

Cultural Traits and Founder Influence in Family-Run Educational Institutions: An Interview-Based Study in Rio de Janeiro

Thiago Simone Bueno

Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), Rio de Janeiro - Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Abstract: *The aim of this work was to investigate cultural traits of family-owned businesses in the educational sector and their possible relationships with their founders' values. Four schools in Rio de Janeiro were researched, and 14 of their leaders were interviewed. The content analysis method was used to analyze the results. From the analysis, the following categories emerged: a school for my child; is the child of a fish a little fish or not?; and the influence of the founders' values. The analysis of the results showed that traits of the schools' founders, such as cultural values, persist over the years, managing, not without difficulties, to span generations. And for the more recent leaders, the challenge is to maintain the institution's cultural identity while also making it flexible to ongoing social transformations.*

Keywords: Family business; Educational sector; Organizational culture; Founder values; Intergenerational transmission; Content analysis.

1. INTRODUCTION

Family businesses are the majority of business organizations in Brazil and worldwide. A survey conducted in 2020 by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), in partnership with the Service for Support to Micro and Small Enterprises (SEBRAE, 2020), found that 90% of companies in Brazil follow the family model. These organizations are responsible for producing 65% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employ approximately 75% of the workforce in the country. Due to the impact of these companies on economic and social life, studies on their cultural aspects become relevant.

Research on organizational culture points to the influence of leadership in building corporate cultures (Taylor, 2016). More specifically, the objective of this work was to investigate cultural traits of family businesses in the school sector and their possible relationships with the values of their founders. The study is part of a broader research project, in which four schools in Rio de Janeiro were surveyed and 14 of their leaders were interviewed.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The concept of culture is of fundamental importance for the human and social sciences. A topic of anthropological studies and other researchers, it has generated significant theoretical and empirical output. There are numerous definitions of organizational culture, but all basically refer to the set of beliefs, values, rituals, symbols, myths, arts, religion, language, and other items that compose or permeate the imaginary and symbolic systems of human groups (Bertero, 1996; Schirato, 2000; Schein, 2004/2020; Taylor, 2016). Culture varies geographically and historically, and can be observed in small groups (such as families or work teams) or in large populations (as in the case of country or regional cultures). As Bertero (1996) says, the study of culture is so classic that it invites the researcher to adopt a reflective and humble stance.

Schein (2004/2020) understands that the culture of a group can be defined as the shared and accumulated learning by the group, as the group experiences and solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration. What is validated by experience, what worked well enough to be considered adequate and to be disseminated, becomes part of the culture. New group members then receive the culture, with its constituent elements, as the correct way to interpret reality and deal with problems. In this process, the role of the leader and founder of an organization becomes fundamental. It is he who first communicates to the team of employees and the generation that may succeed him the history and the meaning of the organization's existence (Bloes, 2022). In turn, the leadership style and culture in family businesses are influenced by specific variables, such as the interactions and affections involved among family members working in the company. Such specificities have been attracting researchers' attention but still require more studies (Fries, Kammerlander, Leitterstorf, 2021).

In his theoretical framework, Schein (2004/2020) identifies three layers that make up group culture: premises (or assumptions); values and norms; artifacts. The first level contains more abstract, less accessible, conscious, or observable concepts, but which provide the foundation for the other levels. For example, unformalized notions about education or childhood present in a school institution could be in this first level. The second level of culture, directly informed by the premises, includes norms (also not yet formally established) and values. Relevant examples from the school context at this second level would be discipline or the degree of formality with which the group handles the hierarchy between children and adults. Finally, the artifact level includes all the most evident elements of a group's culture: its rituals, symbols, and myths. In schools, examples of artifacts would be uniforms, parties and celebrations, school routines, as well as all institutional communication of the school.

As outlined, in his concept of culture, Schein (2004/2020) emphasizes the sharing of cultural aspects within the group, as well as the knowledge generated and accumulated by its members. In the case of family businesses, it is quite reasonable to assume that, to some degree, cultural aspects of the founding families are present in these institutions. In turn, the effectiveness of intentional efforts by their founders, leaders, or managers to disseminate and perpetuate desired cultural traits, as in other companies, is uncertain (Loureiro, 2006).

