

“Know Your Place” or “Love Each Other”:

Logic Work on Value Ambiguity in Rwandan Family

Business

To understand why encounters between modern market institutions and other ways to allocate resources can yield so diverse outcomes, I examine family and business interplay in Rwanda, East Africa. Interviews reveal that the family institution's articulation with business depends on the value associated with family: order, love, or collective achievement. Accordingly, Rwandans either maintain family as central in resource exchange at society level or limit its role to the private sphere. This study highlights the intrinsic value ambiguity of a fundamental institution such as family. This ambiguity adds to extrinsic institutional complexity when family encounters business. The paper describes the process of ambiguity reduction that relatives engage in as they attempt to draw a boundary between family and business. More theoretically, it shows institutions can pre-exist the values placed at their core, reversing traditional views on institutions, logics, and values, and suggesting new research avenues on institutional change.

Keywords: logics, values, family business, Africa

Over the last century, Western business institutions, supported by modern States, have come to dominate social life (Meyer & Bromley, 2015). Research on institutional logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton et al., 2012) has shown that, today, resources are predominantly distributed according to market and corporate logics that pervade even religion, health, or charity (Lewis & Carlos, 2022; Munir et al., 2021; Reay & Hinings, 2009). Other institutions only survive in so far as they are compatible with dominant institutions (Kim & Schifeling, 2022; Marquis & Lounsbury, 2007; Yan et al., 2019). Resisting the trend is arduous, especially in contexts where market and corporate institutions have taken hold earlier and deeper (Fourcade-Gourinchas & Babb, 2002; Malhotra et al., 2021).

However, in many countries, a sharp mismatch remains between institutions built on the Western model and those rooted in local histories (Baland et al., 2020; Mutch, 2018; Nason & Bothello, 2022). Since their encounter, Western and local institutions have been co-evolving, conflicting, hybridizing in ways that do not necessarily converge toward a single global model (Hall & Soskice, 2001; Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Unfortunately, institutional scholarship predominantly reflects Western societies (Friedland and Alford 1991, Thornton et al. 2012, Weber 1978). As a result, we have limited understanding of institutional dynamics in non-Western countries, in particular of micro-level institutional work (Zilber, 2024). Yet, surviving non-Western, non-market logics often manifest in the ways collective narratives and imaginaries are built around resource use and resource access.

In this paper, I thus I aim to *empirically identify the logic of family* (Reay & Jones, 2016) in a *non-Western country* then study *how it interplays with market and corporate logics*. I focus on family for two reasons. First, it is widely acknowledged as an universal, fundamental institution (Friedland and Alford 1991, Thornton et al. 2012, Weber 1978) that still considerably influences resource allocation in modern societies, including within and around formal organizations (Dyer, 2003; Fairclough & Micelotta, 2013; Malhotra et al., 2021). Second, it is

an extremely fluid institution with a large variety of local instantiations (Godelier, 2004; Stewart, 2003). As a result, institutional scholars have a hard time accurately explaining the influence of family on organizations (Bhappu, 2000; Zellweger et al., 2016).

Using interview data collected in Rwanda, East-Africa, I observe how business owner-managers and their relatives make sense of the family institution as market and corporate logics gain in influence in the country. I find that, although the Rwandan family institution remains strong, its meaning is ambiguous. This ambiguity generates tensions that need to be resolved through individual and collective work on values (Gehman et al., 2013). Interestingly, this institutional work does not always converge toward the same outcome. Different logical accounts can relate institutionalized family practices to different values: order, love, or collective achievement. I describe the process leading from an initial situation of institutional ambiguity to the institutionalization of a set of value, logic, and practice giving sense to family, through phases of conflict, logic elaboration, settlement, and diffusion that often shatters family hierarchy and conditions relation between family and business.

This study describes collective efforts to find acceptable ways to distribute scarce resources, in reaction to the spread of individualistic market logics. In addition to extending the institutional logic perspective to Africa (George et al., 2016), it highlights the *value ambiguity* of a fundamental institution. In contrast to institutional complexity coming from the encounter of several institutions at the organizational or field level (McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Pache & Santos, 2013; Reay & Hinings, 2009; Zilber, 2024), ambiguity in the value associated with family resides at the level of the institution itself. The study illustrates how people cope with intrinsic value ambiguity that adds to extrinsic institutional complexity when family encounters business. Second, this study shows that an institution devoid of a clear logic and value substrate can be maintained by relating existing practices to various values through logics constructed on the spot. Ongoing debate about the meaning of family in Rwandan society thus calls into question

the way institutions, logics, and values relate to each other (Kraatz et al., 2020; Lounsbury et al., 2021; Selznick, 1957) and reminds us of the contingency of even the most taken-for-granted institutions. This opens avenues for research on the role of value ambiguity in institutional change or persistence (Amis et al., 2002; Mutch, 2018; Ocasio et al., 2016).

1. THEORY

1.1. THE IMPORTANCE OF VALUES AND LOGICS AS CEMENT OF INSTITUTIONS

The core idea of neo-institutional theory is that social actors need to legitimate their existence and their behavior to thrive in the social fields they are embedded in. Each field is defined by its boundaries; by specific practices, symbols, identities, and values that are accepted as legitimate within these boundaries; and by a specific “institutional logic” (Zietsma et al., 2017). Institutional logics are what logically connects all the elements of an institution into a meaningful whole (Alvehus & Hallonsten, 2022). They are *institutionalized ways of thinking* that are considered logical in a given social field (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Lounsbury et al., 2021). These institutionalized ways of thinking enable social actors to justify (or criticize) institutions when needed (Ocasio et al., 2016; Thornton et al., 2012).

Different ways of thinking are perceived as explanatory in different social fields. The large array of “niche” logics that justify local institutions derive their own meaning from a small set of overarching logics related to a handful of specific domains of life, or “institutional orders”. The list of institutional orders and related logics is not well established, but most authors agree that it includes family, religion, State, market economy, and professions (Boltanski and Thévenot 1991, Friedland and Alford 1991, Thornton et al. 2012, Weber 1946, 1978). The logics of these institutional orders influence the entirety of society (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). In particular, they influence business organizations (Pache and Santos 2013, Reay and Hinings 2009, Smets et al. 2012, Zhao and Lounsbury 2016, Zietsma and Lawrence 2010).

Institutional orders and local institutions would ultimately be supported by underlying, fundamental values (see table 1). It is because an underlying value is valued *in and for itself* that the institution it supports has sense and is maintained (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022; Selznick, 1957). From this perspective, an institutional logic gives meaning to an institution or institutional order by logically connecting institutional elements to a core value (Alvehus & Hallonsten, 2022; Friedland, 2013; Friedland & Arjaliès, 2019; Kraatz et al., 2020; Lounsbury et al., 2021; Selznick, 1992; Terpe, 2020). This value is the criterion that serves to evaluate, criticize, or justify the institution (Kraatz et al., 2020).

