

PERSPECTIVES

Family Dynamics and Entrepreneurship in China: An Introduction of the Dual Tuning Model of Temporal Rhythms

David Ahlstrom¹ , Hanqing Chevy Fang² , Bin Liu³  and James J. Chrisman⁴

¹Hong Kong Metropolitan University, Hong Kong; ²Missouri University of Science and Technology, US; ³Xiamen University, China and ⁴Mississippi State University, US

Corresponding author: Bin Liu (binliu@xmu.edu.cn)

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Abstract

Family dynamics can significantly influence entrepreneurship, yet the temporal complexities of this relationship remain inadequately explored. This special issue addresses this gap by emphasizing the intricate interplay between internal family evolvability such as generational transitions and identity shifts, cultural continuity, and external adaptability to rapidly changing economic, institutional, and technological contexts in China. We introduce a dual tuning model that highlights how entrepreneurial and family firms (FFs) strategically synchronize their internal and external temporal rhythms to manage conflicts and optimize performance. This lead article reviews existing literature, articulates the dual tuning model, and synthesizes insights from the articles in this special issue to illuminate how Chinese FFs navigate tensions between evolving internal dynamics and external market demands. We conclude by identifying promising future research avenues that leverage this temporal perspective to deepen our understanding of family dynamics and entrepreneurship in China.

摘要

尽管家庭动态对创业活动具有深远影响，但其中时间维度上的复杂性尚未得到充分探讨。本期特刊聚焦这一研究空白，强调中国制度情境下家庭内部的代际传承、身份转变、文化延续等‘演化性’因素，与经济、制度及技术环境的快速变化所带来的‘适应性’要求之间产生的复杂互动。我们提出时间节奏的‘双重调适’模型，以揭示创业型企业与家族企业如何战略性地协同其内外部节奏，从而缓解冲突、提升绩效。本文作为特刊的导论性文章，通过回顾相关文献，系统阐述该理论模型，并整合本期论文的主要研究结果，呈现了中国企业如何在内部动态演进与外部市场压力之间实现动态平衡。最后，我们指出未来值得拓展的研究方向，倡导从时间视角深化对中国家庭动态与创业关系的理解。

Keywords: China; dual tuning model; entrepreneurship; family dynamics; temporal rhythms

关键词: 家庭动态、创业、双重调适模型、时间节奏、中国

Introduction

Recent scholarly inquiry has increasingly emphasized entrepreneurial activity in the Asian context, with particular attention to China – now widely recognized as a dynamic and globally significant entrepreneurial hub (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014; Bruton, Ahlstrom, & Obloj, 2008; Meyer, Prashantham, & Xu, 2021). An emerging stream of research explores the intersection of family systems and

entrepreneurship, highlighting how families' social and political networks shape entrepreneurial behavior in various forms of Chinese family firms (FFs), often assuming these familial influences to be inherently beneficial (Chen, Arnoldi, & Na, 2015; Liu, Qian, & Au, 2023; Luo & Chung, 2013). Despite this progress, limited attention has been paid to the influences of family dynamics – defined here as structural changes within families and evolving relationships among family members – on entrepreneurial behavior.

Against this backdrop, a call for papers was launched at *Management and Organization Review* (MOR) entitled, 'Family dynamics and entrepreneurship: Interaction between changes in families and changes in entrepreneurial activities in China'. This special issue aimed to foster scholarly exploration into how family dynamics interact with entrepreneurship and innovation. The emergence of new family forms and transformations in family structures – driven by shifts in social class, social mobility (Burt, Oppen, & Zou, 2021), family demographics, emotional relations (Cheal, 2002), and broader societal change (Treas, Scott, & Richards, 2017) – necessitates new theoretical frameworks and empirical approaches to understand their implications for entrepreneurial and FFs (Martinez & Aldrich, 2014). These issues are particularly salient given the increasingly prominent role of Chinese entrepreneurial firms in the global economy (Li, Liu, & Qian, 2019; Liu & Wang, 2023).

Encouragingly, this special issue garnered broad interest from scholars across a range of disciplines. We received 43 submissions, of which 7 were accepted after several rounds of rigorous peer review. Another invited manuscript, revised extensively through several review cycles, has also been included to inspire further scholarly discussions. Collectively, the 8 articles in this special issue explore varied dimensions of the interaction between family dynamics and entrepreneurship in China, as summarized in Table 1.

This introductory article develops and presents a dual tuning model that integrates and synthesizes insights from the articles included in the special issue. This model conceptualizes family dynamics through two interconnected processes: (1) external adaptability, which involves strategic responses to dynamic external forces such as market demands, institutional pressures, and societal expectations; and (2) internal evolvability, which reflects gradual and organic transformations within the family, such as generational transitions and shifts in family identity.

By applying the dual tuning model, we analyze how Chinese entrepreneurial and FFs navigate the tensions and synergies between internal family dynamics and external environmental pressures. Overall, the articles in this issue collectively examine (1) how historical legacies and evolving family structures influence international investment strategies; (2) the role of intergenerational capital transfers and parental mentoring in cultivating entrepreneurial identity and resource acquisition; and (3) the impact of family governance and cultural dynamics on innovation and sustained competitive advantages. Furthermore, a commentary by Skorodziyevskiy (2025) offers comparative reflections of FFs in Asia and the West, highlighting surprising parallels and extending the global relevance of this special issue.

Together, the introduction to this special issue and the articles that follow contribute new theoretical insights into how family dynamics shape entrepreneurial decision-making and behavior. The remainder of this introductory article elaborates on family dynamics within China's unique sociocultural context; in doing so, it briefly reviews relevant literature, articulates the dual tuning theoretical model, and summarizes the articles included in this special issue using this model. We conclude with an agenda for future research that is built on the dual tuning model to advance scholarship at the intersection of family dynamics and entrepreneurship studies.

