


A Bright Side to Family Firms: How Socioemotional Wealth Importance Affects Dark Traits–Job Performance Relationships

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Abstract

Examining socioemotional wealth's influence at the individual level, an interactionist approach was used to test its moderation effect on the dark personality traits–job performance relationship, using supervisor–employee dyads in family firms. Termed the *Dark Triad*, dark personality traits include narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. Results showed that when supervisors in family firms prioritize socioemotional wealth, the expected relationships between the Dark Triad and employee job performance outcomes (task, citizenship, and counterproductive behaviors) is ameliorated. These findings demonstrate that family firms can create an environment that improves the otherwise negative impact that dark personality has on job performance.

Keywords

family firms, socioemotional wealth, Dark Triad, employee performance

Introduction

If you want to tell grown-up fairy tales, you have to look for the dark side.

—Juan Antonio Bayona

Light and darkness have served as metaphors for variations in individual and organizational behavior and, as such, are often used to characterize the differences between positive and negative attributes and outcomes. Given that the family's involvement in the firm has positive and negative implications, it is somewhat ironic that family business research has only begun to apply the “dark side” metaphor to express concerns that revolve around the negative issues that may arise from family involvement. This approach is now being reflected through a concerted effort to explore the darker sides of family business (Kellermanns, Eddleston, & Zellweger, 2012; Klotz & Neubaum, 2016).

Building on this movement, we examine the influence of dark psychological traits within family firms. The

Dark Triad (DT) represents a constellation of three theoretically distinct, albeit overlapping, personality traits (O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Generally, the DT, which includes narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, can be viewed as dispositions toward self-interested approaches to attaining individuals' goals in their professional and interpersonal lives (Hogan, 1996; Rauthmann & Kolar, 2012), pursuing status, power, and the control of resources, even when this pursuit comes at the expense of others. In the workplace, employees with these traits direct considerable attention, time, and energy toward their own, self-set goals, with behavioral tendencies

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toward self-promotion, emotional coldness, duplicity, and aggressiveness (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006; Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy, 2009; O'Boyle et al., 2012; K. M. Williams, Paulhus, & Hare 2007). Existing evidence provides strong grounds for concluding that the DT is associated with, or may actually be involved in generating, a wide range of unfavorable job performance outcomes (e.g., O'Boyle et al., 2012). Furthermore, those with DT traits tend to feel comfortable in ambiguous environments, where the probability of self-interested behavior going unnoticed would be much greater because of fewer, clear policies and standards as well as more relaxed, informal control mechanisms (A. Cohen, 2016). Thus, family firms, with their less formal and less professionalized management practices (e.g., Cruz, Firfiray, & Gomez-Mejia, 2011; Daspit, Madison, Barnett, & Long, 2018), may find themselves with a number of employees who have these darker traits.

While this body of evidence and theory is informative, it has not, to an appreciable extent, explored the possibility that family firms, despite the less formal management practices, represent a unique contextual setting that have countervailing influences such that the DT's negative association with job performance is mitigated. Theoretically, this reasoning is consistent with an interactionist perspective, which posits that individual behavior is a function of the characteristics of the individual, the context, and the interaction between the two (e.g., Endler & Magnusson, 1976; Mischel, 2004; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Thus, despite the general patterns of poor job performance associated with the DT, individuals with DT traits may not always behave in a self-interested, maladaptive way, as theory suggests. For instance, Machiavellians, who are described as selfish and instrumental, are not expected to make altruistic gestures (Becker & O'Hair, 2007). Yet they were found to volunteer for social causes at twice the rate of others when a request for volunteers was made publicly, in front of others (Berezkei, Birkas, & Kerekes, 2010). In short, this suggests that contextual factors likely moderate the extent to which those with DT traits will be an asset or a liability to family firms (e.g., A. Cohen, 2016; O'Boyle et al., 2012).

One of the many unique contextual elements that distinguish family firms from others is the importance placed on socioemotional wealth (SEW). Conceptualized as the affective endowments that family owners derive from the business (Gómez-Mejía, Haynes, Núñez-Nickel, Jacobson, & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007), considerable

scholarship has argued that SEW pervasively influences various aspects of life within family firms (Berrone, Cruz, & Gómez-Mejía, 2012; Jiang, Kellermanns, Munyon, & Morris, 2018). When an emphasis is placed on SEW, for instance, theory suggests that family managers tend to identify strongly with their firm and are motivated to assure its long-run survival (e.g., Madison, Holt, Kellermanns, & Ranft, 2016; Neckebrouck, Schulze, & Zellweger, 2018). Subsequently, these attributes motivate family managers to care about their employees, and stimulate high levels of commitment, trust, and loyalty among employees (Neckebrouck et al., 2018). This suggests that individuals with DT traits, through self-regulation processes that direct or alter their thinking and actions (Barrick, Mount, & Gupta, 2003; Tett & Burnett, 2003), may bring their behavior in family firms into accord with the family's key standards, norms, or goals.

Against this background, this exploratory study is designed to extend this previous research and theory by exploring the possibility that the importance of SEW¹ may serve to moderate the DT–job performance relationship, such that the negative implications and counterproductive workplace dynamics are avoided. Although the interaction between SEW and family members' psychological tendencies has been suggested (e.g., Cruz, Gómez-Mejía, & Becerra, 2010; Eddleston, Kellermanns, & Zellweger, 2012), it has not, to date, been directly examined (Holt, Pearson, Carr, & Barnett, 2017; Jiang et al., 2018; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2014). By conducting this study, we explore how family firm contexts, a theoretically meaningful setting, influences when and how the effects of personality become manifest. This could challenge traditional perspectives on how the DT might shape an individual's job performance (i.e., DT traits are negatively related to job performance). This may also shed some light on how and why family firms are more or less successful while also suggesting key drivers of heterogeneity, not only across family firms but also across members within family firms, highlighting the ways family members' characteristics may shape the firms' outcomes. In addition, responding to recent calls for family business scholars to contribute to the broader discussions in the management literature (Holt, Pearson, Payne, & Sharma, 2018; Shepherd, 2016), the results are expected to shed light on how and why those with socially undesirable traits may be able to succeed in workplace environments where they might otherwise not be permitted to have

influence—a key discussion in the organizational behavior literature.