1.2. UNEXPLAINED STRUGGLES BETWEEN BUSINESS AND FAMILY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The interplay of family and business in Africa is a case of institutional complexity (Greenwood et al., 2011) caused by the encounter of formal business organizations (Meyer & Bromley, 2015) with local family institutions. Formal business organizations are embedded in the global institutional order of the modern market economy, related to the values of efficiency, wealth, and individual accumulation (see table 1 above). Market institutions are tightly intertwined with those of the State, an institution supported by efficiency and order. When these institutions diffuse in a society they conflict with and oftentimes displace other institutions along with their associated practices, logics, and values.

Due to colonization, formal political and market institutions of sub-Saharan African countries have been strongly inspired by those of Western countries (Meyer & Bromley, 2015), but their transcription has been incomplete and superficial (Baland et al., 2020; Scott, 2013). Africans compensate for the insufficiencies of formal political and market institutions by leveraging more deeply rooted institutions (Nason & Bothello, 2022). Prominent among these institutions is family (Ge et al., 2019): it has historically been essential to doing business (Greif, 1993; Kudaisya, 2011; Walther, 2014) and continues to undergird many business organizations

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF FUNDAMENTAL INSTITUTIONAL ORDERS (IN BOLD) AND ASSOCIATED VALUES (IN ITALICS)

<i>Weber 1946</i>	<i>Weber 1958</i>	<i>Friedland & Alford 1991</i>	<i>Boltanski & Thévenot 1991</i>	<i>Thornton et al. 2012</i>	<i>Synthesis</i>
Kinship <i>Belonging</i>	Family <i>Respect of seniority</i>	Family <i>Loyalty to members</i>	Domesticity <i>Honor, social order</i>	Family <i>Loyalty to patriarch</i>	Family <i>?</i>
Intellect 1 <i>(religious)</i> <i>Truth</i>	Religion <i>Truth</i>	Religion <i>Truth</i>	Inspiration <i>Authenticity, originality</i>	Religion <i>Faith</i>	Religion <i>Faith, rightness (to gods, to one's beliefs)</i>
Aestheticism <i>Beauty</i>					
			Reputation <i>Celebrity, visibility</i>		
Erotism <i>Pleasure</i>					
Intellect 2 <i>(scientific)</i> <i>Truth</i>	Profession <i>Expertise, ethics</i>	Science <i>Truth</i>	(Technical, industrial) Expertise <i>Scientific truth, productive efficiency</i>	Profession <i>Expertise, quality</i>	Profession <i>Rightness (to facts, to truth, to ethical rules)</i>
				Community <i>Trust, commitment</i>	Polity <i>Commitment to common good</i>
		Democracy <i>Participation and popular control</i>	Civism <i>Equity, solidarity, dedication</i>	(bureaucratic, democratic) State <i>Participation/ domination, search for common good</i>	
Politics <i>Power</i>	(public & private) Bureaucracy <i>Rational efficiency</i>	State <i>Rationalization, regulation</i>			State <i>Efficiency for social order</i>
Economics <i>Wealth</i>		Capitalism <i>Accumulation and commodification</i>			(for-profit) Corporation <i>Size (absolute wealth)</i>
	Market <i>Profit</i>		Market <i>Competition, relative accumulation</i>	Market <i>Profit (relative wealth)</i>	

all over the world because it conveys trust, facilitates communication, and smoothens coordination (Dyer, 2003; Fairclough & Micelotta, 2013; La Porta et al., 1999). In Africa, family provides valuable resources to businesspeople, notably dedicated workforce but also money, information, and connections (Geschiere & Konings, 1993; Khayesi et al., 2014).

However, African businesspeople often feel pressured by relatives expecting to benefit from business proceeds (Baland et al., 2011; Khavul et al., 2009; Warnier, 1994). Family support comes at a cost—the cost of “giving back” or helping relatives in need (Grimm et al., 2017; Khayesi et al., 2014)—that often hinders business development (Alby et al., 2020; Khavul et al., 2009) and can threaten business survival (Phillips & Bhatia-Panthaki, 2007; Sam, 2003). Some owner-managers thus try to strictly separate business from family while others look for ways to be both responsible businesspeople and responsible family members (Demuijnck & Ngnodjom, 2013; Mitra, 2012). Finally, it is also common that worse-off relatives are exploited by better-off businesspeople (Oya, 2007; Warnier & Miafo, 1993). We lack an overall understanding of how the family institution can interact with business in so many different ways (Bewayo, 2009; Chua et al., 2012). The institutional logic perspective seems to be a relevant tool to tackle this challenge. How can seemingly contradictory observations be logically reconciled into a consistent whole?

1.3. THE VARIABILITY OF FAMILY LOGICS ACROSS TIME AND SPACE

Astonishingly, there has been little work on family-business interplay from an institutional logic perspective (Pounder, 2015; Sharma et al., 2012). As a result, Weber’s (1946, 1978) description of the family institution remains the main reference for institutional theorists: family would be based on unconditional loyalty toward members of the family for the sake of family reputation; intrafamily relationships would be characterized by obedience to a powerful patriarch and competition for status in the family hierarchy (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 73). Yet,

contemporary findings rarely match this archetype: belonging to family is often malleable rather than closed (Karra et al. 2006, Verver and Koning 2018), family ties are transient and contingent rather than unconditional ((Lambrecht & Lievens, 2008; Steier, 2003), family structure can be equalitarian as well as hierarchical (Sam, 2003; Sharma & Manikutty, 2005). Institutional scholar are thus forced into a painful “bricolage” around the taken-for-granted archetype. The mismatch between unchanged theoretical accounts on the one hand, empirical diversity and dynamics on the other is problematic because many researchers rely on a comparison of data with inappropriate archetypes to identify logics and study their effects (Reay & Jones, 2016). For example, (Malhotra et al., 2021, p. 485) obviously observe the modern North American family logic, which is about love and support within households; yet they do not manage to discard the focus on status struggle between relatives which, in Weber’s mind, characterized pre-modern/non-European extended family lineages (Weber, 1978).

Looking outside the institutionalist literature is of little help. Research on family business is full of contradictory assertions about what family is and how it influences organizations (Chua et al., 2012). Love and altruism, often mentioned as the root of family business specificities (Le Breton-Miller et al., 2011; Schulze et al., 2001), do not fit with cases involving far-reaching relations based on social obligations and strict hierarchy (Khavul et al., 2009; Oya, 2007). Likewise, anthropological research indicates that the family institution is universal but has always been characterized by great variability across cultures (Morgan, 1871; Murdock, 1949). Moreover, it evolves over time in any given culture (Godelier, 2004). Today, anthropologists seem to say that a single logic or principle cannot do justice to the variety of local instantiations of the family institution (Kronenfeld, 2012; Sahlins, 2011a, 2011b; Shapiro, 2014).

The anthropological perspective is consistent with institutional theory that holds that the most pervasive institutions are also the most diffuse and fluid (Mutch, 2018; Scott, 2013; Weik, 2019). Family would be such a diffuse and fluid institution varying across cultural contexts and

situations. It thus seems presumptuous to describe *the* family logic; at best, it is possible to empirically capture *a* logic that explains *one* instantiation of the family institution in a given time and place. Only a handful of organizational scholars have attempted this task (e.g. Bhappu, 2000). A great number of such studies in a diversity of settings would be needed to improve our global understanding of family logics and their influence on organizations (Zellweger et al., 2016). To contribute to this accumulation of empirical knowledge, I tried to identify the logic explaining the influence of family on business in contemporary Africa.