Organizations aim for synergy with their employees in terms of beliefs, values, and behaviors—a necessary condition for implementing their strategies and achieving established visions (Loureiro, 2006). It is understood that the more aligned the workforce (employees and service providers) is with the organization, the closer the institution will be to reaching its goals. As Peter Drucker (2002) states, culture has enormous potential to undermine strategic planning; in other words, if there is no true alignment between strategy and culture, the strategic plan tends to fail. A critical moment identified in family businesses, when there is a risk of breakdowns in cultural, strategic, or even the tacit way of conducting business, is the succession process: the moment when leadership changes hands, especially when passed to new generations (Lodi, 1978; Rodrigues, 2019; Seabra; Santos; Tajra, 2022). Not coincidentally, this is one of the main concerns of family businesses (SEBRAE, 2017). As Krishnan (2020) asserts, culture needs to be cultivated and managed in the name of good business results. Leaders who succeed one another, generation after generation, are challenged by the reality of the context in which their companies operate to make necessary adaptations to the organizations' culture so that their growth is sustainable over time. And, at this point, it is worth emphasizing once again the importance of the leader's communication (Bloes, 2022), whether the founder or their successors.

In the business world, much is debated regarding the role of leadership in shaping and maintaining organizational culture. Taylor (2016) emphasizes the inescapable aspect of the cultural context as either a facilitator or hindrance to the implementation of business strategy, but also acknowledges the possibility of managing corporate culture. To this end, the author values the concrete actions of leadership as an example and a means to consolidate the desired culture. As previously mentioned, in family businesses, where the main leadership positions generally stem from the family, it is possible to assume that cultural traits of the leaders and their families are strongly present. In line with this logic, from a more psychological perspective, Bacal (2013), in a study on the intergenerational transmission of a profession, highlights that living in an environment of emotional bonds and love for the profession facilitates the identification of new generations with the professional practices of parents and grandparents. It is also reasonable to assume that these transmitted affections and values facilitate identification with the family businesses where such professional practices take place. It should be noted, however, that this identification, whether with the profession or the company, should not be understood as a rule or as something free of conflicts.

As Bertero (1996) states, when referring to the owner-entrepreneur, the basis of their power is grounded in both property and tradition. Traditions, in turn, are passed down through generations over time. However, no matter how much there is common ground for identification and value transmission in both institutions—family and company—in the case of family businesses, there are no guarantees regarding the longevity of the business. A SEBRAE (2020) survey indicated that 70% of family businesses do not survive beyond the founder's generation, and only 5% reach the third generation. In other words, cultural aspects that facilitated the establishment of the enterprise will not necessarily sustain it over time—either because they are not adequately shared with new generations or because they cannot withstand the test of cultural changes occurring in society.

Schirato (2000), when describing the myths present in organizations, directly associates what she calls the "myth of the great man" with company founders and family businesses. This myth includes elements related to initial difficulties, lack of resources, and precarious conditions, all of which are overcome by the willpower and determination of this first leadership figure—the founder. According to the author, the foundation of this narrative

can arouse identification in others who come into contact with this cultural content and a desire to similarly invest in their own creativity and strength to overcome difficulties; that is, the founding leader's strength in overcoming challenges can inspire others. Even in smaller businesses, where structured strategic planning is not always present, the inspiring and guiding role of leadership proves fundamental and capable of contributing to overcoming limitations (Fernandes, 2020).

Myths, which in Schein's (2004/2020) cultural structure are understood as part of the artifacts level, are explored in Enriquez's (1997) work in light of the concept of the imaginary. Enriquez, who builds his work on a psychoanalytic foundation, understands that organizations are shaped in the imaginary of subjects, with this configuration including a complex web involving myths, rites of passage, and symbols. According to the author, organizations also have myths that unify them and rites such as initiation and passage rites. Similarly, they need heroic figures, constructed from their real or imaginary founders. For the author, organizations need a saga to be recounted and perpetuated in collective memory. It can be said that they need a narrative, composed of myths, rites, and heroes, that grounds and legitimizes the organization's practices and very existence.

In the context of generational issues, focusing on psychological aspects associated with the family, a key point is research on generational transmission. As Magalhães and Féres-Carneiro (2004) state, the family is an intersubjective matrix and a means of transmitting psychic life between generations. Or, in line with Granjon (2001), one generation depends on the one that precedes it. In a kind of search for transcendence, for perpetuation beyond individual and generational finitude, generations yearn to create new generations that succeed them. Human existence occurs in a generational chain, in which many elements are transmitted across various dimensions: biological, social, economic, and psychic. The subject is a link, both a constituted and constituting part, between the generation that preceded them and the generation that will succeed them (Kaës, 2001). Extending what happens in families, it is possible to imagine that a similar dynamic occurs in family businesses.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, psychic transmission can occur intergenerationally and transgenerationally. In intergenerational transmission, there is the possibility of transformation, modification, and adaptations to be undertaken by the subject in psychological terms when what is transmitted passes from one generation to another, according to Granjon (2001). In turn, in transgenerational transmission, what is transmitted cannot be transformed by the subject and, consequently, cannot be psychically integrated, tending to repeat itself.

