent in family firms than in nonfamily firms. Relational conflicts have a negative impact on the performance of family firms.	Kellermanns and Eddleston (2004, 2007); Amarapurkar and Danes (2005); Ensley and Pearson (2005); Eddleston and Kellermanns (2007); Eddleston et al. (2008) Nosé et al. (2017)
Uniqueness of conflict in family firms	Conflict in family firms shows certain particularities related to the interaction between family and business systems (e.g., paternalism, "Fredo effect").	Haberman and Danes (2007); Danes et al. (1999); Kidwell et al. (2012); Pieper et al. (2013); Chirico et al. (2012)
Conflict management	Collaborative styles contribute to the achievement of family and business goals. Cooperation between family members promotes better intergenerational succession and innovation. Entrepreneurial couples, where partners maintain collaborative power interactions, are likely to adopt a productive business decision-making team.	Haberman and Danes (2007); Sorenson (1999); Spriggs et al. (2012); Hedberg and Danes (2012); Jayantilal, Jorge, and Palacios (2016)
	The presence of collaborative dialogue and ethical norms contributes to the development of social capital and to the improvement of business performance.	Sorenson, Folker, and Brigham (2008); Sorenson et al. (2009); König et al. (2013); Sciascia et al. (2013)
	Task conflict promotes constructive debates inside the family firm which result in innovation.	Pearson et al. (2014)
	Conflict promotes change in family firms.	De Clercq and Belausteguigoitia (2015) Kammerlander et al. (2015) Claßen and Schulte (2017)

Kidwell (2018) advance this hypothesis, suggesting that these deviant behaviors can be constructively managed through constructive discussions.

Another stream of research has focused on disentangling the effects of different types of conflict (e.g., Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007; Eddleston, Otondo, & Kellermanns, 2008; Danes et al., 2000). Research has confirmed the harmful effect of relational conflict on family firm performance (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007; Frank et al., 2011; Nosé, Korunka, Frank, & Danes, 2017). Some factors, like altruism between family members (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007) and family cohesion and adaptability (Nosé et al., 2017), have shown a moderating effect in these relationships. Other studies show a negative relationship between cognitive conflict and firm satisfaction. However, this negative relationship is moderated by family member exchange (understood as "the level of reciprocity among family members; that is, an individual's perception of his or her family's willingness to share ideas, feedback and expectations with one another") (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007, p.1050) and generational ownership dispersion (understood as the level of concentration or dilution of company's shares between family members) to the extent that first-generation firms obtain more benefits of the cognitive conflict, and family member exchange positively moderates the effect process conflict has on performance (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007). All these pieces of knowledge suggest that a critical factor is not only the type of conflict, but also the conflict management approach if we consider a family member exchange as a proxy of open-minded debates (Tjosvold et al., 2014).

Another stream of literature has explored the benefits of conflict in firms' business dynamics. For instance, conflict management has been found to play a positive role in dealing with divergent goals regarding innovation when multiple generations are involved in the business (Kellermanns, Eddleston, Barnett, & Pearson, 2008) and when ownership dispersion is taking place (Spriggs, Yu, Deeds, & Sorenson, 2012). Likewise, it has been found that constructive conflict fosters entrepreneurial orientation (Sciascia, Mazzola, & Chirico, 2013) and agility in decision making (König, Kammerlander, & Enders, 2013).

More specifically, regarding conflict styles, Sorenson (1999) found that high levels of collaboration result in positive effects for both family and business, whereas high levels of compromise and accommodation contribute to positive family outcomes. Conflict management in family business implies an approach that considers different types of conflict and how they are moderated by several components of family business relationships—like altruism, trust, values, and communication—and by structural factors such as ownership group, level of ownership dispersion, and different styles of conflict management (Pieper, 2010). Caputo et al. (2018) conducted a bibliometric study to confirm that conflict management (through formal or informal processes) contributes to entrepreneurial and innovative orientation, balances multigenerational involvement, and compensates the power of family factions. As shown in the literature review thus far, the benefits and challenges of constructive conflict have been highlighted in previous studies. Yet the role of familiness (Habbershon & Williams, 1999) in conflict management has scarcely been explored, and most studies that do mention this aspect of familiness focus mainly on its negative effects.

