

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND THE FAMILY BUSINESS*

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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews the literature on organizational culture in family business by tracing its origin in organization studies and its importation to family business field. Despite the vast literature in the last three decades, cultural inquiries in family business have not come a long way. To date, research on family business culture are heavily dominated by functionalist/integrationist perspective that assumes culture as coherent and shared values. The paper suggests future research to examine the multidimensionality of family business, utilize ethnographic methods to go ‘under-the-surface’ and achieve deeper immersion in the field, and take critical stances of culture to understand family business.

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1. INTRODUCTION

If the history of the social world is drawn in a single continuous line, we will find ourselves living only on its fraction—at the very front. The trail is long, rooted as far back as the earliest time of human history and it is, at the same time, always in process. Values, norms, behaviors, languages, all these are products of social interaction that we inherit, produce, and continuously reproduce. And for these, social scientists ascribe them under one umbrella term: culture.

To speak about culture is to acknowledge its pervasiveness. In fact, it is very difficult to associate culture exclusively as one thing or another. Culture can be understood as conceptual (in shared beliefs, values, and norms) and also practical (in patterns of behavior) (Geertz, 1973). Culture can be regarded as an objective reality (objectified in forms such as institutions or artifacts) but also a subjective one (the meanings are perceived differently by individuals) (Dyer, 1988). Culture can also be seen as something that an organization has (as a variable) or something that an organization is (as a metaphor) (Smircich, 1983). However, putting the variety aside for a moment, what it brings to light is that culture lies in the process of social interaction. Linstead and Mullarkey (2003, p. 4) once remarked that culture ‘arises as much from the *shared interaction* and practice of bodies as from the shared symbols of minds’ (emphasis added). In other words, everything that occurs during the interaction between individuals can be seen as culture, be it the language that people speak, the way people speak the language, the way people behave, and organization itself. If culture is a process that appears in every interaction, then to talk about organization—either as an institution or an action—one cannot escape to touch upon culture.

Among many forms of organization, family business has been receiving an increasing awareness and legitimacy as a field of study during the last 20 years (Sirmon, 2014). Sharma, Melin and Nordqvist (2014) position the overarching aim of family business studies as ‘to build knowledge on one specific type of organizations—the family business.’ Two major points are stressed from this statement: knowledge building process, and the family business as a context. On the attempt for knowledge building, Berger and Luckmann (1967) in their book about the sociology of knowledge, emphasize that ‘only with the appearance of a new generation can one properly speak of a social world.’ In other words, the social world is incomplete without the presence of the new generation. Of course, in reality it is impossible to isolate the social world from the new generations. But when *speaking* about the social world, the fact that we incorporate the intergenerational interaction marks its totality. The various interaction between and within the children, parents, and grandparents are what make the social world complex and more complete. Consequently, if the purpose of family business studies is to build knowledge on the family business, we are actu-

ally not only in the process of understanding family business per se; we are also in the process of, to a certain degree, understanding the (wider) social world.

What all these have to do with culture? There are two reasons. First, *family business* contains intergenerational interaction where the parents and their descendants are continuously in the process of culture (re)production. To recall from the earlier that culture is a process that appears in every interaction, the presence of both the horizontal and vertical generational interaction in family business may enrich and complicate the culture of this type of organization. Second, family *business* is a form of economic institution that operates under its own *raison d'être*, which adds another layer of cultural complexity. Thus, *family business* can be regarded as a holistic micro-environment of the wider social world where the social, economic, and political factors are intertwined. And from organizational culture studies, there are vast examples showing that cultural analysis holds the power to cut across these social, economic, and political issues (Clement, 1994; Hallett, 2003; Riad, 2005). Fruitful potentials lie ahead through the application of cultural theories in family business where both family business and organizational culture studies would benefit.

Throughout its development, family business as a field of study has been successful in importing theories from the adjacent fields such as organization theories, strategic management, and entrepreneurship (Sirmon, 2014). However, the contribution that family business domain have exported to other fields remains very limited. Against this background, this chapter serves to answer why it is increasingly important—and inevitable—to adopt cultural approach in family business settings, both as a way to advance our understanding of family business and to contribute to the larger field of social science. To fulfill its purpose, this chapter is organized in three sections that cover the past, present, and (possible) future of organizational culture in family business. The first section presents the historical overview of organizational culture in general. In this section, the different streams of research are outlined which cover the proliferation of perspectives in understanding organizational culture. On the second section, we bracket the cultural discussion within family business settings to get a narrower but deeper look on how culture has been used and exploited in family business research. We try to answer what and how does family business bring significance in understanding organizational culture, and how does culture help in understanding family business better. To close, the third section reflects upon the future challenges and possibilities of cultural approach in family business research.