2. METHOD

2.1. IDENTIFYING THE FAMILY LOGIC IN CONTEXT

Logics are immaterial emanations of culture that are “revealed through language, practices, and symbols” (Reay & Jones, 2016, p. 442). They are hidden: deeply institutionalized ideas are neither commonly talked about nor thought about (Harmon et al., 2019; Scott, 2013). It is only when taken-for-granted practices are challenged that institutional logics emerge from under the surface (Cloutier & Langley, 2013; Harmon et al., 2015; Wright et al., 2017). Then, they are elaborated and expressed as lay theories of the institution in question (Smets et al., 2012). Although it is possible to study institutional logics in any context, it is thus easier when social actors are trying to make sense of a contested institution through logic work.

To identify the family logic and how it influences organizations, it is thus easier to focus on a country characterized by rapid social change impacting the family institution. I chose to turn to Rwanda, a small African nation-State whose population shares a single language and culture (Chrétien, 2000). This ruled out the difficulty of comparing cases influenced by various family systems, as would have been necessary in larger, culturally heterogeneous African countries. Moreover, the family institution was the main institution of Rwandan society until the 20th century (Adrianssens, 1954; Chrétien, 2000; Maquet, 1961; Newbury, 2009) and

remains central in Rwandans' daily life (Honeyman, 2016; Pontalti, 2018). However, recent history—colonization, civil war and genocide—has considerably challenged its place in society (Chrétien, 2000; Newbury, 2009; Prunier, 1997). In the last two decades, pressure on the family institution continued due to the rise of State and market logics (Honeyman, 2016; Porter et al., 2008). Rwanda thus seems to be the perfect setting to collect an account of the family logic.

2.2. DATA COLLECTION

The aim of this paper is to look for a logical account of family grounded in data (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Between August 2018 and June 2019, I interviewed business owner-managers based in Kigali, capital city of Rwanda. I also interviewed members of their families and employees of their businesses, as well as “experts” of business and/or family, to enrich my understanding of the context. I focused on business owner-managers because, deeply embedded in the family institution like all Rwandans, they also deeply engage with business. Contrary to employees, they lack the framework provided by preexisting organizations, whose established legal status, bylaws, and practices “filter” institutional complexity (Lee & Lounsbury, 2015). Hence, business owner-managers are likely to face issues due to the mismatch between business and family institutions and to elaborate on underlying logics.

Data collection was divided into four phases. Between each phase, I analyzed the data and prepared the following trip by taking contacts with potential future interviewees (Kreiner, 2015; Yin, 2014). During the first trip, I visited local libraries and documentation centers to gather secondary data on Rwandan institutions and their history. I met local and Western researchers to confirm and update the theoretical knowledge I was acquiring. With the support of a local consulting company, I was able to interview consultants and business experts about the local entrepreneurial landscape and the influence of family on business. I took advantage of these interviews to ask these educated Rwandans about Rwandan family and business

institutions in general to triangulate the academic perspective with an emic perspective. I also leveraged daily interactions with Rwandans from all ages and social backgrounds to check consultants' and researchers' point of view on family. Finally, I attended entrepreneurial workshops and conferences, which enabled me to observe the pro-entrepreneurship and pro-market institutional discourse to which my informants have been exposed since the late 1990s due to governmental policy (Booth & Golooba-Mutebi, 2012).

I then started interviewing young entrepreneurs because 60% of the Rwandan population is less than 25 years old (UNO, 2019). Many of these young entrepreneurs referred to the fact that older businesspeople had a very different vision of family and business. Therefore, I came back to Rwanda to interview older business owner-managers, who ventured between the mid-1980s and the early 2000s. I also targeted teams of business partners, to check whether their perspective on family and family/business boundary differed from lone business owners. During the last stay, I also managed to triangulate what informants had told me during my previous stays by interviewing some of their relatives and employees. I stopped data collection when additional interviews stopped providing new perspectives.

I spent over 6 months in the country and conducted 67 hours of interviews with 88 informants—excluding informal interviews I conducted to familiarize myself with the context. Interviews were semidirected, with questions focusing on business founding and management, informants' biography, and influence of family on life course and business development. When possible or needed (for example, to revive a fading conversation), general questions about family in Rwanda or about the business environment were added. Below, informants are identified by a number (1 to 88) then a “code” that indicates whether they are entrepreneurs (En), workers from their family (Wf) or not (Wn), other family members (Ef), or experts and consultants (Co); their gender (M or F); age in decade (e.g., 3 for people in their 30s); and level of education: secondary and below (S) or higher education (H).

Data is composed of three subparts. First, academic and expert descriptions and interpretations of the family institution, today and in history. Second, a large overview of today's family and business practices and underlying logics from the perspective of young entrepreneurs engaged in various industries, mostly IT, construction, and fashion. Third, a set of older construction firms that gave me insights into long-term family and business dynamics since the 1980s, which enabled me to check whether practices or logics have changed in the last two decades.

2.3. DATA ANALYSIS

I followed Kreiner's (2015) approach to data analysis: analysis was started immediately after the first phase of data collection and continued throughout the collection process. Cases were constantly compared with each other. I also embraced theoretical ideas as soon as they emerged from preliminary findings and compared them with extant literature on family, family business, entrepreneurship in sub-Saharan Africa, and of course institutional logics. perspectives on family with their relatives, I identified a process though which they all had gone or were going through. The result section below presents the outcome of this 3-rounds data analysis.

3. FINDINGS: LOGICALLY ALIGN PRACTICES WITH VALUES

3.1. THE FAMILY INSTITUTION IN CONTEMPORARY RWANDA

The Rwandan family institution was consistently described by interviewees as collectivist: "The way I carry myself, the way I talk, represent my background, my family" (52-EfM3H); "you are representing the family. For example, [at weddings] I'm representing my mother and father and our branch of the family" (73-CoF3H). Overall, "[Rwandans] are still much more related to the family than to the individual itself. [...]" (56- EnM6H). Family collectivism somehow extends to properties: the boundary between individual and familial

assets is blurred. For example, (56-EnM6H) explained how he sees legal and psychological ownership of the family business: “I’m the only shareholder. [...] But [family members] benefit from it. When I make money, they make money too! Yes. It’s not like in Europe! Here, we are conscious that the family belongs to everybody [...]”. There are more critical accounts: “Say you’ve earned 100 000\$, and you have a brother who is in the office [...], they will see the money coming in and they will be ‘hey, this is our money’” (52-EfM3H).

Family collectivism translates into constant flows of material resources that relatives exchange to cover the cost of children’s education, housing, healthcare, and unhappy events. Family ceremonies, especially weddings, also trigger important resource exchange. Finally, family members are expected to help each other with connections, advice, money, and time to find jobs. These practices are common to virtually all families and are little, if ever, contested.