Familiness and Conflict Management

Familiness is largely viewed as positive for family business, with research suggesting that it can lead to competitive advantage (c.f. Habbershon & Williams, 1999). However, some studies linking familiness with conflict have suggested that the negative side of familiness leads to destructive conflict through communication patterns that create, escalate, and sustain those conflicts (Großmann & Schlippe, 2015). For this reason, some authors consider family businesses as a fertile ground for destructive conflict (Großmann & Schlippe, 2015, p.294). Regarding how family-related conflict is connected with the mortality of family businesses, Großmann and Schlippe (2015) found some patterns related to conflict and family business failure. From a multiple-case study with narrative interviews and analysis of secondary data, they identified a dynamic pattern of conflict through latent conflicts that transformed into highly escalated conflicts. Across the five cases studied, the authors confirmed that families in business create a special climate in which latent conflicts fed through family narratives focused on negative elements such as animosity and aversion. Then, a shift in relationships is produced, mainly when an imbalance in power irritates the system and "awakens" the latent conflict. Thus, conflict becomes ubiquitous and controls the communication system to the point where family members lose their capacity to manage these conflicts. The authors thus inferred that these families have a "conflict culture" that leads family members to adopt a helpless and clumsy attitude when conflicts emerge (Großmann & Schlippe, 2015, p. 308). Another study on the influence of family narratives in innovation of family firms found that family narratives focused on the founder were associated with destructive conflict and less innovation, whereas stories focused on family were related to constructive conflict and more innovation (Kammerlander, Dessi, Bird, Floris, & Murru, 2015).

Familiness and Constructive Conflict Management in Family Firms

We suggest that whether conflict follows a constructive or destructive course depends on the protagonist's emphasis on cooperative or competitive goals (Tjosvold, 2008); that is, a perceived similarity in beliefs and attitudes, a disposition to help to each other, openness in communication, trusting attitudes, dismissal of opposed interests, and sensitivity to shared interests and shared power are all determinants of constructive conflict (Deutsch, 1994). When people underline their cooperative goals, they are more willing to express their differences openly, explore and consider opposing positions open-mindedly, and integrate them into new alternatives of action (Tjosvold, 2008; Tjosvold et al., 2014). Therefore, they are more willing to solve their conflicts constructively. In the family business context, this constructive perspective on coping with conflict is influenced by family and business interaction, which produces a unique bundle of resources (Habbershon & Williams, 1999) that may be advantageous to the family firm's performance (Habbershon et al., 2003). Familiness is a source of social capital resulting from the family's involvement and interaction in the business (Pearson et al., 2008). Therefore, familiness is organized around the three dimensions of social capital (Pearson et al., 2008): structural, cognitive, and relational. According to this model, the structural dimension refers to the patterns and the strength of family ties. The cognitive dimension concerns the family business's shared vision and purpose as well as family beliefs, narratives, and culture, which are embedded in the family business's history. The relational dimension refers to the resources of family relationships in the business, such as trust, loyalty, and commitment (Pearson et al., 2008).

From a social capital perspective, familiness will encourage constructive conflict in family firms if it promotes a relational context in which family members underline their cooperative goals and engage in open-minded debates when dealing with conflicts (Tjosvold et al., 2014); that is, familiness influences the dynamics of constructive conflict because their structural, cognitive, and relational resources serve as a basis for interdependence and confronting the conflict as a cooperative problem (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b).

Our work endeavors to extend the familiness theory through conceptualizing how it influences constructive conflict dynamics in family firms. We propose a model that sustains familiness's unique influence on the development of constructive conflict dynamics because it creates the relational conditions to cope constructively with conflicts in family firms. Thus, we have coined the term *collaborative familiness* to capture how familiness may create a relational context that would promote constructive conflict in family firms (please see Figure 1).

