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Anthropology of Family Business: Ten Desiderata. In Proceedings, United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship, 27th Annual Conference

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THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF FAMILY BUSINESS: TEN DESITERATA

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Abstract

For anthropology to realize its potential for contributing to family business, what would it be like? I would emphasize 10 desiderata. These are: (1) familiarity with relevant ethnographies; (2) knowledge about kinship studies; (3) focus on important questions; (4) alertness to sources of solidarity and of conflict; (5) knowledge about human variation and possibilities; (6) attention to wider contexts; (7) systematic comparison; (8) attention to lived experiences; (9) cross-disciplinarity; and (10) methodological soundness. For these 10 properties, I outline key elements, suggest readings, and argue for their importance by considering the consequences if they were not included.

Executive Summary

For family business studies, anthropology has well developed literatures in three areas that provide it with a comparative advantage: in kinship theory and comparative kinship studies, in ethnographic studies of particular kinship systems, and in ethnographic method (up-close field research using participant observation). Moreover, family business is a topic that crosses into both business and familial subject matter. Therefore, we can hope that an anthropology of family business will evolve and prove of scholarly and practitioner use. It should attend to consequential questions, such as the ways family business leaders find opportunities in the relationships between kinship and business. Such an anthropology would alert us to variables and considerations that otherwise might not be noted. It would also help us to define the contexts for which particular findings do and do no apply.

In order for such an anthropology to emerge, its scholars would need to be competent in ten ways: (1) they would be familiar with relevant ethnographic studies, (2) knowledgeable about kinship studies, (3) focused on important questions, (4) alert to sources of solidarity and of conflict, (5) knowledgeable about human variation and possibilities, (6) attentive to wider contexts, (7) systematically comparative, (8) attentive to lived experiences, (9) cross-disciplinary, and (10) methodologically sound. Any business school scholars who would develop these competencies could make outstanding contributions to the family business field. Moreover, their writings could have a level of real-world detail that could capture the imagination of a practitioner readership.

INTRODUCTION

Is the anthropology of family business "the greatest *unutilized* resource for advancing the field of family business studies" as Stewart asserted (2003, p. 383, italics added)? Anthropology does share central interests with family business scholars (Rutherford, 2010; Stewart, 2008) but it has yet to be widely utilized. Searching family business journals (until recently just the *Family Business Review*) for a variant of "anthropology" in the abstract, we find just one article.

Searching the full text we find 21, largely incidental, references. Two articles with both family business and anthropology in the abstract appeared in *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*; none appeared in the *Journal of Business Venturing* or *Journal of Small Business Management*.

If the anthropology of family business were to realize its purported potential, what would it be like? What would be its most important properties? What would be covered in doctoral preparation? If I had a mandate to design such preparation, I would emphasize 10 desiderata. These are: (1) familiarity with relevant ethnographies, (2) knowledge about kinship studies, (3) focus on important questions, (4) alertness to sources of solidarity and of conflict, (5) knowledge about human variation and possibilities, (6) attention to wider contexts, (7) systematic comparison, (8) attention to lived experiences, (9) cross-disciplinarity, and (10) methodological soundness. For these 10 properties, I outline the key elements, propose suggested readings, and argue for their importance by considering the consequences if they were not included.

1. FAMILIARITY WITH RELEVANT ETHNOGRAPHIES

Learning the anthropology of family business could logically begin with readings in kinship theory, the most developed field of anthropology that uniquely contributes to family business studies. However, scholars starting out this way could be driven off by the opaqueness and exoticism of much of that literature (Patterson, 2005; Peletz, 1995). If instead they begin with ethnographies they could learn kinship theory incrementally and they also might find that these texts fire their own ambitions.