2. THE ORIGIN AND PROGRESSION

The discourse on organizational culture has enjoyed rapid momentum on 1980s, which coincides with the rising success of Japanese corporations and the West's interest—more specifically the US—to reinvigorate their companies' performance (Alvesson, 2013). While the academia in business administration have been studying organizational culture since 1940s (Alvesson & Berg, 1992), popular management books such as those by Ouchi (1981) and Peters and Waterman (1982) had helped to proliferate the interest on cultural research in business settings. And along with these, the concept of organizational culture is also widely defined. Schein (1983), for example, defines culture as 'the pattern of basic assumption that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration.' This pattern of assumption, he adds further, is passed through new members as the way to frame and understand the problems. Schein emphasizes culture as a tool for coping with the reality, and it echoes Pettigrew (1979) who argues that culture is the system of collectively accepted meanings 'for people to function within any given setting.' In a similar vein, Pettigrew stresses the contextual dependence where culture ensures the functioning of a group of individuals in their respective context. Other scholars itemize culture into several constituting parts. Dyer (1988), for example, views that culture is comprised of artifacts, perspectives, values, and assumptions. In addition, Shrivastava (1985) categorizes cultural products (or artifacts) into myths and sagas, language systems and metaphors, symbolism, ceremony and rituals, and value systems and behavior norms. Encompassing all these, a simpler definition is offered by Alvesson and Berg (1992) where culture can be understood as 'a collection of shared norms, beliefs and value structures' or succinctly as 'shared values' and 'joint conceptual frameworks.' These definitions seem to converge to the point where culture is (1) contextually bound and (2) coupled with some degree of sharedness among the members. In summary, then, it is appropriate to consider that organizational culture is the lens that is produced, used and shared by organization members to interpret the reality around them.

While the definitions of organizational culture may achieve a certain degree of convergence, culture differs most fundamentally in its metaphorical assumptions about organizations. Smircich (1983) proposes that, fundamentally, culture can be understood either as variable or as a root metaphor for conceptualizing organization. Culture as variable assumes organizations as analogous to organisms or machines and culture is among the components that ensure its operability. Here, culture is either an independent or dependent, external or internal, organizational variable: it is something an organization *has*. Conversely, culture as a root metaphor goes beyond the organismic metaphor and view organizations as expressive forms, man-

ifestations of human consciousness (Smircich, 1983). In other words, it is something an organization *is*.

Starting from that point, other parts of organizational culture research are much divergent and difficult to reconcile. Ontological difference among scholars in this field results in studies that are generally stretched in three different directions: technical (positive), practical (interpretive), and emancipatory (critical) (Alvesson, 2013). Positive-oriented scholars operationalize culture as a variable in organizations and measure it against performative ends. That is, whether certain types of culture lead to better or worse organizational performance—mostly in financial terms. In this stance, culture is assumed to be singular, frequently labeled as strong or weak (Gordon & DiTomaso, 1992; Denison, Lief & Ward, 2004), and with the notion that unhealthy culture can be replaced with the healthy one to pursue better performance and efficiency (Meek, 1988). Here, culture is a property that an organization *has*. Interpretive-oriented scholars, on the other hand, are more concerned about the role that culture plays in the understanding of organization members. ‘Meaning-making’ is the central keyword for the interpretivists and scholars are interested in the process in which culture is construed to be meaningful (or meaningless) within the organizational life. Different from the positivists that tend to reduce culture as singular, interpretivist scholars often assume that an organization *is* culture and that several overlapping cultures may coexist in an organization (we will return to this later).