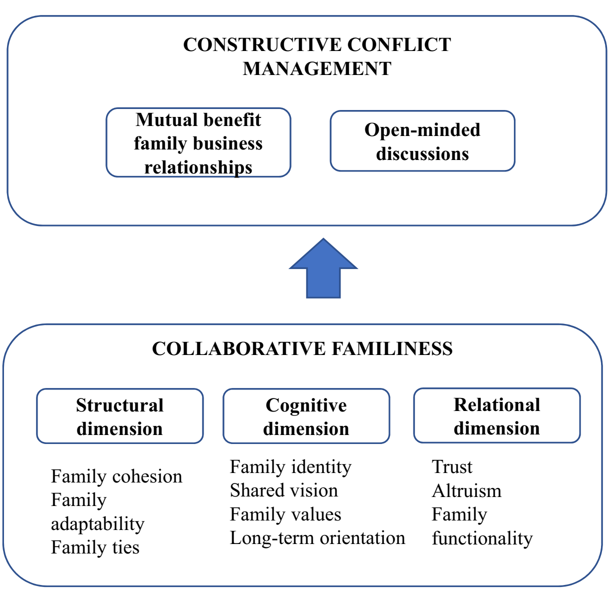

Figure 1. Multilevel model for collaborative familiness. Source: Own elaboration.

Collaborative Familiness

Collaborative familiness refers to the particular resource configuration of familiness that promotes constructive conflict management in family firms. Collaborative familiness extends the initial conception of distinctive familiness (Sharma, 2008) and family capital (Hoelscher, 2014) to understand familiness as a unique configuration of relational resources created by the flow between family and business systems. Thus, collaborative familiness is created on the basis of strong family ties (understood in the literature as structural dimension) (Pearson et al., 2008), common values, history, and belief systems that emphasize mutual concerns (Tjosvold et al., 2014); it creates a relational environment characterized by trust (Eddleston & Morgan, 2014; Sundaramurthy, 2008), altruism (Dyer, 2003; Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007) and fairness perception (Heyden, Blondel, & Carlock, 2005). Table 2 reflects the main findings of the literature review regarding the main components of the model.

Familiness can have a positive influence on constructive conflict management when the flow of information is transparent and constant, and the action of the group is collective (Pearson et al., 2008). Social capital focused on "sense of family, family bonds, family language, and a sense of belonging" has been conceived as family capital (Hoelscher, 2014, p. 57). Research has reported that high levels of family capital encourage "free and open communication between participants" (Hoelscher, 2014, p. 57) and have a smoothing effect on task conflicts in family firms. Conflict management research has reported that emotional closeness, particularly when present in family firms, buffers the harmful effects of relational conflict (Rispens, Greer, Jehn, & Thatcher, 2011). Thus, we argue that collaborative familiness positively influences constructive conflict in family firms. Formally stated,

Proposition 1: Familiness is positively related with constructive conflict management in family firms when it is collaborative.

Collaborative familiness comprises three intertwined dimensions: structural, cognitive, and relational (Pearson et al., 2008). Each dimension contributes differently to constructive conflict in family firms. However, their influences are combined to produce collaborative familiness. The structural dimension regards the strength and closeness of the family ties in the business (Pearson et al., 2008). In the family business literature, this dimension has been measured as levels of cohesion of family in the business (e.g., Ensley & Pearson, 2005; Nosé et al., 2017; Zahra, 2012) and understood as the levels of integrity and stability of family relationships. Moderated levels of cohesion and adaptability (Nosé et al., 2017) may contribute to mutually beneficial relationships and open-minded communication in family businesses. The closeness of family ties is higher in parent–child relationships and decreases in sibling and cousin groups (Ensley & Pearson, 2005). Family firms in the parent–children stage have a stronger cohesive bond, stronger shared goals, and less relationship conflict (Ensley & Pearson, 2005) than those in later stages of family evolution. High levels of family cohesion can reduce the potential debate for the emergence of new ideas in the group (Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008). On the one hand, high levels of family firm cohesion may evolve into poor-quality decisions because of groupthink (Kidwell et al., 2012). On the other hand, lower levels of cohesion are associated with more conflicts between owners and managers (Corten, Steijvers, & Lybaert, 2017). Hence, the structural dimension of collaborative familiness will be evidenced in moderated levels of cohesion and adaptability (Nosé et al., 2017), which leads to the following proposition.