Family business ethnographies include no firm-level studies comparable to classic studies of non-family business such as the books by Bower (1970), Dalton (1959) and Gouldner (1954). Sorely lacking from family business research are extensive, in-depth studies by social scientists on both kinship and business *within particular firms* (Nordqvist, Hall, & Melin, 2009). Ram (1994) is a qualified exception – he studied more than one firm - made possible by his insider status in the West Midlands Asian clothing industry. Other ethnographies focus on multiple firms, such as clusters in footwear (Blim 1990) and silk goods (Yanagisako, 2002), and emigrant Chinese in the leather (Oxfeld, 1993), the textiles (Wong, 1988) and the take-away restaurant trades (Song, 1993).

Along with Ram (1994), Yanagisako (2002) is relatively attentive to business issues. This book is avowedly Marxian but family business scholars should not neglect it. Yanagisako conducted high quality fieldwork that is reflected in compelling accounts of several family firms. She is insightful on ideas such as “the conundrum of the second-generation self-made man” (pp. 90-92) and “betrayal as a factor of production” (Chapter Four). By the latter she means a kind of familial creative destruction: “In later years, as the firm matures and begins to bring in members of the second generation, limitations to firm growth and expansion fuel sentiments of distrust and suspicion, which operate as forces for the division of the firm, the diffusion of technology, and the destruction of families. Out of these processes emerge new firms, new families and new solidarities” (2002, p. 115; see also Goody, 1996, pp. 141-145, 155, 203; Kasdan 1965).

More typical of ethnographies of family firms are two books about Japanese family businesses by Japanese-American scholars, Hamabata (1990) and Kondo (1990). Each is valuable for family business scholars but neither has much information about business as such.

Their focus – Hamabata's especially – is on family not business. Despite this limitation, both of these books demonstrate that there can be much of value for family business scholars from studies that examine businesses from the family perspective. For example, these books reveal a complex "set[s] of mutual connections" between "market [and] family" (Davidoff & Hall, 1987, p. 32). Hamabata, for example, found that very wealthy Japanese women conducted economic transactions through their natal kin. This was interesting and unexpected in a strongly patrilocal society in which brides leave the geographic area of their families of orientation and affiliate with their husband's kindred instead (1990, p. 28).

A common finding in both historical and ethnographic studies is that women *apparently* play only private, domestic roles, but nevertheless influence business and public affairs, and often through networks of other women (Davidoff & Hall, 1987, pp. 202, 227; also Bruun, 1993, p. 22; Colli, Fernández Pérez, & Rose, 2003; Farrell, 1993, Chap. 4; Lomnitz & Pérez-Lizaur, 1987, p. 118; Peletz, 1995 citing Goody; Ram, 1994, pp. 132-136; Robertson, 1991, p. 41). These findings shed insights into the linkages of business and kinship. Unfortunately, however, few studies examine the kinship-business connection in depth for the implications of this connect ion *for the business*.

Suggested readings: Blim (1990); Bruun (1993); Douglass (1992); Hamabata (1990); Kondo (1990); Lomnitz and Pérez-Lizaur (1987); Marcus and Hall (1992); Oxfeld (1993); Ram (1994); Song (1999); Wong (1988); Yanagisako (2002). These works are relatively accessible. Marcus and Hall may make for heavier going but this is the only such book on American firms. For other suggestions: Rutherford (2010).

What is at stake? The bread and butter of education in social and cultural anthropology is the critical reading of ethnographies. Ethnographies create the knowledge base for theory and for comparative empirical research (Ember & Ember, 2009). They also open the minds of scholars, as they set off to create their own ethnographies, to the possibilities in method, in theory and in rhetoric (Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 2011).