In addition to being collectivist, Rwandan families are characterized by a strict hierarchy of age and gender. Generally, “the parent is gonna be a parent, and the child is gonna be a child. Even if I’m 55 and my dad is 80, I have to respect him, [...] everything he tells is correct, everything he wants me to do I must do [...]. In our culture, the young and the old never collide” (52-EfM3H). Similarly, in private life, men have precedence over women: “When we’re at home, if we don’t agree, you’re the brother, I’m the sister. So you win” (33-EnF2H). This latter point contrasts with the fact that Rwanda has been doing very well on gender equality in business and politics (Abbott & Malunda, 2016; Kagaba, 2015).

Family hierarchy is dominated by a “head of the family”, an elder male who oversees resource flows between family members. Heads of family strongly influence the management of family real estate, which is a remain of their traditional role as a steward of collective family assets. Heads of family are also in charge of arbitrating conflict between family members. Finally, they represent the family during ceremonies or when a family member has a conflict with another family and asks for support. For example, a consultant recalled that when the two

partners of one of her client firms got into a fight and closed their business, the liquidation process was supervised by the heads of their respective families (34-CoF5H).

3.2 TENSIONS BETWEEN FAMILY AND BUSINESS

Family collectivism gives access to resources that are crucial to start and grow businesses. Relatives often provide start-up money and equipment, as well as housing and daily cash for young entrepreneurs. Family hierarchical structure further boosts support. “Let’s say your dad is the first [head of family], then definitely he will influence [...] uncles and aunties to come in and help financially” explains (82-EnF2H). Family is also a pool of cheap, dedicated labor: “There is a lot of unemployment. [...] So you can call on your sister, who can accept to work for minimum wages or can accept to work for a whole year without being paid, until money comes, and then you call on a brother, and progressively the business grows” (56-EnM6H).

For established businesses however, family collectivism might be a drain on resources. “It’s small amounts each month but in the end, it basically kills the business because [you] cannot invest in it. [...] There is always a sick relative whom you need actually to [...] take care of and everybody [in the family] knows that you are the only one who can get access to money and sometimes you even take loans, and then you need time to pay back before you engage into something which is substantial [to grow your firm]” (12-EnM2H). For a business development consultant, the mechanism was just as clear: “You can find some businesses go bankrupt because some family members are in trouble and [entrepreneurs] want to really give a hand” (47-CoM2H).

A cheap, hence common way to help relatives in need is to hire them: “If I don’t hire him, I must help him anyway. So better he works!” (57-EnM6H). However, hired relatives are not always as committed as entrepreneurs would like: “Some want to earn without doing anything!” (57-EnM6H). In addition, the hierarchy of age and gender that structures family does not necessarily match business hierarchy: “You can’t just hold older people accountable [...] It’s

inappropriate to ask your elder what's happening, where is the money" says a young woman (4-EnF2H). A mature man (87-EnM4S) confirms: "When one works with relatives older than oneself, that creates conflicts [...]. You cannot manage them". Furthermore, family hierarchy can directly interfere with business management, particularly in hiring. (45-EnF2H) told me how she had to hire an unproductive sister under family pressure. A consultant confirmed that this is common: "Senior relatives invest in your business. [So] they ask for jobs for children".

3.3. STRUGGLE IN ENTREPRENEURS' FAMILIES

The issue for Rwandan businesspeople is thus to limit resource sharing and elders' influence to protect their business, without losing family support. Conversely, their relatives generally consider that business is somehow theirs. This causes a gnawing struggle in Rwanda about the limits of family collectivism and hierarchy. Most business stories go through the same stages. At first, entrepreneurs tend to rely on family support and hire relatives. Soon enough however, they face issues coming from relatives' behaviors that are at odds with sound business management. To explain what it wrong, businesspeople contrast family with an explanation of business that clearly correspond to the archetype of market and/or corporate logics (see table 1 above). All business owner-managers I met planned for growth hence wanted to accumulate capital. Many insisted that business relationships should be impersonal relationships based on mutual interest. Within their firm, they wanted to establish a hierarchy of responsibility and wages based on employees' professional skills rather than personal acquaintance or liking.

When family is at odds with this business logic, the boundary between family and business is made more strict: misbehaving relatives are sanctioned, often fired, and new hiring put on hold. This opens a phase of conflict: "There'll be some relatives that will support you, and others will think you are just selfish and self-centered" (82-EnF2H). Disagreement is settled collectively: "At the end of the day it's family. You have to sit and talk to one another" (51-WfM3H).

Discussion is highly influenced by the head of family: “It’s [his] responsibility to come and calm the situation down” (51-WfM3H). Heads of families control which claims are fair and which are abusive: “Not everybody can come [in my office] and ask. It’s the head of family who says ‘there is a kid here who needs help, [...] do what is needed’ and I do” (57-EnM6H). When the legitimacy of a claim or complain is not obvious, disagreeing relatives have the opportunity to plead their cause: “Every time [the head] intervenes, he comes to me, ‘Listen, what happened, I have heard this and that...’, so you explain your point of view, he takes a decision” (66-EnM6H). (45-EnF2H) has a similar story: having hired a sister under family pressure, she made the head of family come to Kigali to witness that the sister did not show up at work. She was then authorized to fire the lazy sister. (50-EnM4S) also proactively called on family hierarchy: “It’s stronger than the courts! I called the [head of family], with him I called my paternal aunt and seven others. Then, I said: ‘Look, this is my brother. I hired him, he stole me [inventory] [...]. I wanted you to know that I fired him for one year’. [...] Then [my brother] comes and wants to ask for forgiveness. The head of the family said: ‘We need something written. That you will not work for one year, and you will not steal again’”.

Such conflict-resolution procedure pushes individuals to elaborate on their perspective on family solidarity and family interests. For example, sons of (56-EnM6H) recalled that there had been conflict between their father and his brothers. (56-EnM6H) managed to convince the whole family to align with his way of interpreting family practices. (56-EnM6H)’s older brother admitted that this conflict was key in (56-EnM6H) supplanting him as heir: “He explained well to the family. [...] He knows how to speak. [...] So, nobody was offended [...]. That’s about this time that I thought he would be a good head of family” (88-EfM6H). (50-EnM4S) is very proud of having overcome the same kind of issues. He is expected to become head of his family. (50-EnM4S) and (56-EnM6H) not only protected their business from family opportunists but also took conflict as an opportunity to show their commitment to the family and gain in family status.

Indeed, entrepreneurs who play the game of family institutions obtain opportunities to display their social and discursive skills to elders, which increases their chances of being appointed as heirs: “In the Rwandan culture the ability to speak well and cleverly and to play with words is held very highly [...]. An elder male in the family who has this ability to speak well is generally the one who is [chosen as head]” (63-CoF4H). Sensemaking efforts on what family is therefore extends to the role of family hierarchy and how the head should be chosen.