Proposition 2: The structural dimension of collaborative familiness leads family members to conceive their relationships as a mutual benefit, and consequently to maintain open-minded debates to manage their conflicts constructively.

The cognitive dimension reflects the business family's values, history, and common beliefs, which promote collaborative familiness. This dimension consists of a view of conflict as a problem to solve through cooperation among family members in the business (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b), and its temporal

Table 2
Summary of Main Evidence about Collaborative Familiness Model

Concept/ dimensions	Main evidence	Example studies
Distinctive familiness	A balanced flow of capital between family and business systems enhances capital stock for both systems.	Sharma (2008).
Family social capital (FSC)	FSC is a bundle of resources that stems from relationships among family members within family firms.	Arregle et al. (2007) Gudmunson and Danes (2013); Herrero (2018).
Familiness from social capital (SC) perspective	The three dimensions of SC, structural, cognitive, and relational, are the specific components of familiness.	Pearson et al. (2008);
	Family firms create value through their ability to renew and to reshape their social interactions within and outside the controlling family.	Carr, Cole, Ring, and Blettner (2011); Kansikas, Laakkonen, Sarpo, and Kontinen (2012);
	Both family SC and nonfamily SC contribute to family firm innovation. SC maximizes knowledge transfer during the succession process.	Zellweger, Chrisman, Chua, and Steier (2018); Daspit, Long, and Pearson (2018); Salvato and Melin (2008); Sanchez-Famoso et al. (2014); Higginson (2010); Cabrera-Suárez, García-Almeida, and De Saá-Pérez (2018).
Family capital (FC)	The total resources of the family members derive from the existing human, social, and financial capital. FC promotes communication among family members. In the presence of high levels of family capital, task conflict has only a slight negative effect on family business performance.	Hoffman, Hoelscher, and Sorenson (2006); Danes, Stafford, Haynes, and Amarapurkar (2009); Sorenson and Bierman (2009); Hoelscher (2014).
Structural dimension		
Cohesion	High levels of family firm cohesion may evolve into poor-quality decisions because of groupthink processes. Lower levels of cohesion are associated with more conflicts between owners and managers. Firm satisfaction decreases with the presence of high-level relationship conflict and low cohesion. The breadth and speed of organizational learning are higher with the presence of high family ownership (a family controls a high percentage of the equity) and high cohesion.	Sundaramurthy and Kreiner (2008); Kidwell et al. (2012); Zahra (2012); Corten et al. (2017); Nosé et al. (2017).
Adaptability	Low relationship conflict and high adaptability contribute to the enhancement of firm satisfaction. However, satisfaction is reduced with the presence of high relationship conflict independently of whether adaptability is low or high. Family adaptability predicts (positive and significantly) organizational commitment, work satisfaction, and life satisfaction of the second generation working in the parent's businesses.	Lee (2006); Nosé et al. (2017).

Table 2
(continued)