Dark Personality and Family Firms

Before examining our hypotheses, however, a brief description of the specific dimensions of the DT is warranted. The DT, as noted, is frequently referred to and subsumes three traits to include narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. These three “offensive, yet non-pathological personalities” (Paulhus & Williams, 2002, p. 556) reflect a domain of darker personality. The DT has become a leading framework to examine the influence of dark personality within the fields of psychology (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus 2013) and business (Hirschfeld & Van Scotter, 2018). Moreover, entrepreneurship and family business scholars have recently pointed to the need for research on dark personality characteristics and how they influence the performance in family firms (Klotz & Neubaum, 2016).

Considering the three traits individually, narcissists are preoccupied with gaining the admiration of others as well as their own self-love and self-aggrandizement that create and reinforce a positive self-view (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Psychopathy is characterized by individuals who are without conscience (Hare, 1993, 1996). People with this trait have a reduced capacity for relationship building, empathy, guilt, or loyalty to anyone beyond themselves; they also demonstrate impulsive and antisocial tendencies (K. M. Williams, Nathanson, & Paulhus, 2003).² Machiavellians display a willingness and ability to manipulate situations and others while acting without regard to ethical norms, skillfully exploiting circumstances and people for their personal benefit (Christie & Geis, 1970). Each trait is distinct, yet there is potential for overlap (O’Boyle et al., 2012).

Theoretically, personality traits influence individuals’ preferences for specific workplace environments (Hirschfeld & Van Scotter, 2018). While each of the DT traits are distinct, there are similarities where those with DT traits have been found to seek out settings that are less formal and structured, where their behavior would go unnoticed because of the few clear policies and standards, as well as the absence of control mechanisms (A. Cohen, 2016; Hirschfeld & Van Scotter, 2018). These preferences may align well with family firms that are generally characterized by their informal management practices (Cruz et al., 2011; Daspit et al., 2018). Although relatively few in number, the

empirical studies that comprehensively examine “formal,” or “professionalized,” management practices in family firms have consistent results (e.g., De Kok, Uhlaner, & Thurik, 2006; Reid & Adams, 2001). Reid and Adams (2001), for instance, concluded that family firms were less likely to have formalized appraisal, compensation, and training systems. Similarly, De Kok et al. (2006) found that the incidence of professional management practices (i.e., formal recruitment, selection, compensation, training, and appraisal systems) was lower in family firms. Despite these consistent findings, Astrachan and Kolenko (1994), as well as Dekker, Lybaert, Steijvers, Depaire, and Mercken (2013) present evidence that the informal practices do not seem to hinder family firms’ performance. This invites the basic question, “How would those with dark psychological traits perform within family firms?”

Theoretical Development and Hypotheses

We adopt the interactionist perspective as an overarching conceptual framework to examine how the relationship between DT traits and job performance may be moderated by the importance the family places on SEW. The interactionist perspective emphasizes the consequences of person–situation interactions (e.g., Endler & Magnusson, 1976; Mischel, 2004; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Theoretically, individual behavior is a function of the characteristics of the individual, the context, and the interaction between the two. This perspective has been frequently used as a framework for understanding how one’s context works in concert with his or her individual characteristics (e.g., personality traits) to encourage or discourage behaviors (e.g., Shalley, Gilson, & Blum, 2000; Wang, Noe, & Wang, 2014). Although many studies have examined the interactive effects of personality characteristics and work contexts (e.g., Kim, Triana, Chunch, & Oh, 2016; Wang et al., 2014), the interactionist framework and reasoning is also consistent with arguments made in the family business literature. For instance, Jiang et al. (2018), in their review of SEW research, suggested that family firms with the family, as a group of normative influence, would represent a context where unique behavioral patterns are motivated and nonobvious relationships likely emerge largely because of the importance placed on SEW. We, therefore, argue that when examining family firms, the importance placed on SEW should be an influential

contextual factor that influences individuals' behaviors (Jiang et al., 2018; Schulze & Kellermanns, 2015)—a point developed in a subsequent discussion.

Dark Triad–Job Performance Relationship

Before examining the moderating influence of SEW, we discuss the main effects (i.e., the DT traits–job performance relationship). As we detailed earlier, past research has demonstrated individuals with DT traits tend to be poor performers on the job (e.g., O'Boyle et al., 2012). It is important, however, to clarify that an individual's job performance is nuanced and is often conceptualized to include three distinct categories: task performance, citizenship behaviors, and counterproductive workplace behaviors (CWBs; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). Task (or in-role) performance represents the outcomes that emerge from fulfillment of job duties that support the firm's technical core (e.g., working an 8-hour day, finishing assignments on time, obeying policies and procedures; L. J. Williams & Anderson, 1991). Because not all work-related behavior can be categorized as performing according to a job description, citizenship and counterproductive behaviors are also considered. Organizational citizenship (or extrarole/contextual) behavior are "behaviors [that] do not support the technical core itself so much as they support the broader organizational, social and psychological environment in which the technical core must function" (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993, p. 73). These behaviors enhance social and psychological climates, creating helpful and supportive environments (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). CWB, in contrast, disrupts the accomplishment of firm goals through active and intentional harm toward members of the firm or against the firm itself (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002).

Theoretically, personality traits are linked to these three, individual-level performance dimensions through psychological processes where individuals tend to exert effort in a persistent way to realize goals that are aligned with their personality (and preferences; Barrick et al., 2003). While each of the DT traits are distinct, they share several common characteristics, typified by a tendency to engage in purposeful behaviors that are selfish and place one's own needs ahead of others (Ames et al., 2006; Dahling et al., 2009; O'Boyle et al., 2012; K. M. Williams et al., 2007). Based on these shared characteristics, it would be reasonable to expect those with DT traits to avoid behaviors that are helpful and supportive (i.e., citizenship behaviors) while engaging in behaviors

that are disruptive and potentially harmful to others (i.e., counterproductive work behaviors). In contrast, the relationship with task performance may be less clear as many individuals with DT traits have been found to prosper in business settings, especially those that are informal and less structured (e.g., A. Cohen, 2016). Nonetheless, it has often been assumed, and confirmed through meta-analytic findings, that the effects of DT traits on task performance are predominantly, if not exclusively, detrimental (O'Boyle et al., 2012). Because of the circumstances that may enable individuals possessing these traits to become part of (and likely remain) in family firms (e.g., Cruz et al., 2011; Daspit et al., 2018), we expect to constructively replicate this pattern of findings in family firms, such that each of the DT traits will negatively relate to task performance and citizenship behaviors while each is positively related to counterproductive work behaviors.