When they manage to convince the head of their families, and even more when they become head of family themselves, successful entrepreneurs can push their interpretation of family forward. Doing so, they maintain both family solidarity and family hierarchy. (50-EnM4S) explained how he encourages junior relatives so give back to the extended family rather than only to their spouse and children: “I took a child, I paid her school fees, [...] the kid graduated, I made sure she finds a job, then I said: ‘See, I paid you, you studied, you were hired, now you must help family. [...] Not in your household but at this uncle’s, at the younger brother of your cousin’... That’s how I work”. (52-EfM3H) explained that he promotes a mindset of responsibility both among employees and among relatives. (69-WfM3S) explained that his uncle made sure that “everyone sees the possibility to help your brothers, your sisters”.

3.4. GIVING SENSE TO THE FAMILY INSTITUTION: THREE RWANDAN PERSPECTIVES

Surprisingly, I could not identify a single way to explain family features in Rwanda. As bemusedly written by a young Rwandan social scientist, “I do not know (1) why I still respect uneducated brothers and uncles. Having a Ph.D. does not mean that I can contradict them. I do not know (2) why I still have to give money to my relatives even when they will not say thank you. [...] And I do not know (3) why I still have the responsibility to pay school fees of kids of my brother and to a lesser extent for kids of my sisters” (71- CoM2H). Characteristically, businesspeople often explain what Rwandan family is *not* by comparing it with family in other

cultures, in particular family in Europe (more individualistic, with less mutual help because of public services and public or private insurance) and neighboring countries (where family is less hierarchical). Nevertheless, it is difficult for informants to explain what Rwandan family is or should be. Nevertheless, three different perspectives on family transpire from the mass of data. Each informant predominantly referred to only one of the three, but generally not consistently; hints of each of the three perspectives surfaced almost in every interview.

3.4.1. “Know your place”. According to both ancient (Kagamé, 1954; Maquet, 1961) and recent (Newbury, 2009; Pontalti, 2018) literature, Rwandan family is about hierarchy. This reflects Weberian theory (see Table 1). From this perspective, family is a hierarchy based on traditional, even “natural” order. The father of a young entrepreneur explained that he does not fear his son to let him down in his old age because “when you go see [your parents], you bring something to give. [...] It’s an appreciation because they have carried you, they gave you life. You cannot be too thankful for that” (42-EfM6S). Reciprocally, being a good son or daughter is rewarded with access to material support and guidance (Pontalti, 2018).

Because family hierarchy is grounded in the natural order of generations, first sons who do not contest the established order are normally designated successors by heads of family: “You cannot become head of the family as long as you have older brothers” (15-EnM3H). Incapable sons can be dismissed though (Adrianssens, 1954). Incapacity can be physical, intellectual, or moral: a first son who rebels against the head of the family is likely to be replaced in the line of succession by a more respectful son (Pontalti, 2018). However, in general, if family is interpreted as an institution organized around order, family hierarchy follows birth order.

From a critical perspective (e.g. Maquet 1961), this logic is extremely exploitative, as it forces young people to comply with seniors’ wishes under the threat of being deprived from family support or inheritance. Honeyman (2016) and Pontalti (2018) showed how attachment to family order constrains young Rwandans’ life choices and success, as initiatives that do not

fit with elders' expectations are taken as rebellion and sanctioned. Many young informants indeed explained me that the hierarchical character of family constrained their career and life choices: "I always had to do what my parents wanted me to do [...]. Going in front of your dad and tell him: 'Hey, I'm going to do something which is different from what you want me to do or what you thought I should be doing', then it becomes scary" (52-EfM3H). Taking initiative is suspicious, as people are expected to "know their place" (43-EfM3H). Deviating individuals are told off: "who do you think you are"; "you don't know your place" (52-EfM3H).

3.4.2. "Love each other". Alternatively, family is sometimes presented as a group where resources are expected to be shared out of love. (52-EfM3H) explained: "[Relatives] feel like, if the company is making X amount of money, everybody has to get a percentage of the earnings". Equal repartition is expected: "[Relatives] say, if he has 10 million, [...] he should give me 5 [...] we must share" (50-EnM4S); "They feel like 'hey, if I've made 100\$, we are going to split it equally'" (52-EfM3H). If people do not share, "family will say, 'oh, well well, you are egoistic, you let your brother starve'" (57-EnM6H).

A young entrepreneur explained how this vision of family enabled him to raise resources: "They are giving some cash, they are not really [buying] shares. [...] When I mention that [my partners and I] are stuck [...] because we don't have this or that, they say 'OK how much?' I just need to explain: '[...] we need to travel from here to this community [...]'. Maybe if I want 10 000, if my parents can only get 5000 [...] I go to my uncles and aunts [...] And when we started [...] we wanted [...] laptops, phones... [...] Some of my uncles had some devices at work or at home so, they shared them. We used them to work, to start" (41-EnM2H). Another had the same experience: "All the family members, when you go to them, they will [give you] a little cash, 2000, whatever" (75-EnM2H).

An older entrepreneur explains: "Here in Africa, if you are a member of the family and you have anything, you must share with the whole family [...] If you have means, everybody

arrives to your house” (56-EnM6H). Another said: “If I earn something, we share; if there are needs in my family, I say ‘I can share this’, it’s not an issue [...] My salary and my brothers’, they are kind of shared anyway” (87-EnM4S). An old man explained this altruistic orientation: “It’s not an obligation to help, it comes from the heart” (42-EfM6S). For another one, love is the cardinal value: “It’s love truly. [...] And this love, you must give it back” (29-WnM5H).

This focus on love seems to mitigate the hierarchical dimension of family. From this perspective, the head of family is merely expected to be the one who shares or is able to share more. According to the son of a successful entrepreneur, his father became head of family because “he had the material capacity to help the family” (30-WfM3H). The head of another family had the same perspective: “Tradition is, you care for everybody. For example, [...] in the family I’m the one having resources, so [...] I pay school fees for a lot of young relatives [...], if somebody is unemployed, I have to take care of it, if somebody is sick, he comes here to say he cannot afford it, I give him. [...] That’s maybe what determined why I have been designed as head of family [...], I was the support of the family so [my parents] said, ‘well, let’s give him the charge, because he has the resources’” (56-EnM6H). Conversely, it is given more to those who have more responsibilities. (20-EnF2H) recalls that “when [the head of my family] wanted to give [her] a job, the pay was not based on merit or on job description, it was about ‘you are not married, you don’t have kids, so it’s going to be that much’. It really was based on personal stuff, on what he thought you needed”.

3.4.3. “Feel responsible for collective achievement”. Family solidarity can also be interpreted in terms of individual responsibility to make the collective thrive. From this perspective, “you support [...] based on the behavior of the person helped, of her commitment, of her projects. But not assistance. [To be supported] one must show one does one’s part, that one puts help to good use. One must not have to take care of you. [...] There is this idea that you help family, under the condition that the person shows drive, shows capacity to improve

one's life [...]. Family members have an obligation of solidarity [...]. However, there is no obligation of sharing, of equal standards of living" (23-CoM6H).