Nevertheless, both the positivists and interpretivists share a similar assumption that legitimates management as a domineering institution towards its members. The triumph of scientific management since the industrial revolution had marked its superiority in achieving high performance through its division of labor and segregation of class (Alvesson, Bridgman & Willmot, 2009). There lies a taken-for-granted assumption that the capital owners may rightfully exploit the labors. While this has been proven as effective and efficient in our times of ever-increasing consumption, it has been argued that the culture of modern management impoverishes and discriminates human lives (Willmot, 1993). As a response to this, critical-oriented scholars try to counter-balance the repressive side of modern management. Criticalists argue that culture formation privileges some parties while discriminating others in the process, and thus liberation of unnecessary constraints for the disadvantaged ones is needed. In this stance, critical-oriented scholars seek to explore and reveal the unnecessary social sufferings that is emerged through the culture in the organization (Alvesson, 2013).

Another area in organizational culture research that has significant differences (even disputes) is on epistemological level. That is, the theoretical frameworks and methodologies used to inquire culture (Martin, 1992;

Martin, Frost & O'Neill, 2006; Prasad & Prasad, 2009). Martin (1992) argues that researchers subjectively see culture in three different perspectives; these are labeled as integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspective. The integration perspective, she explains, assumes that culture is characterized by unity, convergence and agreements that are shared among organization members. Organization-wide consensus is sought in this perspective whereas ambiguity is excluded. The differentiation perspective, on contrary, assumes that consensus only appears in the level of sub-cultures. The organization as a whole is seen as composed with cultural differences and this perspective channels ambiguity as something outside subcultures. Finally, the fragmentation perspective assumes that complex, multiple views are prevalent which cannot be easily distinguished as consistent or inconsistent. There is no organization-wide consensus and, instead, the organization is filled with ambiguities.

During its course of progression, these three perspectives have been struggling to claim its superiority over another. It must be maintained, however, that Martin's (1992) initial purpose by delineating these three perspectives was not to reify and pigeonhole the research field into this or that perspective. The boundaries, she argues, are permeable and some cultural research extend across perspectives (for example, see Meyerson & Martin, 1987). Multiple cultures may exist in an organization and it is not always easy to fit certain culture exclusively as integration, differentiation, or fragmentation. Without going too much further about the differences in the school of thoughts, acknowledgment and appreciation are needed for scholars to set a common ground and start a constructive conversation, not to dethrone those whichever deemed to be 'the winner' (Martin, et al., 2006).

Organizational culture studies are rich with its divergent research streams. While the academia have been debating whether one perspective is more appropriate than another, the field itself has tremendously benefited from the conversation among these varying point of views. For example, in general business settings, culture has been applied to understand organizational identity, strategy and marketing, leadership, and organizational change (Alvesson, 2013). That is a good news; more and more areas of the social worlds are being unraveled. This includes—more importantly—the field of family business. With the presence of multiple generation as a hallmark of the social world's totality (Berger & Luckmann, 1967), family business is a strategic context where plenty about the social world can be learned through cultural studies. Now it is timely, then, to focus the discussion by taking a closer look on how culture-related studies have been performed in family business settings.

3. ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN FAMILY BUSINESS STUDIES

Fletcher, Melin and Gimeno (2012) in their review of family business culture highlight that studies in this area have been revolving around the conceptualization of culture in family business context, the role of culture in family business, and factors that affect culture together with the effects caused by cultural processes. While these have been useful in providing an exposé of the scope of cultural inquiries in family business settings, it did not touch upon the subtle but important aspect of assumptions underlying the research that might span across these three aspects. Assumption-level analysis that makes the implicit explicit is important since it may open up research areas that are previously obscured and unquestioned (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). Hence, to augment Fletcher et al. (2012) and by borrowing the theoretical frameworks by Smircich (1983) and Martin (1992), I intend to dissect the current state of research in family business culture in roughly two levels. First, the level of underlying metaphor whether culture is viewed either as a manageable variable or as a root metaphor in family firms. Second, the level of perspective implied in the studies whether culture is understood through integration, differentiation or fragmentation perspective. These two levels are selected with the aim to shed light to which extent scholars are (re)producing the basic assumptions on family business culture, to identify the areas that are still left in the dark, and consequently to reveal the potential for further inquiry.