Moderating Influence of SEW Importance

Consistent with the interactionist perspective, as theorized and tested in other research (Colbert, Mount, Harter, Witt, & Barrick, 2004; Endler & Magnusson, 1976; Liguori, McLarty, & Muldoon, 2012; Mischel & Shoda, 1995), we posit that the DT–job performance relationship is moderated by the importance of SEW conveyed through the firm's managers, whether they are family or nonfamily members. For our purposes, SEW importance reflects a family firm's preference for some affective outcomes over others (Debicki, Kellermanns, Chrisman, Pearson, & Spencer, 2016). This is distinct from the level or magnitude of SEW that reflects the stock of SEW that has been accumulated by the firm (Chua, Chrisman, & De Massis, 2015). While these stocks may serve as key reference points that guide firm-level behaviors (Chua et al., 2015), the importance of SEW, rather than its level, can be conveyed and transmitted to individual firm members; as such, it would influence the individuals within the firm when, and if, it is important and among the aspirations of the dominant family (Debicki et al., 2016; McLarty, Vardaman, & Barnett, 2019). Moreover, because importance is subjective, SEW importance would likely vary across family firms (Kellermanns et al., 2012).

We draw on Debicki et al.'s (2016) individual-level measure of SEW importance perceptions.³ As laid out by Debicki et al., there are three key affective outcomes that are preferred and represent SEW importance. First,

with SEW importance, the firm is an extension of the family, and as such, the firm is important to the identity of the family and its individual members. As a result, prominence within the community is stressed with family owners valuing image and reputation. Moreover, it is important to preserve the positive perceptions others have of the firm, the family, and its members that arise from the fact that family operates a business, and because of the way the family presents itself to the community through the business. Second, SEW importance reflects concerns about family preservation and sustainability. These concerns suggest a long-term orientation such that a business dynasty is developed along with the perpetuation of community goodwill through the operation of the business. Third, SEW importance consists of desire to fulfill general family obligations. While this is targeted toward the family's harmony and well-being, studies have found that this orientation leads to altruistic behaviors toward nonfamily members that engender commitment, trust, and loyalty among *all employees* (Neckebrouck et al., 2018), which, in turn, offer insights into how SEW importance would moderate the DT–job performance relationship.

Narcissism–Job Performance Moderation. Narcissists are often described as having an unwarranted sense of self-importance (Judge, LePine, & Rich, 2006) and an elevated tendency to reinforce a flattering self-perception (Chatterjee & Hambrick, 2007). Narcissists tend to be overly confident in their own abilities, come across as arrogant and egotistical in their interpersonal interactions, possess strong feelings of entitlement, and importantly, are in constant pursuit of affirmation from others (Judge et al., 2006). Accordingly, narcissists are driven to seek gains for their own purposes and earn prestige (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). Supporting these needs, narcissists tend to prioritize and engage in activities that help them reaffirm their positive self-image (Soyer, Rovenpor, Kopelman, Mullins, & Watson, 2001).

One might assume that narcissists would pursue prestigious job titles and this pursuit would be patently inconsistent with family firms as these firms may present limited opportunities for advancement unless the person happens to be the one fortunate family member who is selected to succeed the firm's senior leader. Prior work, however, has indicated that narcissists respond most negatively and aggressively, not to objective limitations to one's career but to ego threats (Jones & Paulhus, 2010). Thus, in family firms with high SEW

importance, the limitations to advance, as gauged through traditional measures of career success, may be offset by the value placed on image and reputation. Thus, SEW importance may, in fact, enhance the narcissist's sense of self-importance and reduce ego threats as reputational sanctions arise within the firm and the community from poor performance. This allows family firms that emphasize the importance of SEW to capitalize on the narcissists' constant pursuit of affirmation from others and the desire to maintain their glowing self-image (especially from the broader community; Campbell, Hoffman, Campbell, & Marchisio, 2011). From this, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: SEW importance will moderate the relationship between narcissism and (a) task performance, (b) organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), and (c) CWBs such that task performance and citizenship will increase and counterproductivity will decrease.

Psychopathy–Job Performance Moderation. Those high in psychopathy are often described as impulsive thrill seekers who have a limited ability to experience emotions and are less capable of experiencing empathy (K. M. Williams et al., 2007). Despite this tendency to be emotionally shallow with little capacity for guilt, they do understand what drives others and tend to be skilled impression managers who are charming (Mathieu, Neumann, Hare, & Babiak, 2014). They tend to aggressively leverage these skills to get what they want, acting in overly competitive ways with little regard for how their actions may influence others (Babiak & Hare, 2006; Hare, 1993; Mathieu et al., 2014). Despite this, they also fear detection, not out of concern for others but because detection would limit their ability to attain the utilities they desire (A. Cohen, 2016). Consistent with these tendencies, psychopaths prioritize and engage in activities that fulfill their sensation-seeking needs and challenge norms (O'Boyle et al., 2012), thriving in settings that are stressful and uncertain even when they play a role in creating those settings (Mathieu et al., 2014; K. M. Williams et al., 2007).

Because of psychopaths' propensity to challenge norms and rules and behave in an impulsive fashion (Boddy, 2006), it is reasonable to think these individuals would face challenges in family firms as they are often characterized as places with influential norms and values, arising from the family's involvement and its centrality

to the firm (e.g., Chua, Chrisman, & Sharma, 1999; Vallejo, 2008). Recently, however, Palmer, Komaraju, Carter, and Karau (2017) found that those high in psychopathy responded positively in work environments that were perceived as supportive and genuinely concerned with their well-being—a characteristic of family firms with high SEW importance (Neckebrouck et al., 2018). That is, the family's desire to fulfill familial obligations trigger altruistic behaviors toward family members as well as nonfamily members, engendering a supportive environment that is typified by commitment, trust, and loyalty (Neckebrouck et al., 2018). This may enable family firms to capitalize on one of the greatest fears of those that are high in psychopathy—the fear of being noticed and detected. Family firms high in SEW importance, therefore, with their emphasis on harmony and well-being (Debicki et al., 2016), likely create a setting where manipulation of coworkers and antisocial behavior would not go unnoticed and these behaviors would be sanctioned accordingly. From this, we hypothesize that the tendency toward engaging in psychopathic behaviors should be dampened in settings where SEW importance is stressed, therefore we propose the following:

Hypothesis 2: SEW importance will moderate the relationship between psychopathy and (a) task performance, (b) OCBs, and (c) CWBs such that task performance and citizenship will increase and counterproductivity will decrease.