The "learn someone how to fish rather than give a fish" (25-EnF4S, 50-EnM4S) metaphor was often mentioned by Rwandans. A Western woman married to a Rwandan explained how it works: "[My husband's] sister kept asking for money [...]. Then, [...] there was this woman closing a shoe store and he [...] said: 'I'm buying you all these shoes and you start your own thing'. And [...] it kind of failed for her, but she never asked again. This was like 'OK, he's done what he could'. [...] Instead of someone coming asking every week, [...] you can do something that can make this person grow themselves. So that's why people do pay for school, even university, [...] so that relatives can create their own lives. If someone has an idea for a business, we can also pay for that" (6-CoF3H).

Consistently, the role of the head of family is to foster and organize solidarity between family members. The head of a rather poor family explained: "I'm the head of the family, I'm leading and the other help me. [...] There are those I appointed for tax things, those to help my mother" (87-EnM4S). The son of a much wealthier one confirmed: "Let's say there is a member of the family who had the house destroyed by the rain. [...] The elder will [...] make family members know what happened, and then it works like a fundraising thing. If you can afford to buy, let's say, three bags of rice [...], the other persons will say 'I will give them the oil they need to cook', 'I will give them the tools for the house', 'the corrugated iron for the roof'. [...] Or even he would appoint someone who knows well the people who got the house destroyed and tell him to make sure the family does what needs to be done" (36-WfM2H). In short, "It's not that [the head of the family] must take everything in charge! But centralize needs, organize, inform... Then, people can take their responsibilities" (61-EfF6H).

For collective mobilization, family members must feel responsible toward each other but also be able to help each other. That is the role of the head of family to "build capacities. That's

it, in the way that everyone sees the possibility to help your brothers, your sisters, see? There is a sense of responsibility for everyone to help. You can't just sit there, waiting for the chief to... no, if there is a chief of the family who is doing the job well, if I can say, he doesn't make everything, he lets people see that, 'OK I can take my responsibilities'" (69-WfM3S). In the end, a good head of family, with the support of everybody, is supposed "make the family grow" (89-EnM3S). A head of the family explained how he educates his relatives: "[one of my brothers] is older, but [...] sometimes I see he is not looking forward [...]. So I give him a speech, because he is like my little brother [...] I tell him he should grow" (87-EnM4S). The employee of a family business praises his boss: "He is like a father to everybody [...] He does not want you to stay small, he pushes you, he makes you grow up" (29-WnM5H).

Ultimately, family hierarchy reflects ability and willingness to contribute rather than birth order or wealth. Seniors' authority is interpreted as a consequence of the fact that older people are normally more mature and responsible than juniors. The case of a family where the second son was elected as future head of family by his siblings is illustrative. A younger brother explained: "[The future head] is not the first born. [My dad] said we [siblings] had to sit and like, vote, for who we think can be the next leader. Then, all the votes go to [the future head] [...]". The reason is that the head-elect had already shown his capacity to solve family conflict among cousins: "He knew everything that was going in this family, so [...] when the conflict had raised, then they called him to come, [...] I'm not sure how he managed that, but later on we had a good feedback that it worked well. [...] That's why we trust him. [...] If he has done that in other families, he can also do that in our family".

3.5. PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY AND BUSINESS

Three different perspectives can thus explain the family institution. Each perspective leads to a different interpretation of consensual family practices such as mutual support or the

existence of a hierarchy. Interestingly, how business owners and their relatives saw family conditioned how they saw the fit between family and business, hence determined the porousness of the boundary between family and business.

When family is perceived as an institution based on order, it is thought to hinder innovation and discourage venturing. (2-EnM3H) explains that families expect kids to follow well-known professional paths: “You have to be an accountant, an electrician you know the traditional [professions]. So you don’t tell your family that you’re going to venture”. (1-EnF2H) clearly criticizes the Rwandan family institution as well: “It’s really not possible to bloom when you always are the child somehow. [...] As soon as you are born, [...] you are told that ‘it’s this way’”. Those who are low in the family hierarchy are particularly constrained: “Not all parents would let their daughter do business” (82-EnF2H); “If you are the first in the family, and you want to start your business, [...] they are most likely to support you. But if you are among [younger siblings] and want to start a business, most likely they won’t support you” (75-EnM2H). In addition, this interpretation of the family institution increases the risk that family mingles into business management, as young entrepreneurs are expected to obey senior relatives even when the later have no clue about business. (1-EnF2H) recalled that she was asked to hire a young cousin, although she had no work to give her and could not afford to pay her salary. The same happened to (45-EnF2H). Overall, the interpretation of the family institution in terms of rigid hierarchical order seems to conflict with risk-taking, innovation, and skills-based management.

By contrast, the “love” perspective seems to encourage free-riding on solidarity norms: “[Some brothers] see that it’s compulsory that I help them” (87-EnM4S). (52-EfM3H) complained that “you feel like you are entitled to things”. (51-WfM3H) emphasized how the sense of entitlement coming with this vision of family makes it difficult to manage family employees: “They think [the business] is their own and they can do whatever they want”. (50-EnM4S) also thought that too much love makes impossible to manage family employees: “Often

I tell people off. But family members, they are not afraid. Somebody else says ‘if I steal, he will send me in jail’, but family, they think ‘if I take something, he cannot put me in jail [...]. He loves us [...]. He is our brother, even if we make mistakes, he’s not going to put us in jail’”.

Finally, from the responsibility perspective, family would benefit business. (56-EnM6H), entrepreneur and head of family, clearly says that “for a business to work, [...] every employee, family member or not, must feel responsible for all the others”. As it happens, “when a head of family does the job well [...] people will see that, ‘OK, I take my responsibilities’, and it benefits business too. [...] [Family employees] feel [...] that if I do my job well it’s my child who grows, it’s my son-in-law, it’s everybody” (69-WfM3S). Seeing family in terms of responsibility to contribute seems to make the family institution compatible with business.

In summary, venturing, growth, and innovation are at odds with a the “order” perspective. Order also makes it difficult to manage senior relatives. On the other hand, love seems to contradict accumulation and investment, as it does not put limits on collectivist sharing. Consequently, business owners who describe family in terms of order or love often try to separate business from family. For them, family is incompatible with business. This perspective is more frequent among young Rwandan entrepreneurs, who refuse to hire family altogether, even if they are asked by family elders. They tend to strictly separate family from business and avoid as much as possible to hire relatives. Many young entrepreneurs nevertheless hire siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews when they believe they are motivated and competent, and expect family employees to be particularly dedicated. Likewise, older business owner-managers tend to see family as an institution where individuals take their responsibilities for collective interest; they see family as compatible with or even beneficial for business, and do not hesitate to give relatives a chance by hiring them. Young entrepreneurs who believe in family’s sense of responsibility often stem from families where senior entrepreneurs have paved the way by promoting a responsibility perspective in the last few decades.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1. MULTIPLICITY OF LOGICS AND VALUE AMBIGUITY OF FAMILY

The three ways to explain the family institution are not just different *ways of speaking* about family; they are three different, sometimes contradictory *ways of thinking*—i.e., logics—that has concrete implication for implementing family practices and, consequently, for business. Aiming at identifying *the* logic underlying family in Rwanda, I thus face *three* “institutionalized ways of thinking” that logically connect elements of the family institution into a consistent whole. None corresponds to the logic of family described by literature on institutional logics, although the logic of hierarchical order somehow reflects extant theory (see table 2). These three logics collide as Rwandans justify their way to interpret and enact institutionalized family practices. The variability and sometimes contradictory discourse of informants clearly indicates that a logic-elaborating process is ongoing, a neat case of the importance of intra-field rhetoric in institutional dynamics (Harmon et al., 2015). Although the whole family collective is involved in elaborating and negotiating family logics, the role of heads of families in the change process confirms that people in positions of authority can influence the way institutions are interpreted, hence evolve (Kraatz et al., 2020; Terpe, 2020). Overall, my observations are thus consistent extant literature that describe institutions as a set of practices related by a specific logic to a core value (Friedland & Arjaliès, 2019; Kraatz et al., 2020; Selznick, 1992). Order, love, or achievement can all be found in classical lists of fundamental values (De Raad & Renner, 2011; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022; Schwartz, 1992).