Family Dynamics: A Brief Literature Review

Family dynamics have long been a central theme in disciplines such as anthropology and sociology, tracing back at least to Thomas Malthus's seminal 1798 study on population growth (Kreyenfeld,

Table 1. Summary of accepted articles

Title	Authors	Aspects of family dynamics	Outcome variable	Theory
Institutional origin and Chinese family firms' dot tax haven internationalization	Gong, Odom, & Kim	Privatization of former state-owned enterprises, ties with financial institutions, and managerial involvement of second-generation	FFs' dot tax haven investments	Institutional theory & SEW
Intergenerational capital endowments and external funding in new ventures: A fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis	Hu, Wang, & Covin	Intergenerational capital endowments in entrepreneurs' families	FFs' receipts of external funding	Fuzzy Qualitative Comparative Analysis
Like father like son: How perceived parental mentoring strategies shape successors' entrepreneurial identity in Chinese family businesses	Li, Ge, & Dou	Parental mentoring	Family business successors' entrepreneurial identities	Case study
When do family firms plant different new trees? The role of family firms and CSR committees in green innovation	Lee, Lin, & Shih	Control deviation	FFs' green innovation	SEW & Structural dynamics of ownership
Family diversity and hybrid entrepreneurship: A family embeddedness perspective	Song, Su, Ding, Wu, & Fan	Dynamics within family households and income stratification	Individuals' entrepreneurial entry decision	Family embeddedness
Innovation in family firms: An intergenerational tale of symbol and substance	Wu, Wang, Chu, & Chen	Intergenerational succession, family affective endowment, and ascribed bureaucratic connection	Divergence between FFs' symbolic innovation disclosure and substantive innovation	SEW
How does family culture generate competitive advantage for family firms? A case study from the affordance perspective	Xi, Cai, Wu, & Cheng	Sense-giving and sensemaking of family culture	FFs' competitive advantages	Case study
Paradox of family firms: Comment on Fang, Singh, Kim, Marler, and Chrisman (2022)	Skorodziyevskiy	Variations in firm size and institutional environments shape the behavior and performance of FFs	Consistency between the behaviors of Asian and Western family firms	Property rights

Andersson, & Pailhé, 2012). Historically, this body of research has focused on the temporal dimensions of family transitions, including marriage, parenthood, and family dissolution (Andersson, Thomson, & Duntava, 2017; Regnerus & Burdette, 2006). By emphasizing structural and relational shifts over time, prior studies have documented changing parental roles, transformations between nuclear and extended family forms, and evolving patterns of familial interaction (Newman & Grauerholz, 2002). Temporal improvements in contextual factors, such as religious involvement (Regnerus & Burdette, 2006) and housing conditions (Mulder, 2013), have also been associated with enhanced family relationships. Underscoring the impact of family dynamics, Härkönen, Bernardi, and Boertien (2017) demonstrated that divorce and stepfamily formation significantly influence children's well-being and life trajectories. Likewise, Regnerus and Burdette (2006) found that children who report emotional closeness to their parents are more inclined toward collectivist, rather than

individualistic, orientations. New research directions continue to emerge, reflecting broader societal changes in ideologies and cultural norms. Recent studies increasingly engage with issues related to gender, sexuality, intimacy, and cross-cultural dynamics (Karraker & Grochowski, 2012), illustrating a shift toward understanding families as situated within and responsive to evolving social structures.

Building on these insights, Aldrich and Cliff (2003) called for greater scholarly attention to how changes in family composition, roles, and relationships can shape and reshape key entrepreneurial processes, including opportunity recognition, venture initiation, and resource mobilization. However, despite recognizing family dynamics as inherently temporal and relational, the extant literature has largely overlooked how such dynamics shape entrepreneurial decisions, behaviors, and outcomes – a critical gap explicitly addressed by this special issue.

Family Dynamics and Entrepreneurship in China

Family dynamics in China are characterized by pronounced temporal variability, encompassing both shifts in external contextual factors and internal family structures. Although the interdependence between family dynamics and broader social transitions is widely recognized, substantial cross-national differences persist, particularly between Chinese and Western family systems (Treas et al., 2017).

Externally, family dynamics in China are subject to continual changes in policy and institutional frameworks. Historically, China's stringent 'one-child policy' was introduced to curb population growth but has recently been relaxed in response to demographic challenges, especially population aging (ESCAP, 2016). However, the impact of this policy reversal has been tempered by the growing prevalence of dual-income, no-kid (DINK) households, shaped by rising living costs and improved educational and career prospects for women (South China Morning Post, 2023). At the same time, although cultural norms continue to valorize extended family cohabitation ('three generations under one roof'), economic and institutional pressures have catalyzed a notable shift toward smaller, nuclear family units (Fang, Singh, Kim, Marler, & Chrisman, 2022; Liu et al., 2023).

Internally, Chinese family systems exhibit considerable temporal fluidity, reflecting their broad and inclusive definitions of family. In contrast to Western notions of family that tend to emphasize nuclear relationships based on blood or marriage, Chinese families often incorporate extended kinship, clans, and even fictive kinship networks (Holcombe, 2017; Nelson, 2020). Close social connections, such as friends, neighbors, schoolmates, or colleagues, may be considered part of the family through deeply embedded *guanxi* relationships grounded in mutual trust and reciprocity (Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2013; Lu, Huang, Xu, Chung, & He, 2022; Wu, Xu, Song, & Liu, 2024). These broad and flexible conceptions of the family contribute to complex, dynamic interactions and frequent reconfigurations of family structures (Bruton & Ahlstrom, 2003; Chen, Zhu, & Fang, 2021; Liu, Ahlstrom, & Zhang, 2024).