2. KNOWLEDGE OF KINSHIP STUDIES

Reading ethnographies is more entertaining than slogging through kinship theory. However, there is no escaping the jargon and basic constructs of the field (e.g., affiliation, affinity, alliances). Certainly, the relationship between "family" and "kinship" needs to be understood. A preliminary working definition is provided by Harrell, for whom the family is subset of kinship: "kinship principles have ramifications beyond the family… The family is a special type of kinship group, one consisting if close relatives in close cooperation in daily life" (1997, p. 5). As scholars progress Harrell's definition will help to orient them, as they confront controversies and different views, as well as the variability and (at times) fuzziness of these concepts (e.g., Davidoff & Hall,1987, pp. 31, 216; Stafford, 2000).[i]

Similarly, scholars will come to terms with what the "old" and "new" kinship theory. This distinction parallels another one, equally stereotypical and hazy, between older and newer modes of anthropology. The former tend to write what Van Maanen (2011) termed "realist tales" and the latter try their hands art experimental modes such as "confessional", "impressionist", "critical" and "literary tales". The central distinction is the ongoing tension within anthropology between science and humanism (di Leonardo, 1991: 1). On one hand, social scientific ethnography pursues the goal of naturalist documentation; on the other hand, humanistic ethnography pursues the goals of critique or art of both (Marcus, 2010; also Lett, 1997: 1-19; Mulligan, 1987).[ii]

Stereotypically, the former is social scientific, comparative, realist and focused on broad social processes; the latter is humanistic, particularistic, interpretive, and focused on lived experiences (Patterson, 2005; Peletz, 1995). Both terms are simplifications. For example, Clifford Geertz, the most influential advocate of humanism (Kuper, 1999: Chap. 3), was adament that his approach was also scientific (1973: 15, 24). Similarly, some of the "old" kinship studies include excellent data on "new" kinship issues (e.g., Fortes, 1949) and "new" kinship studies are heterogeneous (Collard, 2000; Patterson, 2005), co-existing with relatively scientific approaches (e.g., Chapais, 2008; Jones & Milicic, 2011).

Some awareness of the history of ideas will help scholars to avoid faddishness and to recognize value in works from different eras (di Leonardo, 1991). So too might an awareness of kinship studies from different countries, especially American, British and French scholarship. (For the latter, note the special issue on family business of *Revue Française de Gestion*; e.g., Bégin, Chabaud & Richomme-Huet, 2010; French kinship studies include Collard, 2000 and Godelier, 2004.)

Another way to avoid faddishness it to recognize that kinship cannot be understood in terms of only one of the four Parsonian system levels: culture, social relationships, psychology and biology (Parsons, 1951). These distinctions matter because of an important example of faddishness, the widespread acceptance of the reduction of kinship purely to culture by David Schneider. His work was highly influential (except in France; Patterson, 2005) and it sits at the turning point between the old and new kinship studies. Scholars should be alerted to Schneider's double standard (Shimizu, 1991): a sweeping rejection of prior ethnographies as entirely projections of western concepts, combined with a cavalier disregard for evidence in his own work (Schneider, 1995, pp. 209-212; compare Feinberg, 2001; Kuper, 1999, Chap. 4; Schneider, 1980; Scheffler, 1991; Wallace, 1969; Yanagisako, 1978).

Suggested readings: For general kinship theory (Fox, 1983, Chaps. 1-3; Godelier, 2004 – English translation due this Fall; Good, 1996; Holy; 1996); for family and kinship (Creed, 2000; Harrell, 1997, Chaps. 1-3; Pine, 1996); for the "old" and "new" kinship studies (Franklin & McKinnon, 2001; Patterson, 2005; Peletz, 1995).

What is at stake? Family business carves out the distinctive subject matter of the relationships between the domains of family and business. This subject requires insights into both domains. In anthropology, the tools of the scholarly trade for understanding the familial domain are found in kinship theory. Knowledge of kinship studies is therefore not merely desirable but necessary.

3. FOCUS ON IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

A relevant anthropology of family business asks fundamental questions, such as "why does kinship exist, how does this generate ambivalence in relationships, and how does this affect family firms"? (Stewart & Miner, 2011). Another central question that presupposes some familiarity with theories about the first question is explaining the process by which entrepreneurial potential derives from the kinship-business interface (Johannisson, 2002). Anthropological answers to this question require assumptions about the first question, in order to understand in which ways the “domains” of kinship and business are distinct. They also require familiarity with foundational work in the anthropology of entrepreneurship, according to which entrepreneurs find value from creating bridges between different spheres of exchange (Barth, 1967; Stewart, 1990). Numerous ethnographies have contributed to our understanding of this process (e.g. Bruun, 1993; de Lima, 2000; Lomnitz & Pérez-Lizaur 1987; Marcus & Hall 1992; McDonough 1986; Ram 1994).