However, it seems that the value that lies at the core of family is ambiguous (order, love, or collective achievement?), whereas theory predicts that one institution is organized around one value. I believe that it is a case of persistent *value ambiguity* about the meaning of family, which likely could be found in other institutions (e.g. Zellweger et al. 2016).

TABLE 2: ALTERNATIVE LOGICS UNDERLYING FAMILY PRACTICES

Institutional element	How it is logically related to social order	How it is logically related to love between relatives	How it is logically related to collective growth
Collective identification	High	High	High
Help for daily needs, education and life accidents	Seniors manage and allocate collective resources to answer needs and reward good behavior	Relatives care for each other's well-being because they love each other	Relatives pool resources to secure needs but also to invest in each other's potential and maximize collective achievement
Help for family ceremonies	Way to assert the family status and one's status in the family	Way to celebrate together	Way to display collective achievement and bond people together
Conditionality of family support	Relatives have access to resources according to their status, if they comply with expectations	Relatives have access to resources when they need + if there are loved	Relatives have access to resources when they need + if they have potential to use them fruitfully and give back
Limits put to sharing	Relatives do not share when they do not respect established order	Relatives do not share when they are egoistic	Relatives do not share when it harms collective achievement
Gender and age inequality	Out of principle. Older men have better access to resources because that is the order of things	Out of need. Older men have better access to resources because they need to provide for their wife, children, and dependents	Out of reality but can change. Older men have better access to resources because they are more mature and capable to use them fruitfully
Role of head of family	Maintain family honor and values	Answer family needs	Build family capacities, grow responsible adults
Designation of head of family	Capacity to embody order and respect	Capacity to provide	Capacity to bound and mobilize
Basis of Attention	Conformity with expectations	Resource endowment	Leadership skills and dedication
Sources of tension	Competition for succession	Reach of entitling ties, assessment of resource availability	Pressure to meet implicit expectations
Informal Control Mechanism	Threat and reward	Inclusion/exclusion	Sense of responsibility

My observations could be interpreted as a case of institutional diffusion: family would be an issue field (Zietsma et al., 2017) where the logic of order informing traditional Rwandan lineages would be challenged by a logic of love more common in modern Western families (Padilla et al., 2007). Nevertheless, the interpretation of family hierarchy was already ambiguous in the mid-20th century (e.g. Adrianssens, 1954; vs. Kagamé, 1954; Maquet, 1961). If my study is a case of institutional change where a foreign logic (love as core value of Western family) replaces a traditional logic (order or collective achievement as core value of Rwandan family), it is a very slow change. More probably, it is a case of persisting institutional ambiguity.

One could also argue that the logic of responsibility to contribute to collective achievement conditions what one receives from family to the efforts one makes. This is similar to the logic of proportionality between retribution and contribution characteristics of market exchange (Fiske, 1991). Indeed, business owner-managers who see family in terms of collective achievement consider family and business management to be compatible. Hence, the interpretation of family in terms of collective achievement might signal that the value that governs business has been infusing family. Indeed, when a given society is dominated by a value or logic, all the institutions of this society are likely to be imbued with it (Munir et al., 2021; Yan et al., 2019). For example, if profit is the cardinal value, priests would trade indulgence to sinners; parents would retribute children's housework with pocket money, and Rwandans would share with relatives only when they foresee benefit for the family.

However, entrepreneurs who interpret family in terms of responsibility to contribute to collective achievement tend to simultaneously maintain family hierarchy and build successful family businesses, which they use to support relatives. They actively promote collective achievement as a family value, not a business value. As a consequence, their junior relatives seem much more attached to the traditional family institution than other young people. In other words, the achievement logic tends to maintain family rather than dissolve it into the dominant

business institution. Collective achievement as a value even infuses the field of business through the emergence of family businesses. I thus think that considering the three ways to give meaning to family as *three different family logics* based on *inherent familial values* is a more robust interpretation of the data than considering that they are hybrids of the family logic with Western family or market logics.

Contrary to cases of institutional complexity described long ago, the issue is not about different logics encountering in an hybrid organization (McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Pache & Santos, 2013; Reay & Hinings, 2009) or an issue field (Zietsma et al., 2017; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). Instead, all three logics are inherent to the family institution itself, because this institution is characterized by *value ambiguity*. The coexistence of different values and logics creates institutional complexity *within* the family institution, as if it were composed of independent dimensions (Greenwood et al., 2011; Yan, 2020; Yan et al., 2019). *Intrainstitutional ambiguity* adds to *interinstitutional complexity* when family meets business. Findings seem to indicate that complexity reduction is conditioned to ambiguity reduction.

4.2. THE AMBIGUITY REDUCTION PROCESS

It is indeed more difficult to establish a boundary when the meaning of family is unclear. Family value ambiguity triggers a two-stages process where boundary work on the institutional complexity coming from the encounter of business and family is doubled with value and logic work focusing on family itself (Gehman, 2021; Gehman et al., 2013). After a first phase during which business and family intertwine, conflict arises. Business and family practices are then questioned; business is easily explicated, while the value ambiguity of family is uncovered. Institutional work then switches entirely to family (see figure 2).

Institutional work takes place within the framework of relatively formal family meetings supervised by family hierarchy, through informal conversations, and individual reflection. In

many families, this ambiguity reduction process enables entrepreneurs to gain support and orient family perspective on the meaning of family solidarity and hierarchy. However, my data does not truly allow to describe in detail how ambiguity is dealt with and reduced in family intimacy: more micro-level research with direct observation would be needed. What transpires from informants' accounts, however, is that several family logics emerge, each based on a different value. These different logics are compared and opposed to each other and to the business logic until they progressively crystallize as three different interpretations of the family institution. Depending on the logic that becomes dominant in a family, the boundary between family and business is then drawn: some business owners prefer to separate family from business, while others build family businesses.