Adding to this complexity is the endogenous and evolving relationship between family dynamics and entrepreneurship in China. Entrepreneurship in China is highly time-variant (Ahlstrom & Wang, 2021), frequently shaped by rapid and sweeping changes in the external environment – from policy shifts and demographic transitions to technological disruptions and geopolitical tensions (Ahlstrom & Ding, 2014; Li et al., 2019). These macro-level dynamics often interact with and intensify the effects of evolving family structures, norms, and values, rendering the role of family in Chinese entrepreneurship both more salient and more complex than in the West (Liu & Wang, 2023). In addition, family dynamics and entrepreneurship engage in a mutually transformative relationship: not only do changing family structures and values influence entrepreneurial motivations, strategies, and outcomes but also entrepreneurial activities themselves can reshape family roles, priorities, and intergenerational relationships. As such, capturing entrepreneurship in China requires moving beyond linear causality to a co-evolutionary perspective that recognizes the reciprocal interactions between family and business systems (Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2010).

These distinctive temporal dynamics – marked by rapid external environmental changes and fluid internal family evolution – underscore the uniqueness of Chinese family dynamics and their profound implications for entrepreneurial behavior. A more focused examination of these dynamics is essential for advancing our understanding of entrepreneurship among Chinese business families. The dual tuning model introduced in the following section provides a conceptual framework for understanding how family dynamics influence entrepreneurship in the Chinese context.

A Dual Tuning Model of Temporal Rhythm and Family Dynamics

As noted earlier, a central theme regarding family dynamics within China's entrepreneurial and business landscape is the presence of two distinct temporal variations: one related to shifts in the external context and the other concerning changes within the family system. Recognizing this duality, and to advance current scholarship and identify promising avenues for future research, we propose a dual tuning model of temporal rhythms in family systems. This model serves as a guiding framework for theorizing and integrating insights from the papers in this special issue.

Intersectionality, Adaptability, and Evolvability of the Dual Tuning Model

When examining the role of families in the business or entrepreneurial contexts, the family often occupies a central position in business or entrepreneurial contexts (Gomez-Mejia, Cruz, Berrone, & De Castro, 2011). Indeed, families continuously interact with other systems, simultaneously influencing and being influenced by them. Here, a 'system' is defined as a coherent set of interrelated actors, rules, and routines that collectively produce consistent patterns of behavior and outcomes over time (Feldman & Pentland, 2008). Each system – whether a family, industry, or regulatory institution – operates with its own temporal rhythm shaped by internal logic and interactional dynamics (Maharani, Sukoco, Ahlstrom, & Usman, 2024). These interactions are multidimensional rather than linear, a complexity effectively captured by the concept of *intersectionality*. When family systems engage with external entities, such as industries, regulatory bodies, or communities, numerous intersections arise. Each intersection generates a unique temporal rhythm, reflecting variations in the pace, timing, and dynamics of activities across interacting systems (Klärner & Raisch, 2013).

Within these multifaceted interactions, family systems display two primary capacities: adaptability and evolvability. *Adaptability* is a defining characteristic of family systems, enabling them to adjust to external temporal variations. Compared to institutional or corporate entities, families demonstrate a unique flexibility in adapting their temporal rhythms, which are rooted in the inherently interpersonal nature of familial bonds. These interpersonal relationships tolerate considerable variations in individual behaviors, preferences, and interactions (Gomez-Mejia et al., 2011). While families accommodate significant external shifts, their internal stability ensures the continuity of the family system as a coherent unit.

Concurrently, family systems also exhibit *evolvability* – a distinct internal temporal rhythm defined by natural, gradual developmental processes, including generational transitions, aging, marriage, and family expansion (Andersson et al., 2017; Regnerus & Burdette, 2006). Unlike external temporal rhythms, this internal rhythm unfolds organically within the family structure.

Given the two temporal rhythms mentioned above, family systems operate through a mechanism best described as 'dual tuning', involving two interconnected temporal challenges. First, families continuously adjust and synchronize with external temporal rhythms – such as rapid industry developments or slower regulatory changes – arising from interactions with external systems. Tensions surface when external rhythms fundamentally conflict with one another or diverge significantly from the family's internal pacing. Somewhat analogous to an automobile transmission shifting gears to manage varying speeds, families navigate these diverse external temporal demands (Maharani et al., 2024). Second, the family's internal rhythm, driven by inherent gradual changes,

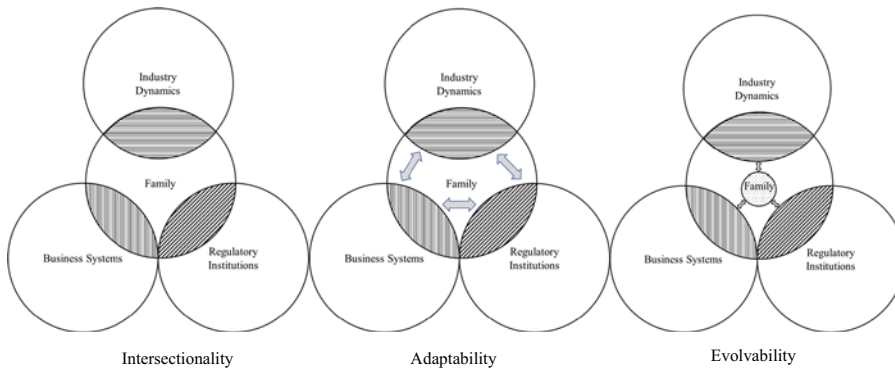


Figure 1. The graphical illustration of the dual tuning model of family dynamics

poses additional challenges when externally imposed demands require responses at differing speeds or urgency levels.