Machiavellianism—Job Performance Moderation. Machiavellians are often described as excessively tenacious, driven by the need for competition and prestige (Zettler & Solga, 2013). Moreover, they do not hesitate to engage in deviant behaviors (e.g., cheating) to “win,” believing that valued ends should be pursued regardless of the means (e.g., Christie & Geis, 1970; Martin, Anderson, & Thweatt, 1998; Grams & Rogers, 1990). Although they are distrustful of others and view people as threats to their goal attainment (Dahling et al., 2009), they, like psychopaths, are skilled at understanding others' affective sentiments and adapting to these situations, and accordingly they have been described as social chameleons. This allows Machiavellians to flexibly adapt to shifting surroundings and take on the attitudes and behaviors of those around them so they can subtly manipulate situations to their favor (e.g., Grams & Rogers, 1990; Martin et al., 1998). Consistent with these

tendencies, Machiavellians prioritize and engage in activities that fulfill their needs for competition and desire for control (Dahling et al., 2009; Spurk, Keller, & Hirschi, 2016), thriving in unstructured, less organized settings that allow them to leverage their skills of manipulation (e.g., O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Given these characteristics, the extent to which SEW importance may influence a Machiavellian's performance is consistent with the reasoning that explains psychopaths' propensities. Family firms high in SEW importance, with their emphasis on harmony, continuity of familial presence, enrichment of family members, and general well-being (Debicki et al., 2016), likely create a setting where manipulation of coworkers and antisocial behavior would not go unnoticed. Indeed, the engagement of these behaviors would undoubtedly be sanctioned for disrupting the family atmosphere stressed in organizations with members possessing high levels of SEW importance. This circumstance should encourage Machiavellians to remain in the family firm's good standing because, like psychopaths, getting out of line would limit their ability to attain personal goals (i.e., gaining status and control). Extending this further, Machiavellians who find themselves in a supportive environment may view their colleagues as less threatening, leaving them the opportunity to manipulate behind the scenes. In essence, Machiavellians may perceive a strategic advantage within family firms that have high SEW importance, thereby allowing them to develop valuable social capital whereby they consolidate future opportunities for personal gain. In any case, the Machiavellian will recognize the emphasis placed on harmony and well-being in a family firm environment where SEW importance is stressed by key figures (i.e., supervisors) and will adapt their job performance accordingly. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 3: SEW importance will moderate the relationship between Machiavellianism and (a) task performance, (b) OCBs, and (c) CWBs such that task performance and citizenship will increase and counterproductivity will decrease.

Method

Sample and Procedure

At two points in time, data were collected from both employees and supervisors who were all part of family

firms. By collecting data in this manner, we minimized issues of common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012) and increased the credibility of our results. A wide variety of individuals representing different job types and industries (e.g., finance, sales, retail, services, and manufacturing) participated. To begin, we utilized students as our first method to contact participants. Student-recruited samples are becoming a more common technique (Greenbaum, Quade, Mawritz, Kim, & Crosby, 2014; Kluemper, McLarty, & Bing, 2015; Wheeler, Shanine, Leon, & Whitman, 2014) that has the benefit of assuring direct contact between participants and researchers. We contacted students enrolled in undergraduate management courses at two large public universities in the southern United States. These students nominated a full-time employee (defined as someone working at least 30 hours per week) to be a participant and provided us with that employee's contact information. In our efforts to explore family firms, we asked the students to select nominees employed at a family business, rewarding students' efforts with minimal extra credit.

Next, we directly e-mailed our employee participants the first Web-based survey and collected information regarding their personality traits, family member status in the firm, and demographics. We also obtained the names and contact information for their direct supervisors. Approximately 2 weeks later, a different survey was sent to supervisors, which requested they assess their employees' task performance, OCBs, and CWBs. In this second survey, we also obtained information from the supervisors about their SEW importance perceptions, whether they worked for a family firm, the family's degree of ownership, whether the supervisor was a member of the owning family, and their demographic data. At all points in time, we ensured confidentiality using secured online software for each survey. Additionally, participation was incentivized with \$50.00 gift cards for 10 randomly selected employees and supervisors.

Students nominated 505 employee participants of whom 354 responded to our survey. Out of these 354 employee respondents, only 328 nominated their supervisor to participate. Using this information, we e-mailed these 328 supervisors and subsequently received completed surveys from 253 of them; 153 of these observations were from a family firm. Following recommendations by Meade and Craig (2012), we identified careless responders by embedding three instructed response items

(e.g., "Please respond *strongly agree* for this item"), removing observations when incorrect responses were provided. After careless responders were eliminated, we had 140 participant dyads. Each dyad, as noted, was from a different family firm, with approximately 88% of these firms having fewer than 200 employees. This yielded a 27.7% response rate based on the number of employees that were originally nominated.

Of the 140 employee-supervisor dyads, 38.3% of the employees were male and 80.9% worked at least 31 hours per week. Approximately 80.1% were Caucasian, 12.1% African American, 5.7% Asian, and 2.1% other. The average age of the employees was 40.6 years ($SD = 14.5$). Out of the 140 supervisors, 56.7% were male and they had an average age of 49.5 years ($SD = 11.9$). Approximately 80.1% of the supervisors were Caucasian, 12.8% African American, 5.7% Asian, and 1.4% other.

Measures

Unless otherwise specified, each measure was anchored using Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). All scale responses were averaged and coded so that higher scores reflected an enhanced level of agreement or frequency of that trait or behavior (except narcissism).

Narcissism. This trait ($\alpha = .72$) was evaluated by employees using the 16-item version of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Ames et al., 2006). Items include "I really like to be the center of attention" versus "It makes me uncomfortable to be the center of attention" and "I am going to be a great person" versus "I hope I am going to be successful." We scored these items by computing the proportion of responses consistent with narcissism (e.g., Judge et al., 2006).

Psychopathy. The employee's ratings of this trait ($\alpha = .77$) were measured using 20 items from K. M. Williams et al.'s (2007) measure of psychopathy. Sample items include "I get a 'kick' out of conning someone" and "I am often rude to other people."

Machiavellianism. The employee's ratings of this trait ($\alpha = .87$) were made using the Machiavellian Personality Scale (Dahling et al., 2009). This 16-item measure has sample items that include "I believe that lying is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage over

others” and “I dislike committing to groups because I don’t trust others.”

Socioemotional Wealth Importance. Supervisors assessed their perceptions of SEW importance ($\alpha = .87$) using the nine-item measure from Debicki et al. (2016), with anchors from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *completely*. The original items were slightly modified and include these sample items: “How important is it that the firm remains under the control of the owning family such that business decisions are directed at getting future generations of the family to take over?” and “How important is the maintenance of the owning family’s reputation through the business by conducting business in ethical, honest, and respectful ways?”