Suggested readings: For why kinship exists and why it matters (Bloch, 1971; 1973; Fortes, 1969; Lambek, 2011; Scheffler, 1991; Stewart & Miner, 2011); for the family-business interface and entrepreneurship (Barth, 1967; Johannisson, 2002; Stewart & Hitt, 2012).

What is at stake? Fields of study must shed new light on questions that interest scholars and, ultimately, practitioners if they are to thrive in research universities (Sharma, 2010; Stewart & Miner, 2011). The questions above are merely examples at the intersection of anthropology and family business, and other questions are implied in other sections of this paper.

4. ALERTNESS TO SOURCES OF SOLIDARITY AND CONFLICT

Peletz (1995, p. 355) urged us to learn “more about how and why Chinese [family firms] are able to overcome familial ambivalence in the context of economic cooperation when many other groups (e.g. Malays, Javanese, and Thais) are not” (Peletz, 1995, p. 355). This speaks to a core question in the scholarship and practice of family firms: how and why can kinship be a source of solidarity and also of conflict (Stewart, 2003). We have noted the role of differential growth in kin and of wealth (Yanagisako, 2002). As this suggests, answers require an understanding of links between kinship and property, succession and inheritance (dowry, bridewealth), formal and realized law.

An example of work in this vein is Greenhalgh’s (1994) article on power differentials within the family. Another example is Goody’s (1976) writings on “strategies of heirship” or ways to cope with a shortage of heirs. Strategies include marital choices (e.g. serial monogamy, polygyny) and incorporative practices such as adoption (Stewart, 2010). A related topic is the process of entrepreneurs who dis-embed from kinship obligations at one stage of building their ventures, but re-embed as honored community leaders later on.

Suggested readings: Besides Greenhalgh (1994), for relationships involving property, especially inheritance and succession: Finch and Mason (2000); Hann (2008); Lambek (2011); Schlegel and Eloul (1988); for (dis)embedding: Hart (1975); Stewart (1990); Watson (1985).

What is at stake? Knowledge of solidarity and conflict is vital at three levels of analysis. At the individual level, it is needed to understand differential strategies and outcomes (e.g. for majority and minority owners, males and females); at the firm level, to understand longer-term sustainability; at the population level, to understand patterns of deaths and rebirths and effects on economic growth (Stewart & Hitt, 2012).

5. ALERTNESS TO SOURCES OF VARIATION AND HUMAN POSSILIBITIES

Kinship systems share commonalities and shared constraints (e.g. the length of the human lifespan; Harrell, 1997 and Sangren, 2009), but they also vary in fundamental ways. Variance is found, we have noted, in modes of transmitting property or office. Other examples of variance are found in the cultural understanding of "family" itself (e.g. the Japanese *ie*; Shimizu, 1991); in the systems of marriage and affinity (Shapiro, 1997; Stockard, 2002); in the potential for discretion in treatment of kin (Scheffler, 2001; Stewart, 2010); and in gender and sex role expectations (Ortner, 1996; Stone, 2010). Little wonder, then, that family firms also vary across multiple dimensions (Goody, 1996; Stewart & Hitt, 2012; Yanagisako, 2002).

Suggested readings: For variation in kinship (Harrell, 1997; Pasternak, Ember, & Ember, 1997; Schusky, 1974 – a basic introduction); variation in marriage and alliances (Bao, 2008; Kuper, 2009; Shapiro, 1997; Stockard, 2002); variations in the use of and discretion about kinship (de Lima, 2000; Scheffler, 2001; Stewart, 2010; Wallman, 1975; in gender and sex roles (Ortner, 1996; Sangren, 2009; Stone, 2010).