Concept/ dimensions	Main evidence	Example studies
Family ties	Family members maintain social relationships with other family members and nonfamily members at intrafirm and extrafirm level. Family firms in the parent–children stage have a stronger cohesive bond, stronger shared goals, and less relationship conflict. A greater kinship dispersion is associated with less cohesion, consensus, and more relationship conflict. Knowledge transfer between mother and daughters in the context of succession is maximized when structural, cognitive, and affective dimensions of social capital are present. Spousal teams show higher trust, identification, and mutual obligation than siblings' teams. The attitudes, values, and behaviors of family culture are transmitted through the parent–child relationship and imprinted in the mindset of the family members involved in the business. Family ties may promote interdependence, positive mutual influence (reciprocal nepotism), or entitlement (entitlement nepotism).	Ensley and Pearson (2005); Higginson (2010); Jaskiewicz, Uhlenbruck, Balkin, and Reay (2013) Zellweger et al. (2018) Bird and Zellweger (2018); Kidwell, Eddleston, and Kellermanns (2018).
Cognitive dimension		
Shared vision	A strong identity focused on collective goals promotes commitment and the formation of entrepreneurial teams. A shared vision contributes to quality of decisions commitment and long-term financial sustainability of the firm. Open communication in family firms is positively associated with a shared vision.	Chua et al. (1999); Ward (1997); Lansberg (1999); Mustakallio, Autio, and Zahra (2002); Discua Cruz, Howorth, and Hamilton (2013); Miller (2014); Neff (2015).
Family identity	The involvement and participation of family managers allow to develop a shared point of view and consequently contribute to higher cohesion, shared strategic consensus, and higher quality of decision-making processes.	Zellweger, Eddleston, and Kellermanns (2010).
Future oriented	Family firms' managers are more long-term oriented than nonfamily firms' managers. Family firms that are more family centered (and less founder focused) are more likely to envision the future as promising and nourishing.	Vallejo (2008); Lumpkin and Brigham (2011).
Norms of family harmony	Norms of family harmony reinforce the idea of a team-based ethical climate based on cooperation between family members.	Kidwell et al. (2012).
Values	Good ethical values are predominant in family firms. They share values of commitment and harmony. Integration of family and business values allows family firms to cope with conflict and stress.	Koiranen (2002); Vallejo (2008); Distelberg and Sorenson (2009); Parada and Viladás (2010); Sorenson (2013).

Table 2
(continued)

Concept/ dimensions	Main evidence	Example studies
Collective efficacy	Perception of collective efficacy focus on common goals reduces role conflict. Family narratives focused on family member's contributions instead of those of the founders	Memili, Chang, Kellermanns, & Welsh, (2015); Kammerlander et al. (2015)
Positive outlook of conflict	Conflicts are perceived as an opportunity and "a driver of change" (p.1204)	Claßen and Schulte (2017).
Relational dimension		
Trust	Clarity about the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of family members in the firm enhances trust.	La Chapelle and Barnes (1998); Vallejo (2008);
	Trust in family firms roots on basic values of integrity, honesty, and credibility and is expressed through supportive behaviors, concerns regarding the well-being of others, and empathy. Honest discussions about rules and expectations are present in high-trust narratives of family members. The last is associated with optimism, proactivity, and a sense of connection. Cooperation and the development of trust enhance successor leadership group effectiveness. Maintaining trust minimizes dysfunctional conflict.	Sundaramurthy (2008); Eddleston et al. (2010); Solomon et al. (2011); Cater and Kidwell (2014); Eddleston and Morgan (2014).
Altruism	Altruism increases communication and cooperation in family firms but also may be associated with distributive injustice. Altruism significantly reduces relationship conflicts and enhances a participative strategy process. Reciprocal altruism promotes higher levels of mutual trust and goal alignment. Asymmetrical altruism (e.g., parent to children) can be associated with entitlement nepotism, lower levels of cohesion, lower levels of trust, and an increased likelihood to exploit resources for personal gains than collective benefit.	Schulze et al. (2002); Zahra (2003); Dyer (2003); Lubatkin et al. (2005); Karra, Tracey, and Phillips (2006); Eddleston and Kellermanns (2007); Pieper (2010); Jaskiewicz et al. (2013); Meier and Schier (2016).
Fairness perception	Clarity and consistency in the decisions supported by family agreements contribute to fairness perception. A fair perceived process minimizes the presence of conflict in family firms, specially, in the succession process. Family business decision makers should practice a mix of equality and equity in the workplace to promote fairness.	Heyden et al. (2005); Sundaramurthy (2008) Taylor and Norris (2000); Samara and Arenas (2017).
Family functionality	Family functionality is conceived as integrity and stability of family relationships. A stronger family functionality is associated with stating the priority of family over the company. The influence of family functionality in family firm performance is partially mediated by the effect of shared vision and role clarity.	Danes and Morgan (2004); Gudmunson and Danes (2013); Neff (2015); Filser et al. (2018).