Psychic inheritance, in its positive and negative aspects, is little discussed or recognized in the business world. However, possibly due to the strength of psychic transmission, it becomes a relevant variable in the fate of family businesses. The subject who inherits a company as an asset to manage also inherits a professional life project, embedded in a worldview developed over the generations of their family. Depending on the subjective and family psychological context, they will have a greater or lesser degree of awareness of this project. The degree of freedom they will have to make the project their own will depend on complex and specific psychic circumstances. In an era of extremely rapid and dizzying changes in the business and economic environment, and on the other hand, of substantial social transformations, including regarding new family formats, generational transmission can have complex consequences for family businesses, for the businesses themselves, and for the families that run them.

As previously seen, the role of the leader is fundamental. The way they communicate and transmit their values can make a difference in succession processes and, ultimately, in the organization's destiny. Given this, the objective of the present work was to investigate cultural traits of family-owned companies in the school sector and the possible relationships between such traits and the values of their founders. This work was developed from a broader research on narratives and cultural traits of family-owned companies in the school sector, whose methodology used will be described below.

3. METHODOLOGY

Four schools located in the city of Rio de Janeiro or neighboring municipalities were studied. The researched schools serve the middle layers of the population and have quite different sizes, in terms of number of employees and students, and profiles, in terms of segments served: two of them operate exclusively in the preschool and first cycle of elementary school segments, and the other two serve from preschool to high school. Despite the convenience for qualitative research, with small groups, of greater homogeneity in terms of the institutions' profiles, it was not possible to find available schools to participate in the study concentrated in the same educational segments or with a similar number of students or employees. The post-pandemic phase, with its numerous challenges for the economy, may have been one of the difficulties for the researcher to find institutions available

for the study. The pandemic was a frequent justification for refusing to participate in the research. In the future, new studies may expand the perspectives pointed out by this research.

The first of the studied schools (School 1 in Table 1, to be presented below) was formalized as an institution in the late 2010s. It is managed by two couples, who founded it motivated by the interest in educating their children, who were still in early childhood at the time, based on pedagogical pillars different from those they perceived in available schools near their neighborhoods. The school serves the preschool segment, also including the nursery phase. In pedagogical terms, the school positions itself as not having a specific approach but with foundational elements based on the appreciation of ethnic and cultural diversity, anti-racist education, free play, and the child's connection with nature.

The second researched school (School 2 in Table 1) began its activities managed by the current family in the early 1990s (before that, it had other owners). It was initially established by two sisters, whose mother was a teaching professional. Of the initial pair of sisters, only one remains in the school's management. A pedagogue, she is the school's main leader, with her husband as a partner and administrative support. The school declares itself as socio-interactionist and operates in preschool and the first segment of elementary school.

In turn, the third studied school (School 3 in Table 1) was founded in the 1950s by the parents of the current director and main leader of the school. The family's motivation to found it was to offer quality education for their son, as the neighborhood where it is located did not have alternatives at the time. The current director's mother, who has passed away, was the organization's main leader and a great reference for the institution for decades. Today, the school is already in the third generation of family members working there. The institution defines itself as socio-interactionist and operates in three segments: preschool, elementary school, and high school.

Finally, the fourth school in the research (School 4 in Table 1) was founded in the late 1960s by a then young immigrant entrepreneur, who established it as a corporation at the time by purchasing a small school. Today, the group has several school units, with the third generation of the family already working in the group. The founder remains the main leader and reference for the institution, which, like School 3, operates in three segments: preschool, elementary school, and high school. The institution declares itself to be socio-interactionist in pedagogical terms.

Participants in the research, as interviewees, included members of the owning families of the four schools, some of their directors and managers. The number of participants was determined based on the size of the schools and their staff. The interviewees were those indicated by the top leadership of the schools. Table 1 contains more details about the profile of the schools and the interviewees. To ensure confidentiality regarding their identities, the interviewees were named E1, E2, E3, E4, and so on up to E14, as also indicated in Table 1. The exact founding years of the schools were also omitted to better preserve the identity of this group of companies.