What is at stake? Findings from one area do not necessarily apply to other areas, even in the same country (Yanagisako, 1978). Thus, one reason to comprehend variation is to avoid ethnocentric assumptions that lead to misunderstandings of family firms embedded in other kinship systems. Another key reason is to become alert to the possible variables relevant to family firm management and performance.

6. ATTENTION TO WIDER CONTEXTS

"Holism" is a controversial goal in anthropology (Thornton, 1988). However, comprehensiveness and the search for connections among phenomena are central to ethnography (Candea 2007; Stewart, 1998, p. 6-9, 25-28, 31-32, 76). A related goal is context sensitivity, which is to say identifying wider situational factors needed for comprehending specific observations. "Immersion within a particular setting leads the ethnographer to see linkages among various strands in holistic – that is, comprehensive – data" (Stewart, 1998, p. 7). Examples of macro contexts are the wider networks of migrants (Olwig, 2009), substitutes for the family (Robertson, 1991), regional (Nutini & White, 1977) and country differences (Colli et al., 2003), and economic cycles (Blim, 1990).

For family firm entrepreneurs, knowledge of when kinship is and is not a resource requires keen attention to timing and kinship dynamics (Aldrich & Cliff, 2003; Stewart, 1990). Further, families and households are systematically misrepresented without attention to both the developmental cycle of the domestic group (Goody, 1996; Harrell, 1997) and "the development of family role relationships over time" (Benedict, 1968, p. 2). Changes in historic periods are also among the macro contexts relevant to understanding kinship and family firms (Segalen, 1986). Thus, kinship contexts also include temporal concerns.

Suggested readings: For the macro context: Colli and colleagues (2003); Robertson (1991); Nutini and White (1977); for the temporal context: Benedict (1968); Fortes (1958); Hammel (2005); Harrell (1997, Chap. 2); Hunt (1965); Moran and McCracken (2004); Segalen (1986).

What is at stake? Ethnography – the central anthropological research method – requires attention to context. "Ethnographic inquiry begins and ends as theory-laden act of comparison. In the course of it we try to detect in the speech and actions of other people concepts and practices that are analogous to those we know from our own social experiences or from other ethnographic studies" (Scheffler, 1991, p. 367). Without this, we fail to notice key explanatory variables, such as the role of each partner's personal networks in the nature of conjugal ties (Bott, 1971; also Bao, 2008). For a more macro example, "in order to understand Mathare Valley shantytown women's lives… one has to understand the political-economic process of the development of shantytowns in third-world states, prevalent kinship structures, and Kenyan state policies" (di Leonardo, 1991, p. 14).

7. SYSTEMATIC COMPARISONS: SEEKING APPLICABILITY

Sadly, "engag[ing] with the fundamental questions concerned with the explanation of human variability and uniformity in human populations" is now unfashionable in anthropology (Bloch & Sperber, 2002, p. 746; also Hann, 2008). This need not discourage family business researchers from comparative work. They might ask, for example, what factors are associated with a focus on lineal (cross-generational) as opposed to collateral (same-generation) collaborations in family firms. They might what factors are associated with females starting dynastic firms (c.f. Yanagisako, 2002, pp. 143, 147). They might ask, what sources of entrepreneurial discretion in kinship systems are mutually compatible or incompatible? For these and many other questions, the main resource in anthropology is the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF), an enormous index of ethnographies, and the methodological and empirical work associated with it (Ember & Ember, 2009; Pasternak, Ember, & Ember, 1997; the HRAF journal is *Cross-Cultural Research*).