Task Performance. Supervisors assessed employee task performance ($\alpha = .78$) using Kluemper, DeGroot, and Choi’s (2013) five-item measure, with anchors from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*. Supervisors were asked, “How often does this employee . . .” engage in the work behavior described in each item. Example items include “Adequately complete assigned duties” and “Perform tasks that are expected of him/her.”

Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Supervisors evaluated citizenship ($\alpha = .91$) using a 10-item measure from Kluemper et al. (2013). Once again, we used the question stem “How often does this employee . . .” to ask supervisors the frequency that their subordinates behave according to each of the items. Anchors ranged from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*. Some examples were, “Attend functions that are not required but that help the organizational image” and “Willingly give his/her time to help others who have work-related problems.”

Counterproductive Workplace Behavior. Supervisors evaluated CWB ($\alpha = .87$) using a 10-item measure from Kluemper et al. (2013). Again, we used the question stem “How often does this employee . . .” to ask supervisors the frequency that their subordinates engage in these counterproductive behaviors with anchors ranging from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*. Behaviors include “Make fun of someone at work” and “Intentionally work slower than he/she could have worked.”

Control Variables. To control for alternative explanations, three theoretically relevant variables were investigated.

We controlled for whether employees were members of the owning family (i.e., 0 = nonfamily and 1 = family) because family business literature suggests that family and nonfamily employees may experience differential treatment (e.g., Verbeke & Kano, 2012). From the supervisor, two other control variables were measured. First, the percentage of ownership of the family in the family firm was measured (i.e., using a sliding graphical scale between 1 and 100, they indicated, “Approximately what percentage of the ownership of the organization is controlled by owning family members?”). This allowed us to control for the influence that a family’s involvement might have on our results (e.g., Chua et al., 1999). Second, supervisors indicated whether they were members of the owning family (i.e., 0 = nonfamily and 1 = family). This allowed us to test whether our results were affected when a supervisor was a family member and could have a unique understanding of the firm’s SEW importance (e.g., Barnett & Kellermanns, 2006). No other control variable was deemed theoretically relevant for influencing our results (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016).

Results

Table 1 contains the means, standard deviations, and correlations between all study variables. To confirm that our constructs were meaningful and distinct, we ran a confirmatory factor analysis and found the following fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 321.10$, degrees of freedom = 231, comparative fit index = .93, root mean square residual = .05, root mean square error of approximation = .05), which are reasonable (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2006). We conducted hierarchical regression analysis to test our hypotheses because this provides us with the ability to test whether each DT trait interacts with SEW importance to predict each of the three job performance outcomes. Before creating our interaction terms and running our analyses, we centered our independent and control variables (Aiken & West, 1991). We did this by subtracting the mean value of each variable from the score for each respondent, creating a centered variable with a mean value equal to 0. This transformation minimizes the likelihood that multicollinearity among main effect variables would bias the interaction term and its interpretation (J. Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Control variables were entered at Step 1, main effects at Step 2 and Step 3, and interaction terms at Step 4.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among All Variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Employee-rated												
1. Narcissism	0.28	0.19	.72									
2. Psychopathy	2.07	0.56	.40**	.77								
3. Machiavellianism	2.99	0.88	.43**	.64**	.87							
4. Family membership	0.45	0.50	-.01	.07	.01	—						
Supervisor-rated												
5. SEW importance	5.42	1.01	.17*	.10	.08	.01	.87					
6. Task performance	6.41	0.69	-.19*	-.26**	-.26**	.00	.10	.78				
7. OCB	6.02	0.80	-.17*	-.24**	-.29**	.04	.22**	.43**	.91			
8. CWB	1.40	0.50	.24**	.35**	.39**	-.03	-.07	-.59**	-.48**	.87		
9. Family membership	0.68	0.47	.10	.01	.05	.38**	-.02	-.10	-.01	.13	—	
10. Family ownership	75.55	39.34	.06	.03	-.04	.17	.07	.04	.11	.03	.45**	—

Note. SEW = socioemotional wealth; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; CWB = counterproductive workplace behavior. $n = 140$. Alpha reliabilities appear on diagonal in italics. Employee family member: 0 = No, 1 = Yes; supervisor family member 0 = No, 1 = Yes. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

As seen in Table 2, Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c were supported for the impact of the moderation effect between narcissism and SEW importance on task performance ($b = 0.95, p < .01$), OCBs ($b = 1.04, p < .01$), and CWBs ($b = -0.88, p < .001$). Additionally, the ΔR^2 for each outcome changed significantly upon the addition of the interaction term for task performance ($0.06, p < .01$), OCBs ($0.05, p < .01$), and CWBs ($0.09, p < .001$) which fully supports Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c. Table 3 reports the results for the impact of SEW importance on the relationship between psychopathy and the three job performance outcomes. Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c are also supported as the moderation effect is significant for task performance ($b = 0.39, p < .01$), OCBs ($b = 0.29, p < .05$) and CWBs ($b = -0.21, p < .05$). Again, the ΔR^2 for each performance outcome was significantly changed when the moderation effect was included in the final model: task performance ($0.06, p < .01$), OCBs ($0.03, p < .05$), and CWBs ($0.04, p < .05$). Finally, the results for Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c are presented in Table 4. In this case, only task performance ($b = 0.17, p < .01$) and CWBs ($b = -0.12, p < .01$) demonstrated a significant interaction effect for the influence of SEW importance on the relationship between Machiavellianism and job performance. OCBs were not significantly affected ($b = 0.08, n.s.$). The impact on ΔR^2 for task performance ($0.05, p < .01$) and CWBs ($0.05, p < .01$) were significant but not for OCBs ($0.01, n.s.$). Thus, Hypotheses 3a and 3c are supported, but Hypothesis 3b is not.

In addition to our regression analysis, we conducted simple slopes tests to verify that the interaction effects were meaningful. Using Hayes's (2013) approach, we replicated our analyses for each regression model and tested the nature of the interactions. This allowed us to further examine the interactions by plotting them and testing the slopes' significance. Generally, the patterns of the plotted interactions were consistent across all tests. Thus, for the low level of SEW importance and the mean level of SEW importance, a significant slope is present, but the slope at high SEW importance is not significant. This offers further support for our hypotheses.

Although each plot is available, we include a representative plot that depicts the influence that SEW importance has on a specific DT–performance type relationship. For instance, Figure 1 shows the plot for the interaction of narcissism and SEW importance on task performance. At both a low level of SEW importance ($-1 SD; t = -3.86, p < .001$) and the mean level of SEW importance ($t = -3.01, p < .01$), a significant slope is present, but the slope at high SEW importance ($+1 SD; t = 0.11, p = .92$) is not significant. This further supports our hypothesizing about the relationship between DT traits and task performance. The plot shows that task performance remains steady at high SEW importance despite high levels of narcissism but task performance decreases with low SEW importance. We repeated these simple slopes analyses for psychopathy. To show a representative relationship, Figure 2 displays the interaction

Table 2. Hierarchical Regression Results for Narcissism.