Table 1: Profile of the Schools and Interviewees.

to the Schools and the Respondents.					
School	Foundation or start of family management	Segments and No. of students	Staff	Respondents	Age and gender
1	Late 2010s	Preschool (48)	26	Partner Manager (married to one of the partners) (E1) Partner Manager (married to one of the partners) (E2) Partner Manager (married to one of the partners) (E3) Partner Manager (married to one of the partners) (E4)	F (40) M (42) F (40) M (59)
2	Early 1990s	Preschool (45) Elementary up to the 6 ^o grade (45)	20	Director and Partner (was partner with her sister / currently partner with her husband) (E5)	F (59)
3	Late 1950s	Preschool (78) Elementary 1 (346) Elementary 2 (238) High School (147)	196	General Director Partner (son of the founders) (E6) Coordinator (granddaughter of the founders) (E7) Deputy Director (E8) Preschool Supervisor (E9)	M (69) F (38) M (60) F (46)
4	Late 1960s	Multiple preschool units (over 1000 students) Elementary 1 (over 3000 students) Elementary 2 (over 2000 students) High School (over 1000 students)	1262	Partner Director and Founder (E10) General Unit Manager (E11) Shared Services Director (E12) Commercial Manager (E13) Technology Director (nephew of the founder) (E14)	M (75) F (60) M (44) M (58) M (48)

Note. F = female, M = male Source: Prepared by the authors.

A biographical form and a semi-structured interview script were used for data collection. Schools were also asked

to provide their communication materials. This documentary study was used in the research, more broadly, to understand the structure, cultural traits, and communication of the companies, but the analysis of these materials is not the subject of the present article.

In an initial approach to those responsible for the schools, they were asked to fill out the biographical form. In this document, school characteristics were identified: year of foundation; areas of operation (preschool, elementary school, high school); pedagogical approach; size (number of students and employees); legal structure; number of family members working at the school, their positions, and kinship relations with the school founders.

Once the key people available for the research were identified in each school, interviews were conducted following a semi-structured script. The script, focused on narratives, covered the following thematic axes: culture (premises, values, and cultural artifacts, such as myths and rituals); generational transmission; power and gender relations. Although the script did not include questions directly related to the Covid-19 pandemic, this theme emerged as a category in the data analysis. However, this category will not be the subject of analysis in the present article.

Due to the pandemic, the interviews were conducted online via the Zoom platform (recordings were made by the platform itself and stored securely on the researcher's personal computer). The average duration of the interviews was 45 minutes each. The interviews took place over 10 months, between the second half of 2021 and the first half of 2022. The research project was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the university where it was developed, in accordance with Opinion 75/2021 - Protocol 93/2021. Participants were asked for consent to record the interview and to agree to the Informed Consent Form.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The interview analysis was performed using the categorical content analysis method, as defined by Bardin (1977/2016). Several categories emerged from the content analysis. In view of the objectives of this work, the following categories will be presented and discussed: a school for my child; like father, like son?; and the influence of the founders' values.

A point that stood out in the interviews was the interweaving of the schools' histories with the lived experience of parenthood. The idea of creating a school project arose in two of the researched schools from the own experience of being a mother or father and the search for a school for their child. In one of the other two schools, the source of inspiration was largely the founder's own childhood and the experience of having her mother as a teacher. It is evident, at least in these three schools, the inspiration from ideals of childhood, education, and the leaders' own childhood experiences. In the fourth researched school, there was mention of the founder's youth and his life story as a whole. The following interview excerpts highlight and detail these points.

She [school name] comes about with motherhood, with fatherhood, right?! So... Me and [spouse's name], we had [child's name]. It's... Faced with that, we started dealing with a lot of reading, about parenting. About education, and me and [spouse's name] have a way of, like, really seeking [child's name]'s autonomy. Understanding child development as very connected to nature. We have similar stories from our own childhoods, with open spaces, with playing in nature [one of the school's pedagogical pillars]. (E1)

We went to visit some schools, I've always had a lot of sympathy for progressive projects, right?! Because I thought I had a very formal education, actually I was always a very shy student and that school setup with forty, fifty desks and you sitting in the back never favored me... I never, I always thought I was a bad student because of those things, you know? And then, I don't know, it took, you know, a whole academic life to realize that I could have developed in other ways and not the way I did... and what, what we think, what I practically think about early childhood, I see that (inaudible), [child's name] was the guinea pig, right?! For the school, so, it's all, all the positive things we see in [child's name]'s character, you know? Being very in touch with feelings, you know? Expressing these issues really well. I feel very fulfilled. And I wish I had gone through an education like this, you know? (E2)