3.1 Family business culture as a manageable variable versus a root metaphor

Until recently, the majority of the research in family business culture stem from the positivistic approach with managerial interests. It is shown by a growing number of studies within the last fifteen years that put more emphasis on the importance of culture in understanding family business performance. From the resource-based view perspective, culture is claimed to be a 'goldmine' for family firms' competitive advantage (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Zahra, Hayton & Salvato, 2004; Zahra, 2005). It is regarded as 'an important strategic resource that family firms can use to achieve a competitive advantage by promoting entrepreneurship and enhance the distinctiveness of these firms' products, goods, and services' (Zahra, et al., 2004, p. 373). Specifically, the family firms' culture that values commitment to the business is found to be positively associated with strategic flexibility—described as the ability to pursue new opportunities and respond to threats in the competitive environment—and the effect is amplified when coupled with stewardship-oriented organizational culture (Zahra, Hayton, Neubaum, Dibrell & Craig, 2008). This, in turn, is proven to be translated to the bottom-line performance where family business culture is stronger and

promote better financial performance than cultures found in non-family businesses (Denison, et al., 2004).

Family business culture is also attributed as a critical factor in areas other than financial performance. In the context of the intergenerational interaction, organizational culture plays an important role on the success or failure of family firms' succession (Handler & Kram, 1988; Miller, Steier & Le Breton-Miller, 2003). In addition, Salvato and Melin (2008) suggest that nurturing a culture of individual commitment to the family business across generations generate long-term strategic outcomes even in families with limited access to resources. A similar account is also voiced in the study from a Spanish context that family firms' values such as commitment, long-term orientation and harmony provide a value-based cultural model that reduces or even eliminates the high risk of mortality in every generational transition (Vallejo, 2008). Through a comparative study, Vallejo (2008) found that family firms possess greater levels of commitment and harmony as well as stronger long-term orientation compared to non-family firms. This is further affirmed by Duh, Belak, and Milfelner (2010) where they found a significant cultural difference between family and non-family firms, i.e., family firms have a stronger clan culture characteristics—a more personal and family-like work environment with high level of mutual trust.

Other studies suggest that family business culture is best understood in collaboration with leadership. Based on Dyer's (1986) cultural framework, the success of intergenerational transitions in family business settings is found to involve collaborative style of leadership and participative business cultures (Stavrou, Kleanthous & Anastasiou, 2005). That is, a leadership style that is characterized by extroversion (as opposed to introversion), logical thinking (as opposed to emotional), sensibleness and decisiveness. A study by Sorenson (2000) that is also based on Dyer's (1986) work points to the similar notion where participative leadership is related to both family and business outcomes as well as to employee satisfaction and commitment. Finally, a leadership study by Eddleston (2008) extends the work by Zahra et al. (2008) and argues that family firm culture intervenes the effect of transformational leadership towards strategic flexibility.

The aforementioned studies represent the category where culture is treated as a manageable variable. More specifically, it is seen as a variable for two meanings: as a variable that is significantly different from its non-family businesses counterpart, and as a variable that is significant to ultimately influence the family firms' performance. Research that assume culture as a variable are signaled by the technical interest in the family firms' (financial) performance and most are written with normative overtone. This implies that manipulation of culture is expected to improve family firms' performance, which then concludes that family business culture should be leveraged to achieve better performance and longevity in the

long run.

However, interpretive studies are required to unravel the nuanced complexity in the seemingly straightforward mechanism between culture and performance. And when an interpretive orientation is introduced, culture is seen not merely as a component that family firms have but, beyond that, as a metaphor that points up the processual nature for organization and signifies its temporal and spatial embeddedness. Linstead and Mullarkey (2003) eloquently express this notion:

Embedded in *durée*, or experienced duration, it [culture] must be constantly in process and change, affected by and in a movement of tension and relaxation with and between individuals, and characterized by the working out of creative evolution, or cultural innovation, within the wider unfolding of time. (p. 4)

Here, Linstead and Mullarkey (2003) highlight that culture is a process that engenders negotiation, evolution, and innovation with contextual dependence. Metaphorically, culture as a process stresses organization not for its instrumental ends, but to signify organization as a social (inter)action.