Variable	Task performance				OCB				CWB			
	<i>b</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>b</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>b</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF
Step 1		.14	.02	0.89		.13	.02	0.82		.16	.03	1.24
Employee family member	0.06				0.08				-0.10			
Supervisor family member	-0.23				-0.16				0.20			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Step 2		.23	.03*	4.81*		.22	.03*	4.00*		.28*	.05**	7.37**
Employee family member	0.04				0.06				-0.08			
Supervisor family member	-0.20				-0.13				0.17			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Narcissism	-0.67*				-0.72*				0.59**			
Step 3		.26	.02	2.26		.33**	.06**	9.10**		.30*	.01	1.48
Employee family member	0.04				0.05				-0.08			
Supervisor family member	-0.19				-0.09				0.16			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Narcissism	-0.75*				-0.90*				0.64**			
SEW importance	0.09				0.20**				-0.05			
Step 4		.35**	.06**	8.65**		.40**	.05**	7.76**		.42***	.09***	14.90***
Employee family member	0.00				0.01				-0.05			
Supervisor family member	-0.12				-0.02				0.10			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Narcissism	-0.92**				-1.09**				0.80***			
SEW importance	-0.12*				-0.23**				-0.08			
Narcissism \times SEW Importance	0.95**				1.04**				-0.88***			

Note. SEW = socioemotional wealth; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; CWB = counterproductive workplace behavior. $n = 140$. b = unstandardized regression coefficient; degrees of freedom = 136 in Step 1, 135 in Step 2, 134 in Step 3, and 133 in Step 4.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

between psychopathy and SEW importance for its influence on OCBs. Again, when SEW importance is at both low (-1 SD; $t = -3.48$, $p < .001$) and mean ($t = -3.79$, $p < .001$) levels, there is a significant slope but not at high ($+1$ SD; $t = -1.04$, $p = .30$) levels of SEW importance, which supports our hypotheses regarding the influence of SEW importance and dark personality on OCBs (except for Machiavellianism). Finally, we conducted the same analyses for the interaction effect of SEW importance on the relationship between Machiavellianism and CWBs, and we include the appropriate plot for illustration purposes. In this case, a reverse pattern of relationships was expected as seen in Figure 3. At low (-1 SD; $t = 5.58$, $p < .001$) and mean ($t = 4.81$, $p < .001$) levels of SEW importance, a significant slope is present for its interaction with Machiavellianism, but at high ($+1$ SD; $t = 1.42$, $p = .16$) levels of SEW importance, the slope is not significant. This pattern was similar for all three DT traits. SEW importance seems to mitigate the engagement of deviant behavior (i.e., high SEW importance keeps

CWBs lower while low SEW importance allows CWBs to increase when a darker personality is present).

Discussion

Our findings demonstrate compelling patterns about the relationship between dark personality and job performance when the supervisors within a family firm (whether they are family or nonfamily members) place an importance on SEW. These effects are illustrative of the predictions of the interactionist approach, which states that personality and context can interact to affect behavioral outcomes (Mischel, 2004). As theoretically hypothesized (Endler & Magnusson, 1976; Mischel & Shoda, 1995), when family firm supervisors perceive the family firm's SEW importance, they appear to create a contextual environment where these goals influence their employees in such a way that their employees alter the expression of their personalities as demonstrated by their performance. Our findings go on to suggest that

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Results for Psychopathy.

Variable	Task performance				OCB				CWB			
	<i>b</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>b</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>b</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF
Step 1		.14	.02	0.89		.13	.02	0.82		.16	.03	1.24
Employee family member	0.06				0.08				-0.10			
Supervisor family member	-0.23				-0.16				0.20			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Step 2		.30*	.07**	10.69**		.28*	.06**	8.67**		.39***	.13***	20.35***
Employee family member	0.09				0.11				-0.12			
Supervisor family member	-0.25				-0.17				0.21*			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Psychopathy	-0.33**				-0.35**				0.32***			
Step 3		.33*	.01	2.11		.37**	.06**	8.82**		.40***	.01	1.47
Employee family member	0.08				0.10				-0.12			
Supervisor Family Member	-0.24				-0.15				0.21*			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Psychopathy	-0.34**				-0.38**				0.32***			
SEW importance	0.08				0.19**				-0.05			
Step 4		.41***	.06**	10.18**		.40**	.03*	3.97*		.45***	.04*	6.14*
Employee family member	0.15				.015				-0.16			
Supervisor family member	-0.26				-0.17				0.22*			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Psychopathy	-0.44***				-0.45***				0.38**			
SEW importance	0.09				0.19**				-0.05			
Psychopathy × SEW importance	0.39**				0.29*				-0.21*			

Note. SEW = socioemotional wealth; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; CWB = counterproductive workplace behavior. *n* = 140. *b* = Unstandardized regression coefficient; degrees of freedom = 136 in Step 1, 135 in Step 2, 134 in Step 3, and 133 in Step 4. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

employees who possess these characteristics may not be as damaging to the firm as they could be otherwise.

Our findings show, for instance, that whenever a family firm supervisor perceives a high degree of SEW importance, the engagement of CWBs by employees stays nearly the same regardless of whether they possess low or high amounts of the dark traits. When the supervisor perceives low levels of SEW importance, however, greater amounts of DT traits lead to increased CWBs. Consistent with this pattern, when the family firm supervisor does not perceive the firm’s SEW importance to be high and the employee possess high degrees of narcissism, psychopathy, or Machiavellianism, task performance drops. A very similar pattern occurs for our results with OCBs for narcissism and psychopathy—but not Machiavellianism.

Our expansion of the interactionist perspective to introduce the element of SEW importance makes several theoretical contributions. It seems clear, because of the

strong slopes displayed in our interaction plots, that the importance of SEW has a powerful influence on individual-level outcomes in family firms (Holt et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2018; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2014; Schulze & Kellermanns, 2015)—a relationship that is often suggested but rarely tested (see McLarty et al., 2019, as a notable exception). Indeed, much of the scholarship that has examined the influence of SEW in family firms has relied on firm-level data (sometimes archival), inferring presence of SEW as a means of distinguishing family firms from nonfamily firms (e.g., Berrone, Cruz, Gómez-Mejía, & Larraza-Kintana, 2010; Holt et al., 2017; Jiang et al., 2018; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2014; Schulze & Kellermanns, 2015). Our research directly measures the degrees of SEW importance that exist in a group of small family firms. Beyond this direct measurement, we employed methodological techniques to reduce the likelihood that our results are due to common method variance (Podsakoff et al., 2012). By collecting data from

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Results for Machiavellianism.