Came about during pregnancy, right?! From what I, what I wanted to idealize, what I wanted [child's name] to have as an education, what I believed in, I wanted to break with some issues, yes, my own too... and reflect on some advances, some evolutions. (E3)

At [school name], I think the real driving force was the children, but as [child's name] matured and as we

experienced the internal processes, it was like a slap in the face, like, man, it's more than certain that [school name] wasn't for the kids, [school name] was for us, you know? Like that. So, like, we also realized that, the kids, obviously, were able to take advantage, right?! Of this process we went through and benefited a lot and were, I think, very happy at [school name], but like, [school name] also served, to some extent, I'll speak for myself, right?! But it was a repository of dreams and expectations regarding my professional life too. So, like, I still really want to be at [school name]... I still really want to make, make [school name] grow. I still have, I still have passion for [school name]... [school name] is still in a place of passion, you know? (E3)

It's... actually the school, it, it was born, like, without being very thought out, right?! Actually, there wasn't a prior project from any of the four of us of... you know? My dream is to have a school... no, it wasn't like that, right?! It didn't happen that way, actually it was born from a real need, right?! That we, like, didn't realize before having our own kids, right?! (E4)

My mother wasn't a trained teacher, and I have more [number of sisters], sisters who are older than me [...] a little adaptation problem at school led them to place the four of us here [says the name of the neighborhood], in an old traditional school run by nuns, and my mother decided to found a school. At the time, she went to the education department, she found a specialized teacher who became my first teacher, Teacher [teacher's name], and in a small room with eight more students from known families, she started [says the name of the school]. (E6)

I see that it [the school] was born from the issue of love for one's child. I think that's... the interesting thing about the school, right? The founder, I can say the founders, right? When they decided to start the school, it was to offer their child a resource that wasn't available here in the area, right? [Name of the neighborhood] was a rural area, let's put it that way, right? Sixty years ago, when I arrived in [neighborhood] a little over 30 years ago, which is roughly how long I've been working [audio cut], it was still a bit rural; today it has grown. It hasn't lost much of its small-town neighborhood characteristics, but I imagine that starting a school to serve the community seemed very timely, to offer quality, since the options here were very limited, right? Due to the distance from... other neighborhoods, right? (E8)

She was a very important person; all my memories when I started teaching in early childhood education are... the flashes came flooding back, you know? The flashes of what I had experienced in my childhood with her. Those tables of..., she worked for the municipal government, right? So those varied tables, those huge municipal classrooms, the rooms are wonderful, right? From the schools, and so, the diverse work at a table in early childhood education. She was working with one technique, then modeling clay, then paint in diverse activities, where the child even back then... and me, right? Because I came from there, not as her student, but I was there in that classroom a little before..., I studied in the same classroom where, when I was older, she taught early childhood education for years. (E5)

To the extent possible through research, no texts in the literature on family businesses were found that directly address motivational factors for this specific type of business, derived from the family's own needs, as the interviews in this study indicated. However, it seems reasonable to assume that this occurs. On the other hand, the interviewees' accounts clearly reveal motivational aspects related to their own childhood experiences and the search for what will be passed on to the next generation. In this sense, the literature points to the implication of past experiences in what will be transmitted to children (Granjón, 2001; Kaës, 2001; Magalhães, Fêres-Carneiro, 2004).

In general, the interviews raise questions about how the creation of a school responds, among other motivations, to the need to pass on to future generations alternative approaches to childhood and education based on the founders' own lived experiences in their own childhoods—their premises and values, in the terms of Schein (2004/2020), which were constructed primarily over the early stages of life. One of the interviewees clearly explains the issue of motivation for the type of business in question. At the end of her interview, when asked if she wanted to add anything to what had been asked or said, she suggests:

Well, what came to mind is understanding where this motivation of some families to open schools comes from. It seems to me that there's a relationship with the business that's very different, right?! That is, after all, a person who emerges with the motivation for that business. That business being a motivation to make money, right?! Just the education business, right?! So it seems to me, at least from other schools I know, that they had a history like [school name]. There's a greater motivation around education. Education as a principle. Anyway. Maybe some question that would help you capture more of this information. Whether this is actually a hypothesis, or not. I also

didn't think about what question you could ask. But maybe understanding if this is indeed a hypothesis, if it can be confirmed. If there's a different relationship, right?! Of these education businesses emerging from families that are connected with their children in this process, from other institutions. (E1)

As Magalhães and Féres-Carneiro (2004) state, the family is an intersubjective matrix and a means of transmitting psychic life between generations. In the search for transcendence of their own existences, individuals yearn to shape the new generations that will succeed them (Granjón, 2001). The establishment of a family business focused on education may be associated, among other reasons, with the extension of this search for generational transmission and transcendence, and this becomes even more meaningful when the possibility exists that among the students are their own children. On the other hand, from another perspective (Schein, 2004/2020), the interviewees' cultural premises related to education and childhood seem to have influenced the pursuit of establishing schools aligned with the values derived from such assumptions. For example, as explained by the interviewees from one of the schools, the pursuit of setting up a school aligned with values such as children's free play and their connection with nature seems to be influenced by their own educational and childhood experiences.