Family-In-Business Context

To further theorize these dual tuning challenges, we propose *boundary permeability* as a crucial mechanism underpinning the dual tuning model, especially the interactions between family dynamics and entrepreneurship in China. Family-in-business contexts, including family-based entrepreneurship, family businesses, and family-owned business groups, uniquely feature overlapping and intertwined boundaries between family and business systems. This boundary permeability complicates dual tuning significantly, as temporal rhythms related to internal family evolvability and external business adaptability do not merely coexist but actively intersect and mutually influence each other through three mechanisms. First, the business system itself possesses a distinct temporal rhythm characterized by industry dynamics, operational cycles, and regulatory constraints (Blagoev, Hernes, Kunisch, & Schultz, 2024) which can diverge significantly from the internal rhythm of the owning family, which naturally unfolds through gradual generational transitions, life-stage events, and interpersonal relationship dynamics.

Second, the family's controlling position within the business significantly shapes boundary dynamics. Specifically, family authority enables the transfer of familial rhythms – such as decision-making speed, communication styles, and pacing of strategic changes – into the business domain. Families may leverage the business as an adaptive extension of themselves, employing it as a buffer to absorb external shocks or demands, thus maintaining internal familial stability. Families may also selectively separate business rhythms from internal family pacing, intentionally establishing clearer boundaries to minimize negative spillovers, clarify roles, and enable targeted adaptations. Such selective boundary management enhances the overall dual tuning capability.

Third, the effectiveness of dual tuning relies heavily on strategic boundary management by the owning family. Families that proactively manage boundary permeability – facilitating beneficial interactions at appropriate speeds and minimizing problematic spillovers – can successfully synchronize external adaptability with internal evolvability. Conversely, families lacking strategic boundary-management practices risk operational dysfunction or strategic paralysis due to conflicting temporal demands. Thus, our dual tuning model complements previous studies examining the relationship between the pace of organizational decisions and firm performance (e.g., Klarner & Raisch, 2013), by tracing the origins and mechanisms underlying these dynamics, rather than treating temporal rhythms as externally given (Blagoev et al., 2024). This proposed model is illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 2. Interpreting accepted articles through the lens of the dual tuning model

Authors	Intersectionality	Adaptability	Evolvability
Gong, Odom, & Kim	State regulatory legacies, financial institutions, and global markets.	Conflicting external rhythms stemming from slow-paced regulatory frameworks and rapid-paced international market demands.	The internal rhythm, shaped by family legacies, evolves slowly which is mismatched against external systems requiring rapid strategic responses.
Hu, Wang, & Covin	Investor expectations, societal perceptions of legitimacy, and political affiliations	Conflicting external demands coming from rapid investor expectations against slow-paced societal legitimacy based on traditional and political capital.	The family's slow-paced internal evolution of capital endowments mismatch with external rhythms that demand immediate clarity and legitimacy.
Li, Ge, & Dou	Competitive market pressures and societal expectations for family business successors	Successor identity development naturally unfolds at a relatively gradual pace. Families that strategically mentor successors recognize the need to nurture identity gradually (evolvability) while also enabling sufficient responsiveness (adaptability) to external entrepreneurial rhythms.	
Lee, Lin, & Shih	Market competition, regulatory expectations, and societal norms around sustainability.	The mismatch between rapid market expectations for visible sustainability innovation and slow adjustments in regulated environmental guidelines.	Internal SEW considerations resist swift, superficial adaptations, resulting in behaviors like greenwashing – superficial adaptability without substantive internal evolution.
Song, Su, Ding, Wu, & Fan	Demographic diversity (surface-level: gender, age; deep-level: education, experience) within family households intersects external market conditions.	Internal demographic diversity evolves naturally over generational timelines, which contrasts with rapid shifts in external market demands.	
Wu, Wang, Chu, & Chen	Family firms experiencing generational succession interact with multiple external pressures.	Substantive innovation inherently evolves slowly and internally. Families undergoing intergenerational transitions face internal evolvability constraints, making rapid substantive innovation difficult and prompting family firms to quickly adopt symbolic innovation disclosure.	
Xi, Cai, Wu, & Cheng	Family culture intersects with external competitive markets, stakeholder expectations, and community relationships.	Rapid market demands require swift adaptation, contrasting with external stakeholders' slower rhythms of trust-building and relational continuity.	Strategic sense-making and sense-giving strategies are essential to reconcile slow family evolvability with fast-changing competitive rhythms.
Skorodziyevskiy	Firm-specific characteristics (e.g., firm size, resource endowment) intersect with external institutional contexts and cultural expectations.	Agile but resource-limited small-sized firms need swift adaptability to rapidly evolving market conditions, yet struggle against slower, rigid institutional frameworks.	Internal family rhythms, evolving organically and gradually across generations may inherently resist or slow down rapid adaptations necessitated by external institutional and market pressures.

Applying the Dual Tuning Model to Papers in the Special Issue

The proposed dual tuning model can be a powerful tool to theorize and integrate the accepted papers in our special issue, which are briefly summarized in [Table 2](#). To a large extent, the papers accepted can be categorized into two types, one addressing the incompatibility of rhythms among external systems that the family is exposed to, and the other addressing incompatibility between external systems and the family's internal rhythms.