Few scholars will conduct cross-cultural studies along the HRAF or similar lines. Most will conduct ethnographies in focused contexts. These scholars can still contribute to comparative understanding, by determining which "other times, other places, in the human experience" for which their study's "insights" might apply (Stewart, 1998, p. 16). Thus, the qualitative researcher can attempt to achieve "perspicacity", the ethnographic equivalent of generalizability, by working "first, to comprehend and to specify – dare one say model? – the underlying or generic forms of interactions, processes, structures and meanings, and second, to establish theoretically the domain in which these apply" (Stewart, 1998, p. 47). The example Stewart uses is Audrey Richards' solution to the "matrilineal puzzle" in kinship theory. This solution calls for all the main elements of perspicacity: insight into local phenomena, knowledge of kinship theory, and specification of the contextual factors relevant for her concepts to "travel" to other times and places.

Suggested readings: For use of other ethnographies Stewart (1998, Chap. 5); for systematic comparison (Ember & Ember, 2009; Hann, 2008; Goody, 1976).

What is at stake? Without an awareness of comparative cases, scholars may fail to notice or record relevant matters, such as public safety and extended family formation (Segalen, 1986), residential propinquity in matrilineal systems (Fox, 1983), or the presence or absence of multiple families in business groups (Stewart & Hitt, 2012).

8. ATTENTION TO LIVED EXPERIENCES

The “new” kinship studies pay relatively more attention to the domestic realm and lived experiences, including emotional qualities such as ambivalence (Lambek, 2011; Peletz, 1995). As a proponent argues, “To understand relatedness, and to understand the place of relatedness in dynamic relationships that converge in the domestic arena yet extend beyond it, requires detailed analysis of spoken and unspoken meanings, the micropolitics of interactions, and historical structurings of power in particular places at specific moments” (Van Vleet, 2008, p. 195). Compared with the focus in the “old” kinship studies on structure, function and “the politico-jural aspect of kinship” (Holy 1996, p. 51), more focus is on “everyday cooperation, negotiation, and competition” (Yan, 2001, p. 239; also Dyson, 2010; Carsten, 2000) and to human agency (willfulness and strategizing; Viazzo & Lynch, 2002).

A well-argued exemplar of this approach is Stafford’s paper on “the processual and creative aspects of Chinese kinship and relatedness” (2000, p. 38). He argues that there are four inter-connected and “*equally* forceful… systems of Chinese relatedness”: not only patriliny and affinity, but also “‘the cycle of *yang* (which centers mostly on parent-child relationships) and ‘the cycle of *laiwang*’ (which centers mostly on relationships between friends, neighbours, and acquaintances’” (as above). These latter two systems are missed by formalist analyses that render the familial and the domestic as separate topics of study from kinship. Moreover, these two systems – and *laiwang* in particular – are important for understanding the opportunities for discretion facing entrepreneurs maneuvering in the Chinese social world.

Suggested readings: Dyson (2010); Lambek (2011); Notermans (2008); Stafford (2000); Van Vleet (2008); Yan (2001); Kondo (1990) is also a good exemplar.

What is at stake? If we were to attend only to general patterns at the expense of everyday kinship in domestic arenas, we would miss issues confronting family firms. For example, Hamabata reports on the intentions of the wife of a Japanese company president. “For their household, she felt the objective was to bring in talent through marriage and adoption” (1990, p. 44). However, her daughter strongly objected, not wishing to become effectively a household head – “a man in the guise of a woman” – but rather wishing to be “a true *hana-yome* (a newlywed bride)” (p. 45). Both aspects of this vignette, the typical pattern of discretion in Japanese family firms (incorporating adopted sons or sons-in-law into the *ie*) and the way it played out on the ground with live actors, are needed to understand such family firms.

9. CROSS-DISCIPLINARITY

A robust anthropology of family business does not rely on anthropology only. It is not parochial; it uses not just anthropology but also sociology, history, possibly law and psychology. These are needed because comprehensiveness and contextualization inevitably draw the scholar to questions best studied in other disciplines. For example, “history and anthropology are in fact closely related” (Brettell, 2002, p. S46) and many relevant works cross across these two disciplines (e.g. Goody, 1996; Kuper, 2009; McDonough, 1986; Middleton, 2003; Segalen, 1986; Watson, 1985). Of course, the business disciplines are needed as well because the family business field is inherently at the margins of kinship and business.