As Bacal (2013) suggests, there is a social naturalization of the expectation of inheritance of certain aptitudes or vocations by children in relation to their parents' professional activities. The phrase "like father, like son" (literally "son of a fish is a little fish"), whether true or not, has traditionally been part of social expectations regarding the talents of parents and children. Following in the professional footsteps of parents or continuing the family business brings both potential opportunities and great challenges. From a business perspective, as noted, 70% of family businesses do not survive beyond the founder's generation, and only 5% survive until the third generation (SEBRAE, 2020). From the perspective of the individual who has the possibility of succeeding their family members in the company, the first challenge may be to reconcile their own vocation and desires regarding their career and the lifestyle that professional choices entail. A path already paved by previous generations may bring some degree of security, including financial security, but it does not guarantee professional fulfillment and respectability. The following excerpts show strong identification of the individuals with their families, but also doubts or dilemmas faced in the professional choice process.

So that's the school's story, dear, daughter of a teacher, right? Education, my story brings it here. I went to public school, my mother taught preschool, and when my class ended, I'd go to my mother's classroom—she still had students—and I loved being in her room because I felt like a little teacher too, you know? And all my life, at home, you know? So it's a passion, right? People say my eyes light up when I talk about education, and it's true. (E5)

And I started working at an engineering firm [after graduating in engineering]. My father retired from the army and studied pedagogy to help here at the school, my mother here at the school, and he became the pedagogical director. My mother had a health issue and gathered the family, said she was going to close the school, I said, "No, you opened it because of me, I'll study pedagogy and help you." I left engineering, studied pedagogy, and I've been here ever since. (E6)

I started as acting director, worked... of course, I learned a lot from them, from both of them, and today I consider myself the guardian of the philosophy they implemented back then, right? During that period. (E6)

Well... because my mother worked here, I was a younger student, she sometimes needed to stay a bit longer, right? So I'd hang out here, stay in the yard during others' recess, right? From, from the... the other shift, right? I knew everyone, talked to everyone, felt really comfortable. Sometimes I even spent more time here than at my own house. It was so much my first home that it wasn't even a second home—it was more like my first home than my actual home. And I see a bit of that in my son, right? Of course people are different, right? But my son is way too comfortable [laughs], right? He's also very sociable, knows everyone, talks to everyone, knows everyone, right? (E7)

To have a boss that people like that much, right? The employees really like him and like the [school name] family, and they always worked really hard—never took advantage of the situation... "because my uncle, because this, because that..." to not go in, to skip work—no, they always worked really hard, even more than others. I think because they're family, they worked more than others [...]. (E11)

So it's... I think I can start with... right now, up to the... the decision I wanted to make, right? In college, right? Of course, the story I have here with the school is much more than that, right? I've spent my whole life studying here, right? From kindergarten to third grade, so I don't know, right? Another place, right? Except here where I studied,

so I can put it this way, what came after that too, right? How was that choice made, right? It's... because my mom used to talk a lot, right? What are you going to do? What do you want to be? Oh, your grandfather is a doctor, so-and-so is this, so-and-so is that. There's always a bit of that, right? In the family, right? Why don't you follow your uncle's or your grandmother's path, right? And then, right? I used to be a bit lost, right? What am I going to do? I always liked medicine [laughs], I've always liked medicine, but if I go into a surgical center, I'll faint hard [laughs]. So, I think medicine isn't really for me, I don't think it'll work out. It's... I think about my choices, right? And I started to see, like, I've always been very involved in the school, as a student, I was always in the old student unions, right? In the olympiads [...]. (E7)

So, I've always been very involved, yeah, in all the school's processes, like... when I was a student, I enjoyed it, and it wasn't anyone telling me: "Go on, go on because you're family...". No, none of that, I went because I wanted to, and then I started thinking about that decision moment: wow, why not, maybe, I stay here, right? [...] I graduated, right at the very beginning of my pedagogy studies, I was already interning here, I started very early, so I went through all, practically all the school's environments, right? (E7)

The doubt regarding professional choices that arises in the individuals themselves from the new generations of owner families about whether to follow their relatives' business path or not finds an echo, sometimes later on, in the mistrust of their professional peers within institutions. The view of the entrepreneur's children, grandchildren, or other relatives can be composed of expectations or even mistrust (Lodi, 1978; Seabra, Santos, Tajra, 2022). The following statements demonstrate some hesitations, mainly regarding the third generation of families. The interviewees' identities will not be disclosed to better protect them in their personal and professional relationships within their institutions.