orientation is to the future. It is not focused on negative past experiences (Großmann & Schlippe, 2015); rather, it highlights the values of family harmony (Kidwell et al., 2012) and cooperation (Sorenson, 1999). This dimension also includes the perception of collective efficacy, which facilitates the focus on common goals (Memili, Chang, Kellermanns, & Welsh, 2015). Family narratives are focused on family members' contributions instead of those of the founders (Kammerlander et al., 2015). Collaborative familiness leads family members to perceive conflict as an opportunity and "a driver of change" (Claßen & Schulte, 2017, p. 1204). According to Kidwell et al., "Norms of family harmony help to focus the efforts of family members on the success of the firm, reinforcing the idea of a team-based ethical climate in which family members cooperate with one another" (2012, p. 507). A collaborative orientation integrates the values of the family and business systems (Distelberg & Sorenson, 2009). Formally stated,

> Proposition 3: The cognitive dimension of collaborative familiness leads family members to conceive their relationships as a mutual benefit, and consequently to maintain open-minded debates to manage their conflicts constructively.

The relational dimension concerns the resources derived from family relationships in the business (Pearson et al., 2008). The relational resources of altruism (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007), trust (Eddleston & Morgan, 2014; Sundaramurthy, 2008), and fairness perception (Heyden et al., 2005) are characteristics of a collaborative family business. Levels of family functionality (Danes & Morgan, 2004; Filser, De Massis, Gast, Kraus, & Niemand, 2018) can be also considered as evidence of the relational dimension. Family functionality is important in shaping family members' goals and behaviors (Filser et al., 2018).

Altruism is conceived as one of the potential triggers of mutual benefit relationships: The success of each family member is connected to the success of the others (Zahra, 2003). Their sense of well-being, communication, and decision making may be facilitated by mutual recognition (Dyer, 2003). In addition, altruism reduces relational conflict and enhances a participative strategy process (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007). Likewise, it has a positive influence on stewardship (Eddleston & Kellermanns, 2007), which plays an essential role in succession and promotes collaborative processes between generations (Meier & Schier, 2016). In other words, family altruism may allow family firms to engage in more collaborative approaches to manage conflict (Pieper, 2010; Schulze, Lubatkin, & Dino, 2002). However, extreme levels (lower or higher) of altruism may hamper constructive conflict because these can have a negative effect upon the creation of mutually beneficial family relationships. In the case of lower levels of altruism, family members may have a perception of lack of interdependence (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b). As another example, low altruism could result in unwillingness to develop open-minded debates because family members would be more focused on their own needs and feel less responsible for assuming a proactive role in conflict management (Lubatkin, Schulze, Ling, & Dino, 2005).

Lewicki, McAllister, and Bies (1998) view trust as "confident positive expectations regarding another's conduct" (p. 439). From this perspective, a context of high trust promotes positive interdependence and high-value congruence (Lewicki et al., 1998). When family business members trust each other, they show less obstructiveness in the discussions (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b). Trust is also conceived of as a metaemotion that will facilitate knowledge exchange between family members (Belli & Broncano, 2017). Trust is dynamic: easy to break and difficult to create (Johnson, Johnson, Tjosvold, & Roseth, 2018); and trust and constructive conflict are reciprocally reinforced (Tjosvold, Wan, & Tang, 2016). In family firms, trust is invoked as a governance mechanism facilitating open-minded discussions in family forums, such as family councils or boards, in which family members participate (Eddleston, Chrisman, Steier, & Chua, 2010). Thus, family governance contributes to family communication and creates affective significance and a feeling of shared purpose, which results in supportive behavior among family members (Suess-Reyes, 2017). Moreover, maintaining trust in family firms implies appreciating the value of functional conflict in decision making (Sundaramurthy, 2008). The fairness perception is related to the application of procedural justice, which allows family firm's members to perceive decision-making process as fair

(Heyden et al., 2005; Taylor & Norris, 2000). The application of procedural justice is related to better conflict management (Heyden et al., 2005). A perceived fairness is associated with the sense of justice, trust, commitment (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b), and consequently, the willingness to cooperate between family members. “When family firms create conditions that embrace cooperation, fairness and role clarity, the likelihood of a family member becoming an impediment is lessened” (Kidwell et al., 2012, p. 513). Thus, the relational dimension of collaborative familiness will be evidenced in moderated levels of family altruism, high levels of trust, and high levels of fairness perception. This leads to the following proposition,

> Proposition 4: The relational dimension of collaborative familiness leads family members to experience moderated levels of family altruism, high levels of trust, and fairness, which contribute to managing their conflicts constructively.