Incompatibility of Rhythms among External Systems

The dual tuning model first helps clarify challenges that Chinese family businesses may encounter and their responses when interacting simultaneously with multiple external systems characterized by conflicting rhythms. Several papers accepted in the special issue address this topic. For instance, Gong, Odom, and Kim's (2025) study entitled 'Institutional origin and Chinese family firms' dot tax haven internationalization', explores how the institutional origins of FFs affect their Dot Tax Haven, which are small island economies such as the Cayman Islands with favorable tax systems and financial confidentiality. By integrating institutional theory with the perspective of socioemotional wealth, Gong et al. (2025) look at whether restructured FFs formed by the privatization of former state-owned enterprises differ from entrepreneurial FFs established directly by family founders in their inclinations to invest in Dot Tax Haven. They find that economic ties to financial institutions weaken the tendency of restructured FFs to conduct more Dot Tax Haven internationalization, compared to entrepreneurial FFs. Intriguingly, they find that the managerial involvement of the second generation does not reduce such divergence.

Gong et al. (2025) can be explained through the dual tuning model. Their paper illustrates how Chinese FFs simultaneously face external systems with incompatible temporal expectations – rapidly evolving international market opportunities, such as investments in tax havens, versus slower-paced and rigid domestic institutional legacies stemming from former state ownership. This intersection creates tensions that force FFs to strategically prioritize either rapid global expansion or slower, more stable socioemotional considerations. In this regard, this paper sheds light on the influence of distinct family histories on entrepreneurial behavior in China, demonstrating how institutional legacies like state ownership shape the choice between financial opportunities and socioemotional wealth priorities in global strategies. This study also enriches the literature on FF heterogeneity by revealing that restructured FFs display unique risk tolerances and motivations influenced by their heritage as state-owned enterprises (Liu, Qian, Lu & Shu, 2024), thus indicating that entrepreneurial activity in these firms is shaped not only by family dynamics but also by institutional legacies.

The proposed dual tuning model can also help explain Lee, Lin and Shih's study (2025) entitled 'When do family firms plant different new trees? The role of family firms and CSR committees in green innovation'. The authors investigated the interplay between FFs and green innovation, particularly focusing on the influence of socioemotional wealth and the structural dynamics of ownership within these firms. Drawing on a dataset of 5,071 observations from listed firms in Taiwan over eight years, the study finds that FFs are more inclined to pursue green innovation compared to non-FFs. However, it also shows that FFs that possess control rights that diverge from their cash flow rights exhibit distinct behaviors regarding innovation strategies in comparison to FFs whose control rights and cash flow rights do not diverge.

The dual tuning model helps explain how FFs navigate external systems with divergent rhythms – rapid technological innovation versus the slower, methodical pace imposed by regulatory and societal expectations about environmental sustainability. This incompatibility is amplified in firms exhibiting deviations between their control and cash flow rights. This deviation appears to intensify the difficulty in reconciling these divergent external demands. Consequently, firms may resort to superficial compliance (greenwashing), reflecting challenges in managing the complexity of external temporal conflicts.

As another example, Hu, Wang, and Covin's (2025) study, 'Intergenerational capital endowments and external funding in new ventures: A fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis' investigates how the intergenerational capital endowments of entrepreneurial families impact the level of external funding that can be secured for their new ventures. Drawing on signaling theory and using a fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis, the authors identify four family prototypes – grassroots families, economic upstart families, upward mobility families, and post-political families – that are associated with difficulties in obtaining external funding in new ventures in China.

Hu et al.'s (2025) study reflects the difficulties family entrepreneurs face when reconciling external systems operating at conflicting speeds – rapid financial market dynamics requiring immediate decision-making and risk assessment versus slower-paced external evaluations based on longer-term historical family status and reputational legitimacy. Hu et al. (2025) directly demonstrate the presence and salience of rhythm incompatibility across different dimensions of capital acquisition and accumulation, as well as between generations within families, including both entrepreneurs and their parents. These rhythmic incompatibilities create significant barriers for family ventures seeking external funding, especially when signals across generations appear inconsistent or unclear to external stakeholders. Finally, while prior literature frequently assumes that the political background of a parent or a family – reflected by prior membership in the cadre group or positions within the political system – offers advantages to entrepreneurs, the authors' findings reveal that a parent's political background may impose limitations as well as benefits. Thus, Hu et al. (2025) also contribute to a better understanding of changing attitudes in terms of public opinions regarding the importance and usefulness of political legacy in the business world.

Incompatibility between External Systems and the Family's Internal Rhythm

The dual tuning model illuminates challenges arising from tensions between the gradual evolvability inherent in internal family dynamics and external systems that demand quicker responses. For instance, Li, Ge, and Dou's (2025) study, entitled 'Like father like son: How perceived parental mentoring strategies shape successors' entrepreneurial identity in Chinese family businesses', explores how parental mentoring shapes the development of entrepreneurial identities of FF successors. Notably, it demonstrates that parental mentoring can guide successors in transitioning from an ambiguous to a clearly defined entrepreneurial identity. The authors also identify four mentoring strategies: laying foundations, painting bright futures, sharing experiences, and leading by example.

Using the dual tuning model as an interpretive framework, Li et al.'s (2025) study can be understood as highlighting tensions successors experience between slow-paced internal family mentoring processes focused on identity building and role development and faster external entrepreneurial expectations. Families that strategically manage these tensions through effective mentoring strategies facilitate smoother generational transitions, aligning the internal rhythm of identity development with external entrepreneurial demands. This study also contributes to the theme of the special issue by offering an alternative perspective to prior theorizing about the changing family system in China. Specifically, earlier literature often portrays the Chinese family system as authoritarian, characterizing the parent–child relationship as paternalistic, with parents issuing directives to which children are expected to comply. In contrast, this study suggests that through the design and implementation of specific mentoring strategies, Chinese parents may reduce their authoritarian approach and better support successors' development of entrepreneurial identities.