Variable	Task performance				OCB				CWB			
	<i>b</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>b</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF	<i>b</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	ΔF
Step 1		.14	.02	0.89		.13	.02	0.82		.16	.03	1.24
Employee family member	0.06				0.08				-0.10			
Supervisor family member	-0.23				-0.16				0.20			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Step 2:		.28*	.06**	8.92**		.31**	.08**	12.02**		.41***	.14***	22.95***
Employee family member	0.05				0.07				-0.09			
Supervisor family member	-0.20				-0.11				0.16			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Machiavellianism	-0.19**				-0.26**				0.21***			
Step 3		.31*	.01	1.88		.39***	.06**	9.00**		.42***	.01	1.38
Employee family member	0.05				0.06				-0.09			
Supervisor family member	-0.19				-0.08				0.15			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Machiavellianism	-0.20**				-0.28***				0.22***			
SEW importance	0.08				0.19**				-0.05			
Step 4		.38**	.05**	7.60**		.41***	.01	1.39		.47***	.05**	7.86**
Employee family member	0.04				0.06				-0.08			
Supervisor family member	-0.20				-0.09				0.16			
Family firm ownership	0.00				0.00				0.00			
Machiavellianism	-0.19**				-0.27***				0.21***			
SEW importance	-0.05				0.18**				-0.03			
Machiavellianism × SEW importance	0.17**				0.08				-0.12**			

Note. SEW = socioemotional wealth; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior; CWB = counterproductive workplace behavior. *n* = 140. *b* = unstandardized regression coefficient; degrees of freedom = 136 in Step 1, 135 in Step 2, 134 in Step 3, and 133 in Step 4. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

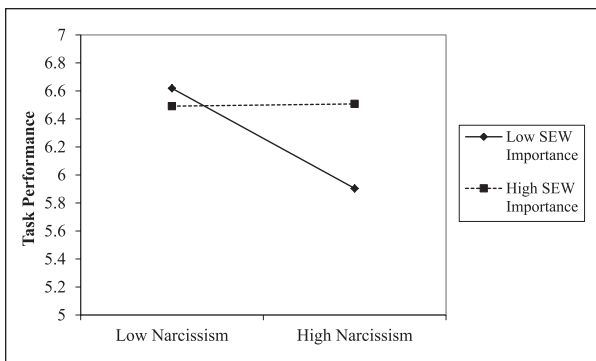


Figure 1. Interaction between employee narcissism and SEW importance onto employee task performance.
Note. SEW = socioemotional wealth.

multiple sources and at different time points, we have stronger evidence that the relationships we discovered are indeed present. Therefore, we are encouraged by the results that we uncovered as they demonstrate important distinctions that family firms possess.

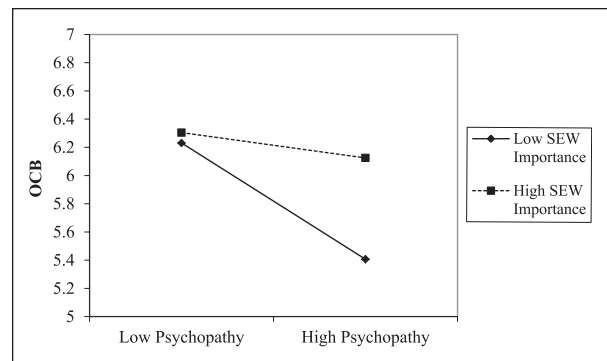


Figure 2. Interaction between employee psychopathy and SEW importance onto employee OCB.
Note. SEW = socioemotional wealth; OCB = organizational citizenship behavior.

Along these lines, our findings challenge traditional perspectives on how the DT might shape an individual’s job performance (i.e., DT traits are negatively related to job performance). On one hand, our findings replicated

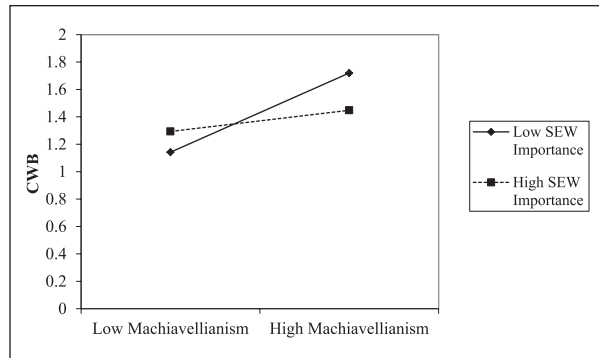


Figure 3. Interaction between employee Machiavellianism and SEW importance onto employee CWB.

Note. SEW = socioemotional wealth; CWB = counterproductive workplace behavior.

the pattern of findings common in the literature regarding the DT–job performance relationship (i.e., each DT trait was negatively related to task performance and citizenship behaviors while being positively related to counterproductive work behaviors). On the other hand, family firms, with the distinguishing aspect of SEW, appear to create unique contextual circumstances that influence employee behavior in positive ways, regardless of whether these employees are family or nonfamily members. This might be counterintuitive given that SEW is family-centric and represents the “non-financial aspects of the firm that meet the family’s affective needs” (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007, p. 106). Because of this, it might be reasonable to assume that SEW importance would be relevant only to the controlling family. By controlling for family status, however, our findings suggest this may not be the case. Therefore, SEW importance may hold a more prominent role in the performance of family firms, influencing family and nonfamily members positively.

Moreover, by measuring SEW importance through the supervisor and controlling for the supervisors’ position within the family (i.e., family or nonfamily), it appears that the importance of SEW can be conveyed effectively through family as well as nonfamily members who fill managerial roles. This finding is in line with Berrone et al.’s (2012) thinking that suggests “non-family principals and managers might experience some of [SEW]” (p. 260). Thus, our findings suggest that family firms may differ in more ways than what some scholars have suggested, where business practices once viewed as a liability might yield a competitive advantage when

the importance of SEW is emphasized. Future research should build on our findings by examining how the importance of SEW influences specific family firm members whether they be family or nonfamily.