Discussion

We addressed the question of how familiness may influence constructive conflict management. After integrating the relevant literature on conflict management and family firms, we developed a new concept: *collaborative familiness*. Collaborative familiness is derived from the familiness framework (Habbershon et al., 2003) and constructive conflict management (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b; Tjosvold et al., 2014) to describe how different dimensions of familiness, understood as a bundle of social capital resources created in the interaction between family and business (Pearson et al., 2008), enhance constructive conflict management in family firms. The three dimensions of collaborative familiness—structural, cognitive, and relational (Pearson et al., 2008)—promote a positive interdependence context (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b) and mutually beneficial relationships (Tjosvold et al., 2014), which facilitate open-minded dialogues (Tjosvold et al., 2014) oriented to managing conflict constructively in family firms. Collaborative familiness forms the root of constructive conflict management in family firms. From the perspective of the input–process–output (IPO) model of teams in family firms (Pearson, Bergiel, & Barnett, 2014), collaborative familiness configures one of the inputs, while constructive conflict management is one of the processes that produce outputs as strategic decisions (Sharma et al., 1997), innovation (Kammerlander et al., 2015; Spriggs et al., 2015), succession, and transgenerational entrepreneurship (Pearson et al., 2014).

This study makes four contributions to the family business and conflict management literatures. First, it expands our knowledge about the uniqueness of constructive conflict in family firms. Collaborative familiness accounts for the complexity of constructive conflict management in family firms because it analyzes the effects of family influence founded on the stability of family bonds, sharing a common identity and values, and a relational environment characterized by altruism, trust, and fairness perceived (Pearson et al., 2008). These conceptual propositions about collaborative familiness illustrate that both ability and willingness are present to produce a family effect on constructive conflict management (De Massis, Kotlar, Chua, & Chrisman, 2014).

The second contribution is a deeper understanding of the constructive conflict dynamics of family firms, a topic that has scarcely been studied. This work presents conflict in family firms from a constructive perspective (Mikkelsen & Clegg, 2018) that posits conflict as a source of positive outcomes because it is conceived as a mutual problem (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b) to be solved cooperatively between family business members.

Third, this study scrutinizes collaboration in family firms from an internal group process viewpoint (Pearson et al., 2014); that is, we examine how internal resources of family firms can be transformed into positive outputs as constructive conflict management inside the organization. In contrast, other studies have explored the external perspective—how family firms collaborate with the external context to promote innovation (Feranita, Kotlar, & De Massis, 2017), market orientation (Cabrera-Suárez, de la Cruz

Déniz-Déniz, & Martín-Santana, 2011), and environmental sustainability (Le Breton-Miller & Miller, 2016). Our paper is positioned within the current stream of research about goals in family firms, proposing that constructive conflict management contributes to the process in which divergent goals are transformed into positive outcomes across different organizational dimensions (Kotlar, Massis, Wright, & Frattini, 2018; Williams, Pieper, Kellermanns, & Astrachan, 2018). This review also advances the familiness theory through the development of its connections with constructive conflict management in family firms. Collaborative familiness can be considered as the constellation of primary resources that nourish the adoption of constructive conflict management in family firms. According to a resource-based view (Barney, 2001), collaborative familiness will contribute to the development of constructive conflict management capability in family firms, in line with other authors who have considered negotiation as an organizational capability (Borbély & Caputo, 2017).

Fourth and finally, this study builds a bridge between the family business and conflict management fields (Caputo et al., 2018). The uniqueness of family firms has been a neglected area in the conflict management field. To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first work that applies the constructive conflict management framework (Tjosvold et al., 2014) in the context of family firms and in so doing integrates prior knowledge of familiness theory (Pearson et al., 2008).