Song, Su, Ding, Wu, and Fan's study (2025), 'Family diversity and hybrid entrepreneurship: A family embeddedness perspective', relates family diversity to an individual's choice between hybrid entrepreneurship along with paid employment and full-time entrepreneurship. In particular, the authors examine how both surface-level (i.e., age and gender) and deep-level (i.e., work experience and education) diversity within families shape entrepreneurial entry decisions within different income classes. Utilizing data from the China Health and Nutrition Survey, the research reveals that deep-level diversity of family households has a greater impact on hybrid entrepreneurship than surface-level diversity. Moreover, belonging to a high-strata family enhances the influence of surface-level diversity on the decision to pursue hybrid entry, while diminishing the impact of deep-level diversity.

Through the lens of the dual tuning model, Song et al. (2025) illustrate how internal deep-level family diversity naturally unfolds at a slow, generational pace, which is often misaligned with external industry rhythms demanding swift entrepreneurial decisions. Families characterized by substantial

internal diversity face greater difficulty achieving synchronization between their slower internal rhythms and faster external market opportunities, influencing the form and timing of entrepreneurial entry (full-time vs. hybrid entrepreneurship).

As another example, the study by Wu, Wang, Chu, and Chen's (2025) study, 'Innovation in family firms: An intergenerational tale of symbol and substance', emphasizes the innovation strategies of family firms by highlighting family dynamics and inter-firm heterogeneities. Wu et al. (2025) argue that FFs engaged in the succession process may be exposed to inconsistent socioemotional viewpoints, leading to varying attitudes among family and nonfamily stakeholders. As an adaptive response, family owners may choose to selectively focus on certain aspects of strategic decisions while neglecting or downplaying others. From this angle, Wu et al. (2025) clearly demonstrate that FFs undergoing intergenerational transitions grapple with inherent temporal conflicts, i.e., slower-paced internal evolvability tied to emotional attachment and family legacy versus external adaptability pressures demanding quick and highly visible innovation disclosures. Such temporal misalignment results in 'innovation decoupling', wherein symbolic innovation disclosure becomes a strategic means to superficially satisfy external demands without substantive internal innovation. Utilizing the Latent Dirichlet allocation model, authors provide evidence that FFs that have undergone intergenerational succession exhibit a greater tendency to conduct innovation decoupling.

Finally, in their paper, 'How does family culture generate competitive advantage for family firms? A case study from the affordance perspective', Xi, Cai, Wu, and Cheng (2025) conducted a longitudinal case study of Baiyun, a Chinese FF with a heritage spanning over a century and an entrepreneurial journey of 56 years, to explore the dynamic nature of family culture. A three-stage process model is developed to illustrate the dynamic interaction among FFs, family culture, and competitive advantage. In the first stage, the natural affordances of family culture (i.e., what the family culture offers) emerge from the instinctive interactions among family members and result in a temporary competitive advantage for the firm. Then, in the second stage, as the FF seeks expansion, it finds that natural affordances become hindrances to the absorption of external resources. Through transcendent sensemaking strategies, including external perspective introduction, culture conceptualization, and pan-familialization, the FF transforms the natural affordances of family culture into designed affordances. In the third stage, the firm applies embedding and symbolic sense-giving strategies to foster identification among stakeholders.

Xi et al. (2025) exemplify how the dual tuning model explains how the gradual internal evolvability of family culture can offer certain competitive advantages. Over time, this slow-paced internal cultural rhythm becomes increasingly misaligned with external systems demanding rapid resource absorption and immediate adaptation to competitive pressures. To resolve these rhythmic incompatibilities, FFs deliberately employ sense-making and sense-giving strategies, recalibrating internal cultural dynamics to better match fast-paced competitive demands.

East and West

In his commentary, 'Paradox of family firms: Comment on Fang, Singh, Kim, Marler and Chrisman (2022)', Skorodzievskiy (2025) addresses the apparent paradox identified by Fang et al. (2022): the behavioral consistency between Asian (particularly Chinese) and Western FFs, despite stark differences in cultural values and institutional infrastructures. Drawing on the framework used by Skorodzievskiy, Sherlock, Su, Chrisman, and Dibrell (2024), he attributes this convergence to firm-level variation in size and the strength of institutional environments. According to his argument, these structural factors – rather than cultural or geographic origins – play a dominant role in shaping FF behavior. In weaker institutional environments, such as those often found in parts of Asia, FFs develop alternative configurations of governance, strategy, and resource allocation that enable them to perform in ways that mirror their Western counterparts operating in stronger institutional contexts.

While this explanation emphasizes structural contingency, we offer an alternative interpretation through the lens of the dual tuning model based on the temporal dynamics of family systems. From a dual tuning perspective, the convergence observed across East and West is not solely due to firm size or institutional variation, but rather to FFs' active synchronization of internal and external temporal rhythms. In this view, East Asian FFs are not merely adapting to weak institutions structurally – they are continuously tuning their internal evolvability (e.g., succession, identity, and family cohesion) in response to the external adaptability demands posed by institutional uncertainty and regulatory volatility. Likewise, Western FFs may face less volatile external environments but must still manage internal generational transitions and evolving family roles, requiring their own version of dual tuning.