In family business context, culture as a root metaphor sheds light not onto the eventual results (i.e. financial performance), but onto other processes (e.g. entrepreneurship and change). Chirico and Nordqvist (2010) put forward that family business culture fosters dynamic capabilities (and implicitly entrepreneurship) that is defined as processes designed to acquire, exchange, transform and shed internal and external resources. However, Hall, Melin and Nordqvist (2001) argue that particular cultural patterns within family business promote entrepreneurial process while other patterns tend to preserve the traditional way of doing business. In addition, they add that family business culture is not static, but always in process and dynamic in nature. To understand these dynamics, organizational culture in family business need to be viewed in three-dimensional categories that acknowledge the degree of explicitness, number of family member(s) influencing the culture and the degree of culture openness (Hall, et al., 2001).

Moving a little away from the business performance side, a study by Danes and Morgan (2004) focuses on the relational tensions of work-family life between husbands and wives in family business-owning couples. Psychologically, they analyze the tensions between husbands and wives in five areas of justice conflict, role conflict, work/family conflict, identity conflict and succession conflict. The study embraces the complexities that arise from these tensions and found that disruptions in attachment are the roots of those difficulties. Danes and Morgan's (2004) study suggests that business-owning couples who are in moderate or great distress would benefit most by seeking assistance from couple therapists with knowledge in both family business dynamics and emotionally focused therapy. López (2012)

takes the issue of work-family balance in business families simultaneously with gender, transnationalism and ethnicity. Through intensive fieldwork on Chinese women in Spain, she reveals a kind of transnational motherhood that situates the mothers primarily in their productive dimensions of work-family balance strategy. The conciliation strategies between the productive and reproductive work are found to depend on the different phases of the family business path which comprised of start-up phase, consolidation phase and expansion phase (López, 2012).

After exploring and analyzing the extant cultural studies in family business through the dichotomous lens of culture as a variable/root metaphor, we will now shift to the second level of analysis and see how the studies in family business culture have taken the integration, differentiation or fragmentation perspective.

3.2 Integration, differentiation and fragmentation perspectives in family business culture

When superimposing Smircich's (1983) cultural metaphors with Martin's (1992) cultural perspectives, there is an implicit tendency that culture as variable goes hand in hand with the integration perspective of culture. For research to be able to say something about culture as a variable, culture needs to be summarized in a coherent and unitary way. This is neatly facilitated by the integration perspective where unity, convergence and agreement are sought after (Martin, 1992). Hence, the voice of the founders, family members, CEOs, and/or top management are assumed to be sufficient to represent the culture of the entire organization. As can be seen in Table 1, all the 'culture as a variable' studies are taking integrationist perspective.

While the integration perspective are abundant, research in family business culture that undertake differentiation and fragmentation perspective remain scarce. Among the limited number of research using these perspectives, a study by Ainsworth and Cox (2003) steps away from the mainstream managerial interest and adopt a critical interpretive approach to explore how forms of control and resistance need to be understood in relation to their local contexts. Here, by focusing on employees perspective, cultural division is the interest, not unity; difference, not similarity. Another study by Fletcher (2002) assumes a social constructionist paradigm to understand how individuals attribute value and meaning to their interactions with co-workers in the workplace. In her rather 'dark' picture of organizational culture in family business, she reveals that an organization has a system of cultural organizing as an unseen—but real—force that can expel its members if they are not fitting in. So strong was this force that the top-down organizational change attempts from the top management ended up putting its initiators on an 'electric chair' (Fletcher, 2002).

By utilizing the power of narrative analysis, Wigren (2003) and Hamilton

(2013) are able to capture the ambiguities in cultural formation. Despite their contextual difference (between Gnosjö, Sweden and North England respectively), their works bring to light that meanings are continuously negotiated and always open for re-interpretation. Following Martin (1992), these studies value the presence of multiple views where the degree of consistency is difficult to be strictly classified. For this reason, fragmentation perspective is seemed to be more complex—as compared to the other two perspectives—in seeing family business culture.