Business owner-managers who manage their relatives to adhere to a responsibility logic can then reap the benefits of family commitment to collective growth. This seems to be only possible by giving a good example, i.e. respecting elders, helping others, and speaking well during family meetings. Displaying commitment to family enables to climb up family hierarchy, which then facilitates the diffusion of one's perspective of what family is. Business owner-managers who believe family is about love or order, by contrast, tend to separate family from business. This is often the case of young entrepreneurs, especially highly educated ones who have studied in Western countries and/or have been socialized in the vibrant entrepreneurial ecosystem of Kigali. These entrepreneurs discard family upfront, taking a short-cut in the process: they avoid ambiguity by assuming upfront family to be about either order or love.

4.3. THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL ORDERS AND FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

Interestingly, none of the logics I observed rules alone in any Rwandan family. Informants are not always consistent in their personal interpretation of the family institution. Furthermore, the three values I identified are neither restricted to family nor to Rwanda: focusing on

collective achievement favors families as well as business organizations; order can also be valued in business (see table 1 + Williamson 1985); sharing out of love is typical of households (Sahlins, 1972) but is also valued between friends, in couples, in religious communities (Bell & Coleman, 1999; Shorter, 1975). Not only can a single institution be related to different values, but a single value can logically explain different institutions.

Institutions and values should thus be considered loosely coupled by transient logics rather than form stable pairings (Vaccaro & Palazzo, 2015). Logics are elaborated in context to link a given institution that needs to be justified or criticized to values that exist “out there”. Labeling logics with the name of institutions with which they are associated at a given time and place hides the variety of ways a given set of institutional features can be logically related to this or that core value. Concretely, a love logic is not necessarily a family logic, just like family is not always explained by love. Hence, fundamental institutions do not always correspond one-for-one with fundamental institutional logics and fundamental values.

The disconnect between institutions and values could explain the variety of ways in which seemingly similar institutions interact across contexts, opposing each other here while smoothly blending there (Yan, 2020). For example, family can be at odds with business (when one values love while the other is about individuals’ interests), while in other cases it can reinforce it (when both family and business are thought in terms of collective achievement). This does neither mean that business follows a family logic, nor the reverse; it means that family and business *can* be logically related to the same value. This perspective differs from seeing logics as existing in pure forms in their own institutional order, then brought into hybrid fields or organizations by individuals acting as “Trojan horses” or “legitimate spokesperson” for this or that logic (McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Zilber, 2024).

4.4. VALUES, LOGIC WORK, AND INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Interestingly, value work I observed is not the “emergence and performance of [...] valued practices” (Gehman et al., 2013, p. 8) but the linking of established practices with abstract values to discard or maintain these practices. Furthermore, what I observed affects a fundamental institutional order rather than an organization or field (Amis et al., 2002; Klein, 2021; Suddaby & Greenwood, 2005). Whereas it is known that organizations’ values can change over time (Gehman et al., 2013; Klein, 2021), the case of Rwandan families shows that the value at the core of an enduring societal-level institution can change as well. Several authors (Harmon et al., 2015; Mutch, 2018) precisely wondered whether the persistence of institutional orders over centuries truly corresponds to institutional stability when one considers how different the “same” institution is a few centuries apart. When one releases the assumption of one-to-one correspondence between logics, values, and institutional orders, it becomes easier to conceive that an institution such as family can persist, while its logic as well as its instantiation and its boundaries vary drastically: the container and its label remain (practices), while its size (inflation/deflation relative to other institutional orders) and content (filled with different values) change.

The Rwandan family case thus suggests that the link between values and institutional orders is transient; it becomes stronger only when institutions are shaken up and value work renews or creates a logical link between institutional elements and a core value (Chatterjee et al., 2021). This perspective contrasts with the classical view of institutions as embodiment of values, which implies that that institutions are built on and for values, i.e. that values preexist institutions (Friedland & Arjaliès, 2019; Selznick, 1957; Terpe, 2020). This might be true; but value persistence at the level of society goes together with value ambiguity at the level of institutions and fields. Value ambiguity might thus contribute to the fluidity and persistence of fundamental institutional orders in the long run. In the case at hand, value ambiguity makes family more robust than a monolithic institution that might not resist the rise of market logics,

because it makes it more malleable, more adaptable to new value scales and new ways of thinking and distributing resources as society evolves.

4.5. FUNDAMENTAL VALUES AND INTERESTS IN COLLECTIVIST INSTITUTIONS

A final discovery is that achievement in Rwandan families is conceived as *collective*, whereas extant literature on values classifies achievement among values with a personal focus, (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2022). This resonates with the concept of *ubuntu* (van Norren, 2022). This word existing in various forms in Bantu languages expresses a sense of interdependence that causes values considered as individual in Western societies to be lived, understood, and expressed in collective terms. My research thus contributes to our understanding of fundamental values by confirming that seminal typologies of fundamental values are culturally biased. Values need to be contextualized and enlarged to non-Western conceptions of what is valuable (Konadu-Osei et al., 2022). In particular, the study of African institutions might benefit from an integration of *ubuntu* as an expression of self-transcendent thriving for collective well-being and achievement (Adeleye et al., 2020).

Researchers should beware, however, not to essentialize difference between collectivist and individualist cultures (Said, 1979; Voronov & Singer, 2002). Indeed, collective-oriented values can well hide crude individual interests. For example, people who interpret family as a vehicle for collective achievement and push for family resources to be “invested” wisely might in fact try to limit sharing with worse-off relatives (“Social status, it’s for you. Others it’s just survival” (57-EnM6H)). Those defending social order might thrive for dominance. People speaking about love might be hoping to freeride on family altruism. It is probably impossible to objectively disentangle values from interests (Lounsbury et al., 2021; Martin & Lembo, 2020). Likewise, distinction between “love” and “achievement” logics might be an artifact: one could interpret the achievement logic as “tough love” looking for relatives’ long-term interest.

It remains that institutions are organized around values, not the interests they might hide. Interests do not make institutions: they can neither mobilize nor convince if not “disguised” into a value that individuals can legitimately endorse (Kraatz et al., 2020; Terpe, 2020; Zilber, 2024). Yet, institutionalist scholars should keep in mind that the distinction between values and interests, individualism and collectivism, is primarily a matter of perspective. Being open to this subtlety is key to giving a realistic account of social institutions.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, I presented data collected in Rwanda on how the logic of deeply institutionalized family practices is elaborated when the local family institution meets global market institution. I showed that several logics coexist, because the value underlying family is ambiguous. Each family logic has different implications for business. This study shows how important it is to carefully capture local institutional logics at the micro level, rather relying on ideal types (Reay & Jones, 2016). It empirically confirms the role of values in giving sense to institutions *through* logics (Gehman, 2021; Kraatz et al., 2020; Lounsbury et al., 2021). More importantly, it illustrates the *value ambiguity* of a crucial institution—family. Value ambiguity adds to institutional complexity when family meets business. This study helps extend the institutional logic perspective to the study of family business outside of Western countries, but also reminds us of the contingency of even the most taken-for-granted logics. Value ambiguity suggests how institutional orders can persist over centuries despite drastic social change: value ambiguity leaves room for agentic maintenance taking the form of filling an existing institutional “container” with a new value “content” adapted to the evolution of the broader institutional environment. This would enable individuals and groups to relate persistent institutions to values that vary over time by elaborating logics on the spot when needed.

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