This interpretive shift highlights an important difference. That is, while Skorodzyevskiy (2025) frames cross-regional consistency as a function of institutional substitution and firm-level variance, the dual tuning model emphasizes ongoing temporal alignment work performed by FFs across contexts. Convergence, in this view, is an outcome of dynamic, rhythmic synchronization, not simply structural similarity. This distinction opens further theoretical space to investigate how different FFs – regardless of context – strategically manage the tension between internal family rhythms and external institutional demands over time.

An Integrative Reflection and Future Research Directions

The topic of family dynamics – and how they shape the goals, governance, resources, behavior, and performance of entrepreneurial and FFs – remains underexplored (Fang et al., 2022). Encouragingly, this special issue presents a diverse range of studies that help illuminate these dynamics within the Chinese context. Interpreted through the lens of the *dual tuning mode of temporal rhythm*, these contributions collectively demonstrate how FFs manage temporal tensions by synchronizing adaptability with external demands from financial markets, stakeholders, and institutional environments with the internal evolvability associated with generational transitions, parenting styles, and cultural change.

For instance, the papers by Gong et al. (2025), Lee et al. (2025), and Xi et al. (2025) explore how internal family characteristics affect resource allocation and strategic decisions, reflecting deliberate calibration of internal family rhythms. Lee et al. (2025) focus on how parenting styles influence the development of successors' entrepreneurial identities, pointing to evolvability mechanisms. In contrast, Hu et al. (2025) examine the challenges of aligning FFs with the fast-paced temporal demands of external stakeholders in capital markets – demonstrating the difficulty of external adaptability. Song et al. (2025) look at how within-family diversity shapes entrepreneurial entry, while Xi et al. (2025) show how evolving family culture can generate strategic advantages, both illustrating the dynamic tuning between internal and external logics. Finally, Skorodzyevskiy's (2025) commentary extends the dialogue across global contexts and reminds us that while structural similarities exist, the synchronization of goals, governance, and resources unfolds through varying temporal rhythms – a key insight at the heart of the dual tuning model.

Temporal Shifts in Family Structure

While the above contributions deepen our understanding, several research directions remain underexplored. For example, research is needed to explore how fundamental shifts in family structure and dynamics influence family entrepreneurship (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003). Existing literature has rarely examined how events such as the addition or loss of family members affect the entrepreneurial decisions and behaviors of FFs. While transgenerational succession is a commonly studied theme, limited attention has been paid to how the birth or adoption of a child might alter a FF's internal rhythm by reshaping its entrepreneurial goals and intentions. Similarly, little is known about how marriage or divorce may modify a FF's entrepreneurial orientation – critical moments that reflect shifts in internal evolvability. Beyond changes in family membership and interpersonal relationships, relocations of the

family or individual family members can also disrupt and recalibrate internal rhythms, potentially influencing the family's entrepreneurial propensity. A deeper exploration of these micro-dynamics can significantly enhance our understanding of internal evolvability using the dual tuning model.

Temporal Entanglement Between Family and Entrepreneurship

From the perspective of the dual tuning model, the relationship between family dynamics and entrepreneurship is endogenous and temporally interwoven. Changes within family systems not only shape entrepreneurial activity, but entrepreneurial developments can, in turn, alter the internal rhythm and structure of the family. This reciprocal influence underscores the need for research that explores how entrepreneurial actions recalibrate the internal evolvability of family systems.

For instance, when a new venture is launched by only a subset of family members, it may introduce asymmetries in roles, resources, and recognition, disrupting previously synchronized internal rhythms. Similarly, the relatedness and resource endowments of new ventures vis-à-vis existing businesses can lead to shifts in family cohesion, identity, and governance logic. If the new venture outperforms the existing business, or conversely, becomes a financial or emotional drain, it may trigger adjustments in decision-making authority, succession plans, or even core family values. In such cases, entrepreneurship becomes not only an output of family dynamics but also a temporal force that reshapes the internal trajectory of the family system, requiring continuous retuning to maintain a balance between internal evolution and external entrepreneurial demands.

Social Change as an External Rhythm

We also encourage further research into how family dynamics interact with broader social changes, underscoring the two-way influences and mutual adaptations between internal family rhythms and external societal rhythms. While some studies in this special issue explore internal aspects such as within-family diversity and its impact on entrepreneurial entry decisions (Song et al., 2025), we still lack sufficient research investigating how external societal-level shifts affect the internal evolvability of family systems. For instance, external shifts like the relaxation of China's one-child policy, declining family sizes, aging populations, and other major demographic transitions represent powerful external rhythms that likely influence entrepreneurial activities and internal family dynamics. Future studies could address these questions by delving deeper into longitudinal datasets (e.g., Chinese General Social Survey, China Health and Nutrition Survey, Chinese Family Panel Survey) or employing advanced methods such as difference-in-differences analyses to quantify and interpret these temporal interactions from a macro-level perspective (Maharani et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2023).

Additionally, the dual tuning model emphasizes the endogenous relationship between family systems and external institutions. For example, Carney, Gedajlovic, and Strike (2014) illustrate how inheritance laws – external institutional rhythms – uniquely influence the perceptions and strategies of FFs. Conversely, entrepreneurial activities originating from family dynamics may also alter societal norms and institutional arrangements (Ahlstrom & Bruton, 2010; Dieleman & Sachs, 2008). This reverse temporal influence, however, remains relatively understudied due to data limitations. Further exploration into these mutual adaptations between family-level entrepreneurship and macro-level institutional changes promises significant theoretical and practical insights into the rhythmic synchronization processes at the core of the dual tuning model.