I see the current generation, the grandchildren, as... not as interested in the school as the children were. I see the grandchildren, right? The ones who work here and the ones who don't, it's... like, they don't go all out to sustain it. [...] I don't see a strong drive to keep it existing, I think that weakened a bit from the child generation to the grandchild generation in my view.

And... sometimes this generation doesn't have that willingness, so it has to be a priority. I think for you to be the president of a company, a director of a company, or a successor, first it has to be a priority—the love you have for the institution, that's in the blood, that's in the blood.

I think, because... because family won't make a mistake, right? And sometimes people do make mistakes, and because they're family, it's brushed off, and that harms the company in various ways. I think... there's no problem with family members working in the company, but it's... if you are [family], you have to be held accountable just like a regular employee. Not penalized, but face the same consequences as a regular employee, and this creates strain because people think: man, just because he's family, he can do it, I made a mistake and got penalized, you know? So that was, that is bad in any business.

Look, yeah, I think that has two sides, right? There's the pros and cons, a good side, a positive side, and like everything in life, I think there are two ways to look at it, there's also a negative side, right? The positive side is when the person is really committed; they end up having a stronger relationship because they're family, right? But when we get certain employees who don't have that commitment, right? That sense of belonging to the company, it ends up getting in the way because it becomes protectionism, right?

Yes, the institution is kind of a dream of [founder] that we watched grow. And then the generational successions have other thoughts, other minds, so at some point, there's some conflict, right? Some clashes, isn't there? These are just... simple things, right? We have here a, a... a feeling of, you know? There's the family side and the professional side, so sometimes there are difficult things to deal with, right?

I studied here since [states age] and this family issue here always creates a problem for those who are family, because I, for example, was a good student, got good grades, but I had the stigma of being [states relationship to founder]. So today we talk about bullying, back then we didn't, there weren't any comments, but I suffered that bullying because I got good grades and people said it was because I was [states degree of relationship] [...]. So I learned my whole life not to highlight that, because if I highlight that I'm [degree of relationship] [...], people don't judge me by my professional ability, they judge me by my relationship, you know?

That was the only thing I wanted to comment on. [...] we always have this thought: a saint in one's own home

doesn't work miracles, right? So, among us family members, we always have this issue: oh man, we don't have that professional value in people's eyes, because people think we're here because we're family, but that's not it. We always fight against that kind of thinking, you know?

As early as the 1970s (Lodi, 1978), the specialized literature already stated that being a family business was not a problem in itself. The main issue was the professionalization of management. Recruitment, promotion, performance evaluation, and reward processes need to be aligned with good market practices, regardless of whether family members are part of the company's staff. Technical criteria in these various stages can ensure greater comfort even for family employee members. Because, as can be seen in the interviewees' statements, distrust regarding the fairness of the position they hold or how family members are treated in the company can bring some discomfort in their daily professional lives or even compromise the organizational environment.

A standout among the company's processes, the succession process is a key point (SEBRAE, 2017). It carries risks of disruptions in terms of the organization's sustainability and family relationship rifts. As Rodrigues (2019) states, there is sometimes even a certain awkwardness regarding the founder themselves, since the succession process brings with it the idea of their departure from leadership or their repositioning within the institution (such as moving that leadership to the board of directors). To mitigate risks and transform the succession process into something viable, in all senses, for the organization, there are currently a range of studies and solutions proposed by theorists and consultancies to guide the company during these times (Seabra, Santos, Tajra, 2022).

The presence of the founding leadership values of the school was very evident in the research. The following statements are excerpts from interviewees from the two schools that have existed for longer. The presence of the founders' values in the institutions is referenced in the statements. In line with what has been stated in other works (Bertero, 1996; Schirato, 2000), the organization's culture seems to be strongly influenced by the values of its founders, even after the initial establishment phase of the business.