Practical Implications

This work describes how collaborative familiness is composed of structural, cognitive, and relational issues that should develop and sustain over the long term to promote more constructive conflict management within family firms. The study offers insights for practitioners and family business managers to overcome the negative view that sees conflict as a dangerous and pervasive entity, instead of shifting the perspective to view it as a mutual challenge that may be constructively managed through cooperation and open-minded communication (Tjosvold et al., 2014). For family business managers, it is vital to cultivate a constructive conflict culture in the different levels of the organization (Borbély & Caputo, 2017). This means promoting values such as reciprocity, shared community, and nonviolence (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b). Board members (family and nonfamily members alike) should pursue governance dynamics such as effective communication, trust, and open debates to promote conflict that is more constructive. In particular, nonfamily board members play an essential role (Basco & Voordeckers, 2015) in engaging collaborative familiness and also contributing to constructive conflict. It is possible that their roles as independent advisors would be maximized if they are also committed to adopting constructive conflict management in the family business (Sanchez-Famoso, Maseda, & Iturralde, 2014), even acting as peacemakers (Zhang, Bollen, Pei, & Euwema, 2018). Governance forums such as family councils and family constitutions are helpful to promote collaborative familiness and constructive conflict management in family firms (Alderson, 2015; Arteaga & Menéndez-Requejo, 2017). Developing new abilities to constructively manage conflict in team members will report many benefits in terms of group performance and satisfaction (Sciascia et al., 2013).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The study of conflict management in family firms is a promising area (Holt et al., 2018). Further work is needed to explore the reciprocal influence between collaborative familiness and constructive conflict management in family firms and capture the nature of these effects. Moreover, the interconnections between the different dimensions of collaborative familiness require more exploration. Hypothetically, constructive conflict management should behave as a dynamic capability (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003) that is developed throughout the different stages of a family business's life cycle (Gersick, Davis, Hampton, & Lansberg, 1997), a construct deserving of more attention in the future research agenda. The effects of critical factors such as generational ownership dispersion (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007) and generational involvement (Kellermanns et al., 2008) on the development of collaborative familiness need to be investigated.

Future explorations of the positive influence of constructive conflict management on socioemotional wealth conflict are encouraged (Vardaman & Gondo, 2014). This study did not elucidate the dark side of collaborative familiness. For instance, the emergence of nepotistic practices because of in-group favoritism dynamics (Deutsch, 2011a, 2011b) may hamper the integration of nonfamily executives in constructive conflict dynamics. Hence, we encourage future studies examining collaborative familiness as a source of constructive conflict management styles.

Qualitative studies may explore how different dimensions of collaborative familiness are created and sustained to enhance constructive conflict in family firms. Another issue to further explore is the role of nonfamily managers in the dynamics of collaborative familiness (Arregle, Hitt, Sirmon, & Very, 2007). Future studies about the various components of collaborative familiness are encouraged.

Quantitative research to confirm the different dimensions of collaborative familiness and the possible existing interactions between such dimensions and their effect on processes and outcomes of constructive conflict management is needed to provide empirical support for our propositions. Furthermore, research into how open-minded communication is developed in owner families may bring new insights into how trust, altruism, and fairness are established in the family, and their connection to constructive conflict dynamics in the business. More knowledge is needed on the role of trust in enhancing constructive conflict (Eddleston & Morgan, 2014).

In addition, studying constructive conflict management and its influence on reconciliation (e.g., between family members) may add new insights to the ongoing discussion on forgiveness in social identity theory (Waldkirch, 2015). More studies are also needed to explain how family composition contributes to constructive conflict management through clear rules to family members in the firm (Arteaga & Menéndez-Requejo, 2017). One relevant question is: To what extent does consensus about rules and family values effectively trigger cooperative dialogue in family firms (Sorenson, Goodpaster, Hedberg, & Yu, 2009)?

Conclusion

In this article, we integrated family business and conflict management literature to propose a model that sheds light on how the uniqueness of family firms affects their constructive conflict management. This model is built on theoretical propositions that broaden our understanding of the concept of familiness to collaborative familiness to explain constructive conflict management. This work offers interesting and productive avenues to theory, research, and practice in the fields of both conflict management and family business.

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