Technology and Rhythmic Realignment

The dual tuning model highlights the need to explore new forms of intersections, particularly concerning how technological advancements influence both the internal evolvability and external adaptability of entrepreneurial and FFs in China. As digital technologies reshape the external business environment – accelerating market rhythms, intensifying competitive pressures, and

introducing new forms of connectivity – FFs must continually recalibrate their internal temporal rhythms to maintain strategic alignment. Preliminary evidence suggests that internet-based technologies may influence internal family evolvability, leading FFs to adopt more open-minded governance structures and decreasing traditional concerns about maintaining tight family control (Liu & Wang, 2023).

Moreover, technological shifts may introduce new external pressures, such as widening income inequalities and uneven regional development (Fan, 2024), prompting FFs to adapt differentially based on their geographic location. Consequently, comparative studies examining urban versus rural FFs could reveal distinct approaches to dual tuning, capturing how internal family dynamics such as succession planning and management practices vary in response to external technological and socioeconomic disparities. Future research might also investigate how cultural factors mediate this dual tuning process, shaping governance structures and strategic choices within FFs across diverse regional and institutional contexts, thus enriching our understanding of how internal familial rhythms interact dynamically with external technological transformations.

Methodological and Epistemological Expansions

The dual tuning model underscores the importance of adopting more diverse theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches to better capture the temporal influence of family dynamics on entrepreneurial activity. Although advances in quantitative historical economics – such as the use of granular archival data – have enhanced our capacity to predict long-term economic outcomes (e.g., Barone & Mocetti, 2021), research on family business and entrepreneurship remains largely grounded in traditional management paradigms. To advance a more nuanced understanding of the complex temporal interplay between internal evolvability (i.e., family-level changes and transitions) and external adaptability (i.e., industry dynamics, institutional changes, and shocks), it is imperative to incorporate interdisciplinary frameworks and methods. For instance, replicating prior studies across different institutional and temporal contexts (e.g., Wang et al., 2023) can shed light on how FFs recalibrate their internal rhythms in response to external temporal demands related to internationalization (Arregle, Duran, Hitt, & Van Essen, 2017; Liu et al., 2024) or participation in diverse industry sectors (Guan, Ahlstrom, & Liu, 2024; King & Peng, 2013). Moreover, the rise of new FF forms and the occurrence of major external shocks – such as the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical disruptions, or China's Belt and Road Initiative – highlight the growing need to expand the epistemological foundations of this research domain. Integrating insights from history, sociology, and anthropology perspectives can generate a richer, context-sensitive understanding of how FFs dynamically tune internal and external rhythms over time (Calabrò, Chrisman, & Kano, 2022; Ciravegna, Ahlstrom, Michailova, Oh, & Gaur, 2023; Liu & Wang, 2022). Such methodological pluralism offers promising avenues for capturing the adaptive strategies of family enterprises and increasingly complex and evolving environments.

From Static Snapshots to Dynamic Sequences

From the perspective of the dual tuning model, existing research on family dynamics within the entrepreneurship literature predominantly adopts a static perspective, thereby insufficiently capturing how internal evolvability within the family or family business system dynamically influences external adaptability – manifested as changes in firm behavior and performance. For instance, while prior research has distinguished between founder-led and successor-led FFs, it often overlooks the temporal processes by which firms transition internally from one generation to another, and how these internal transitions subsequently recalibrate firm strategies and outcomes. Thus, understanding is limited regarding how and why strategic behavior and performance evolve over time during generational shifts (Chen et al., 2021; King & Peng, 2013). A dual tuning approach, emphasizing longitudinal

analyses, can more clearly illuminate how firms synchronize internal generational transitions with external strategic demands, providing richer insights than comparing static snapshots at isolated stages of FF evolution (cf., Chrisman, Madison, & Kim, 2021).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this special issue underscores the complex and evolving nature of entrepreneurial and FFs in China through the application of the dual tuning model. By synthesizing insights from the contributing articles, this framework illuminates how entrepreneurial and FFs continuously manage the interplay between internal evolvability – reflected in shifting family goals, governance mechanisms, and resource distribution – and external adaptability in response to dynamic economic, cultural, institutional, and technological environments. Recognizing these dual rhythms is essential for researchers and practitioners alike, as effective synchronization significantly influences the performance, growth, and sustainability of entrepreneurial and FFs, as well as family well-being. Moving forward, the dual tuning model offers a promising foundation for advancing innovative research designs and developing more nuanced theoretical perspectives, thereby deepening our understanding of the dynamic forces that shape entrepreneurship within China's rapidly transforming economic landscape.

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David Ahlstrom (ahlstrom@baf.cuhk.edu.hk) is an associate dean (research) at Hong Kong Metropolitan University and emeritus professor at The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He received a PhD from New York University after having worked in the data communications industry. His research interests include managing in Asia, innovation and entrepreneurship, and economic growth. He has 180+ publications in top journals. He earned the Clarivate Highly Cited Researcher award (2017–2019) in three consecutive years.

Hanqing Chevy Fang (fangha@mst.edu) is an associate professor in the department of business and information technology at Missouri University of Science and Technology and an editor of *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*. He received a PhD from Mississippi State University. His research interests include family firms, entrepreneurship, and strategic management. He has published widely in peer reviewed academic journals including *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Global Strategy Journal*, and *Journal of Management Studies*.

Bin Liu (binliu@xmu.edu.cn) is an associate professor at Xiamen University and a reviewing editor of *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*. He received a PhD from The Chinese University of Hong Kong. His research interests include international business, corporate governance, and family business with a focus on emerging economies. He has published widely in peer reviewed academic journals including *Journal of International Business Studies*, *Journal of International Business Policy*, and *Journal of World Business*.

James J. Chrisman (jchrisman@business.msstate.edu) is the Julia Bennett Rouse professor of management at Mississippi State University and a senior editor of *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*.

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