In addition, our findings offer new insights into how researchers might distinguish family firms from one another, suggesting that family firm supervisors may be one key source of heterogeneity. That is, our findings show that family firm supervisors have differing demands and capacities to embrace and promote family firm SEW goals (i.e., via their expression of SEW importance). These findings go on to suggest that SEW importance moderates the DT–outcome relationship. Thus, the extent to which supervisors reinforce the family firm’s SEW goals and express their support of these goals to their employees may influence the extent to which desirable job performance outcomes (i.e., task and OCB) are realized and undesirable performance outcomes (i.e., CWB) are buffered.

While our work is somewhat exploratory in nature, we believe that it should spur several lines of research that examine the impact of SEW importance on individual-level outcomes such as job performance. With this in mind, we join the calls for researchers to expand their examination of organizational behavior issues within the theoretically meaningful context of family firms (e.g., Gagne, Sharma, & De Massis, 2014). By taking a direct, individual-level look at issues, we can begin to understand the “microfoundations” of family business phenomena. Microfoundational work unpacks collective phenomena and concepts such that we gain an understanding of how individual-level factors contribute to and influence organizational-level factors. This helps us understand how the interaction among individuals within the family firm leads to emergent, collective, and organization-level outcomes and performance, and how relations between macro variables (like SEW) can be perceived by individuals to moderate the micro actions of individuals within the firm (like individual job performance).

The family firm also appears to provide a rich environment to study dark personalities. Therefore, there are opportunities to build on our findings such that contributions can be made to the broader literature addressing organizational behavior issues. We speculate that family firms are more likely to employ individuals who possess DT characteristics because of their less sophisticated human resource management practices and their preference to select family members (e.g., Cruz et al., 2011;

Daspit et al., 2018). These two conditions may manifest in an unwillingness or inability to recognize and remove (or prevent from hiring) individuals that possess these potentially damaging characteristics. Therefore, it might be reasonable to think that individuals with DT traits might affect the family firm for extended time frames. This makes it possible to examine whether the potentially enduring influences of the DT have positive or negative implications, which may not be garnered when examining other organizing structures. Indeed, the further implication of this phenomena relates to the heterogeneity of family firms themselves (Holt et al., 2018). Smaller family firms, as our findings suggest, may have the capacity to “police” their high-DT employees more effectively than larger ones.

This thought does give rise to some key limitations regarding generalizability that warrant discussion and may present promising opportunities for future research (Simons, Shoda, & Lindsay, 2017). Our sample consisted of supervisors and employees who were family and nonfamily members within family firms. These participants were invited when their names were given to us by undergraduate students from two large universities in the southern United States. We feel this contributed to our sample of family firms that were relatively small, with the vast majority (i.e., 88%) having fewer than 200 employees. Thus, we would expect our results to generalize to smaller family firms where the family’s influences might be pervasive. In larger firms, however, we are not clear whether these findings would be as robust as the family’s positive influence might be replaced as more formal management systems are introduced.

In addition, though our investigation was meant to be thorough, it was exploratory and not meant to be exhaustive. Specifically, we examined the DT traits of employees. Other family firm members’ personalities (to include additional traits) could be examined to see how these shape SEW importance and outcomes. For example, it is possible that family firm supervisors with differing degrees of DT characteristics might be more or less likely to embrace SEW importance. It is not hard to imagine that a family firm supervisor who is more narcissistic (i.e., known to desire social status and admiration from others; Judge et al., 2006) might be more interested in the pursuit of SEW prominence as a personal objective because building the reputation of the family firm in the community would also appeal to the narcissistic supervisor’s motives and desires. Additionally, it may be beneficial to examine SEW importance from

the employees’ perspective as this could also influence job performance outcomes in a meaningful way.

Despite these shortcomings, the practical implications of our research are relevant for at least three reasons. First, when family firms have supervisors who are aware of and communicate the noneconomic goals of the firm to their employees, this expression of SEW importance has the potential to benefit the firm. Thus, family owners should openly communicate these goals. Second, our work demonstrates that dark personality exists in family firms and affects job performance in a negative fashion in these organizations. Whereas prior research has confirmed that this relationship exists in general (e.g., O’Boyle et al., 2012), our work confirms this and suggests it may be of more concern in family business settings due to HR practices (or lack thereof) or potentially due to family members who cannot be easily removed from the organization (i.e., it is more difficult to terminate your relatives who possess DT traits). Family firm owners and operators should be cognizant of this issue from a practical perspective. Third, our findings provide hope for this situation because we demonstrate that SEW importance serves as a contextual factor that helps to ameliorate these negative employee characteristics. As employees with DT traits may potentially be more likely to exist in a family firm environment, our work is valuable because it shows that family firms could be able to handle their presence to some degree. That is, family firms with *clear* SEW importance motives seem to be more resilient in how they handle their employees who possess dark personality characteristics. Conversely, this implies that family firms who do not embrace their SEW importance may suffer the consequences of their employees expressing dark personality traits more perniciously.

In this research, we examined the impact of SEW in family firms at the individual level. We believed that SEW importance was a key factor in explaining how family firms are different from nonfamily firms, but we also wanted to examine how these differences manifest themselves. By assessing the effects of supervisor perceptions of SEW importance, we found that family firms have the capacity to influence individual employee job performance in a way that had not been previously tested. Prior research demonstrates that personality influences performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991) and dark personality especially affects performance in harmful ways (O’Boyle et al., 2012). Our findings show that SEW importance can reduce the negative influence of

employee dark personality in the form of narcissism, psychopathy, and Machiavellianism. For each of these DT traits, we found that higher levels of emphasis that the supervisor places on the importance of SEW serve to reduce the impact of dark personality on task performance, OCBs, and CWBs. As such, family firms, with their potential desire for and pursuit of SEW, may represent a unique setting that influences employee behavior in a beneficial way.

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Notes

1. SEW importance reflects the subjective preferences the family has for certain nonfinancial benefits that are linked to the well-being and affective needs of the family and its members (Debicki, Kellermanns, Chrisman, Pearson, & Spencer, 2016).
2. In the past, narcissism and psychopathy have been viewed as clinical disorders; empirical work, however, demonstrates that each exists as nonclinical traits, which have implications for individual behavior. Our model hypothesizes this nonclinical level of both (Raskin & Terry, 1988; K. M. Williams & Paulhus, 2004).
3. Several studies have offered a conceptualization of SEW accompanied by individual-level measures (Berrone, Cruz, & Gómez-Mejía, 2012; Debicki et al., 2016). We adopted Debicki et al.'s (2016) conceptualization because it explicitly stresses SEW importance. Additionally, the measure they present is accompanied with considerable validity and reliability evidence.

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