Yes, definitely, there has been an evolution, right? So I think there isn't as much strictness in some things, but others, regarding discipline... it's a school that has always been characterized by the [inaudible] use of uniforms. Now, these days, we have a 9^o grade that already wears jeans with a white blouse that says [school name], so there has been some flexibility. We still maintain the uniform in terms of timing; if you're late, the gate closes, [...] you have to wait to get in. It's... movement around the school, speaking softly, respecting others, greeting people, eating with others, moving around... all of that has always been [inaudible], which is why the school remains. That's exactly why parents come here, even from far away, because they ask: "Is [school name] still the same, right? Kind of like a military-style thing." Look, there has been some flexibility because time has passed a bit, but when it comes to rules and norms, the school definitely stays the same: enforcing the uniform, respect, order, order in the hallways, using cell phones in the classroom... those are enforced. (E9)

Oh, today and always, right? The brains behind the school has always been [founder's name]; today he has [number of children] who are with him, directly involved in the school's administration [...] they are the [...] maintainers, they are the ones who make the final decisions, who call the shots... (E12)

Because... he built this from nothing, so even though [founder's name] is [states age] years old, he's... someone who's on the front lines, very active, [...], so he has a really good business sense, but his passion is education. So he wants to be involved in all the processes, he's here every day, and he still has this feeling that everything has to go through him, you know? (E12)

You know, the foundation of our family institution is [founder's name]; he's the main pillar of this entire structure, and he has a mind that's very focused not just on the school business... no, actually, I don't think he even sees this as a company that has to make a profit, right? He approaches this work as truly a pleasure to be here, right? To promote education. He feels really good interacting with families and knowing that generations have come through his school, right? Not through the company, but through his school. So he really instills that in us, right? He's a very kind, very attentive person, and I think what he conveys to the company itself are these values: attention, being in contact with families, being close to his clients, who he actually treats like family, not like clients, right? These are the values he associates with the school, and I think everyone ends up adopting them, right? His presence here is very important, right? (E13)

As mentioned earlier, from Schein's (2004/2020) perspective, organizational culture has three layers, the deepest of which consists of premises or assumptions. From this layer derive the organization's values and norms, making

this second level more easily perceived. Finally, even more visibly, come the artifacts of culture (rites and symbols, among others). In the highlighted statements, the founders' values are evident, such as the value of discipline, effort, work, charity, and education itself, which translate into artifacts like the requirement of uniforms, dedication to work, and involvement with the school institution beyond a business, as a social investment in education. The two oldest schools in the investigated group have existed for more than five decades. One of them no longer has its founders (who have passed away); however, despite the time elapsed and necessary flexibilities, both institutions do not seem to have strayed from the framework in terms of the values of their first and main leaders.

5. CONCLUSION

Studies on organizational culture have been arousing the interest of academics, leaders, human resources professionals, and other corporate areas of companies for decades. Similarly, the role of the organization's leader or founder in terms of influence and ability to forge a culture has been extensively studied. Schein (2004/2020), one of the main references in this field, as seen in the present work, emphasizes the importance of viewing culture as a shared product of group learning. It is from the sharing of this learning that, according to the author, the sense of belonging, cohesion, and group identity arises. The leader's role, in turn, is of paramount importance in communicating and facilitating this sharing (Bloes, 2022). It is usually up to the leader to give voice to the institutional narrative, make it explicit in their discourse, share it, but above all, live it in their way of acting and deciding (Taylor, 2016).

Family businesses have the peculiar characteristic of incorporating into their culture aspects related to traits of two institutions: the company and the family. As Bacal (2013) points out, family emotional bonds between grandparents, parents, and children can, despite conflicts or dissonances, facilitate identification with professional activities and, consequently, as highlighted in this article, possibly also with the family's businesses. In the studied schools, which are family businesses, it was possible to perceive inspiration in life stories, the vision of childhood, and expectations regarding education from the generation of descendants for the founding and management of the companies. The schools were structured based on their founders' values, probably, in Schein's (2004/2020) terms, values nurtured by their premises regarding childhood and education.

In the researched companies, especially the older ones, it was also possible to perceive the maintenance, despite the years, of values brought to the institution by their founding leaders—values that have now spanned three generations. The challenge, then, pointed out by the interviewees themselves and especially aimed at successor leaders, is twofold. In a way, the new generations need to perpetuate the values that helped found the organization and have allowed it to sustain itself over time. But they also need, concomitantly, to make the organization flexible and sufficiently open to social transformations. Maintaining the organization's identity—the founders' legacy—and at the same time transforming it, bringing subjective elements of their own that are synchronous with the present and with what is envisioned for the future, seems to be the incentive for the new generations.

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