[Table 1 goes here]

3.3 The significance of family business settings for organizational culture studies

The context of family business underlines that the sphere of the organizational (work) life cannot be detached from the domestic (family) life. For a broader organizational culture studies, this signifies two key messages: (1) the inextricable cultures of the family and the business where some values may be congruent and advantageous while some others may be a potential source of conflicts, and (2) the intergenerational property in cultural studies. In research, this means that family culture needs to be given more space in the foreground and inquiries to the tension and relaxation between the two spheres (between the family and the business, and between the new and old generations) may lead to a better understanding of the organizational culture. To give an example, an inspiration can be drawn from Bråten's (2013) study from the field of sociology. In his ethnographic study on Javanese (Indonesia) micro family firms, he reveals that the 'market', the 'economic' and the 'social' spheres are mostly intertwined in complex ways, and that understanding the socio-cultural domains are important. These realms are embedded, he argues, hence business domain cannot be fully understood without incorporating the social and cultural domains and vice versa. The implication is critical: it suggests that organizational culture scholars, especially those in family business studies, need to enter into these *three levels of reality* to have a holistic understanding of this micro-firms' embeddedness.

From a paradigmatic level, it is suffice to say that the combination between positivistic and interpretivistic studies—and between culture as a variable and culture as a root metaphor—provide a fuller account in illustrating the nuanced and complex nature of the culture in family business. The understanding of the mechanistic relationship between organizational culture and its neighboring components such as succession, leadership and entrepreneurship need to be paired with the organic understanding that

culture is dynamic and always in process. Table 1 presents the selected (non-exhaustive) works in family business culture studies in a bird's-eye view to help the reader to give sense on how the studies are grouped under the analytical lenses of metaphors and perspectives. On the final section that follows, we will touch upon the future challenges and possibilities in our efforts to better understand family business culture.

4. FUTURE CHALLENGES AND POSSIBILITIES

In this chapter I have presented the origin and progression of organizational culture followed by a bracketed discussion in the field of family business studies. Re-interpretation of a classic by Berger and Luckmann (1967) is provided to underline the significance of intergenerational interaction in family business culture inquiry. Family business is rich in culture with its vertical and horizontal generational interaction. That said, family business—as a type of organization and as a field of study—yields a promising potential in the social sciences arena to extend our understanding of the wider social world beyond the realm of business. However, cultural inquiries in family business have *not* come a long way since thirty years ago when Dyer (1986) firstly introduced the conceptual foundation of family business culture. While, in organization studies, the struggle of the three perspectives (integration, differentiation, and fragmentation) are fierce and prominent, the presence of these perspectives in family business research is rather one-sided and dominated by the managerial-oriented integration perspective. Our agenda of family business culture research needs re-orientation and re-balancing. To make an impact, aspiring researchers should be well aware of this and dare to take the path less traveled (yet strategic).

Theoretically, Danes (2014) projects that future research on family business studies should be directed to be more process-focused, multidisciplinary, and moving away from firm financial performance towards multidimensional sustainability. It means not only that multiple theoretical point of views need to be acknowledged, but multiple voice within the family business also need to be fairly represented. The voice of non-family and non-manager employees as cultural members in the organization are as important as the families and managers. From the family business owners/managers' side, attention must be paid to the below-the-surface family culture. By taking these into account, it is hoped that the multidimensionality of family business will be better illustrated and analyzed. In this light, cultural research deemed not only to be necessary, but it is also inevitable to be carried out as an integrative framework that straddle across multiple disciplines.

Methodologically, more daring scholars can learn from the field of sociology and/or anthropology to carry out a more imaginative research. Some, but not many, have performed ethnography-inspired research that con-

tributed a new way to understand family businesses as well as business families (Fletcher, 2002; Wigren, 2003; López, 2012; Bråten, 2013). This method of inquiry needs empowering. Ethnography has been the way to produce thick descriptions of culture and ethnographic research in family business puts family and processes at its center. Hence, corresponding to Danes (2014), the possibilities for more process-focused and multidisciplinary research are wide open. Even if not to the extent of a full scale ethnography like the anthropologists do, more business-related ethnography such as workplace ethnography yields a promising prospect for future research.

As a way forward, there are several areas where family business studies can benefit from applying organizational culture thinking. While the extant studies have revealed that culture significantly contribute to the family firms' competitive advantage, we do not know much whether, for example, in which situation a family business culture with high-degree of unity is better or worse than family business culture with certain level of tensions. With emphasis on the cultures of both the family *and* the business, positivistic studies can direct their research to seek out the optimum threshold where the tensions between family culture and business culture may benefit organizational performance. Hence, the question should be less about asking whether family business culture affect performance, but more about how does it affect performance and in what configuration, technically, it can be achieved? Interpretive oriented scholars, on the other hand, can delve deeper into the intricacies of both realms by looking at how organizational members negotiate conflicting values and/or leverage on the congruent ones. What are the particular themes that may emerge by looking into both cultures of the family and the business? Are these issues similar or different from small- to large-sized family firms? What processes are involved? And how organizational members try to resolve the tensions? These are among the questions that can be posed as a starting point.

Finally, a big opportunity lies for studies that take a critical stance. We must not forget that the presence of family business is not only to serve economic purpose, and our role as a researcher is not only instrumental to our subject's economic ends. Family business is also a context of social interaction where meaning is construed and power is exercised. In this area, our knowledge about how culture produce power asymmetry in family business is still very limited. Hence, this is an open invitation for critical-inspired scholars interested in the culture of family business. It must also be maintained, however, that I am not suggesting that culture as a competitive advantage should be taken for granted and left unquestioned. As explained earlier, scholars that lean towards the interpretive-managerial interest are encouraged to explore what culture can do in family business. Constant inquiry in what we already know is always necessary. But then we have to be wary not to fall into what is lamented by Alvesson (2013), that the concept

of organizational culture tries to explain everything but consequently nothing.

Most importantly, we need to be more conscious that family businesses play a strategic role with its social, political, and cultural significance in the wider social world, more than a mere economic motive. This condition presents to us with an opportunity. Promising potentials lie in family business studies that are directed to contribute through interpretive and non-managerial interests that acknowledge multidimensional perspectives of integration, differentiation, and fragmentation. On a different account, Fletcher et al. (2012) highlight that ‘a fruitful area for future research on family business culture ... relates to critical stances towards culture.’ I agree. The contribution for the wider social world lies in our ability to critically re-question what has become a steady and convergent wisdom in the scholarship. In our effort to understand the family business culture, it translates to a reflexive research with the audacity to touch upon the subtle-yet-sensitive social and political issues.

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TABLE

Table 1: Select published works on organizational culture in family business

Type	Year	Author(s)	Cultural aspect(s)	Approach	Culture as	Perspective
JA	2004	Denison, Lief & Ward	Culture and performance of family firms vs. non-family firms	Positivistic	Variable	Integration
JA	2004	Zahra, Hayton & Salvato	Association between four dimensions of organizational culture and entrepreneurship in family firms vs. non-family firms	Positivistic	Variable	Integration
JA	2008	Vallejo	Comparative analysis of the organizational culture of family firms vs. non-family firms	Positivistic	Variable	Integration
JA	2008	Zahra, Hayton, Neubaum, Dibrell & Craig	The moderating effect of stewardship in the culture of family commitment and strategic flexibility	Positivistic	Variable	Integration
JA	2010	Duh, Belak & Milfelner	Family firms vs. non-family firms culture as a constitutional element of ethical behavior	Positivistic	Variable	Integration
JA	1988	Dyer	Categorization of cultures found in the business side of the family firm	Interpretive	Metaphor	Integration
JA	2001	Hall, Melin & Nordqvist	The role of cultural patterns in family firms entrepreneurship	Interpretive	Metaphor	Integration
JA	2008	Salvato & Melin	The role of family social capital in cross generational value creation	Interpretive	Metaphor	Integration
JA	2010	Chirico & Nordqvist	The role of organizational culture in the creation of dynamic capabilities and trans-generational value creation in family firms	Interpretive	Metaphor	Integration
JA	2012	Discua Cruz, Hamilton & Jack	Entrepreneurial cultures in family businesses	Interpretive	Metaphor	Integration
BC	2013	Bråten	Cultural embeddedness of micro family businesses	Interpretive	Metaphor	Integration
PD	2003	Wigren	Process-oriented cultural perspective in understanding the grand narrative of family firms	Interpretive	Metaphor	Fragmentation
B	2013	Hamilton	Narrative, gender and learning in family business	Interpretive	Metaphor	Fragmentation
JA	2003	Ainsworth & Cox	The use of shared understanding of divisions and difference in constituting organizational culture	Critical interpretive	Metaphor	Differentiation
JA	2002	Fletcher	Relationship between organizational networking and cultural organizing in the family firm	Critical interpretive	Metaphor	Differentiation

JA: Journal Article, BC: Book Chapter, PD: PhD Dissertation, B: Book