Suggested readings: Campbell, (1969); Devons and Gluckman (1964); Stewart (2008)

What is at stake? The risk in disciplinary "ethnocentrism" (Campbell, 1969) is dilettantism in which a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. Ironically, attempting to be comprehensive, and attempting to work with other disciplines, present risks of dilettantism as well. The challenges of cross-disciplinary work should not be understated, but happily there are writings available to help scholars cope with these risks (Stewart & Miner, 2011).

10. METHODOLOGICAL SOUNDNESS

Ethnography, which is research based on participant observation, is the distinctive method of social and cultural anthropology. Perhaps it should be called the set of methods, plural, due to disparate approaches (Adler & Adler, 2008). Still, all approaches share three methodological criteria, provided they aim to approximate scientific truth (Stewart, 1998, p. 14). Following Stewart (1998), these criteria are (1) descriptive truth (or "veracity"); (2) transcendence of perspectives – i.e. relative impartiality – (or "objectivity"); and (3) specifying the applicability of its insights to other settings (or "perspicacity"). (The "quantitative" equivalents are validity, reliability and generalizability.)

For all three, Stewart notes the challenges in research that make the criteria hard to satisfy, and recommends the most effective "tactics" that can help to overcome these challenges. These tactics differ from approaches used in "quantitative" research. For example, the challenges in the way of veracity are various "limits to learning arising in the field… [and] caused by [the] researcher's personal and role constraints" (1998, p. 17), with two of the main recommended tactics for overcoming these limitations being prolonged fieldwork and good participative role relationships.

Unfortunately, a reason for the dearth of family-firm level ethnographies is based on a specific challenge that is hard to overcome. Access into field sites is a challenge for organizational ethnography regardless of the approach taken. Family firm access is more challenging yet. Gatekeepers of these firms are often accustomed to privacy and may well be concerned that sensitive family matters could be publicized should they grant researchers up-close, long-term access. Opportunistic use of pre-existing connections such as consultancy roles may prove to be necessary, as it was for Dalton and other organizational ethnographers (Helin, 2011). Bower's access, by contrast, was gained through "time and care" (personal communication), although it surely helped, as with Hamabata (1990), to have an elite affiliation (Harvard University in each case).

Suggested readings: For a general introduction to qualitative or "discovery" oriented research: Locke (2011); for comprehensive introductions to ethnography: DeWalt and DeWalt (2011); Spradley (1980); Wolcott (2008); for types of ethnography, particularly as writings: Adler and Adler (2008); Geertz (1988); Van Maanen (2011); for ethnographic criteria and standards: (Stewart, 1998).

What is at stake? Based on many years of reviewing "qualitative" manuscripts, I believe that inadequate attention to foundational tactics (e.g. prolonged fieldwork and appropriate role relationships) typically leads to inadequate data. Absent good data, no amount of analytical or theoretical gymnastics will generate credible findings. As an example of the ways that good ethnographic method can contribute to good quality studies, Stewart (1998, pp. 68-74) includes a "Checklist for Ethnographic Method". This checklist includes three examples of ethnographies, two of which have been noted above: Gouldner (1954) and the family business study by Kondo (1990). Although these books are very different, both of these authors found ways to convince us of the veracity, objectivity and perspicacity of their research.

WHAT GOOD COULD COME OF THIS?

Anthropology has well developed literatures in three areas that provide it with a comparative advantage: in kinship theory and comparative kinship studies, in ethnographic studies of particular kinship systems, and in ethnographic method. Therefore, we can hope that an anthropology of family will evolve and incorporate the sorts of desiderata discussed above. If it were to do so, scholarship and the impact of scholarship on practice would both benefit. Some of the reasons have been noted above in sections called "what is at stake?" As an example, the anthropology of family business should attend to consequential questions, such as the ways family business leaders find opportunities in the relationships between kinship and business. Such an anthropology would alert us to variables and considerations that otherwise might not be noted. It would also help us to specify the contexts for which particular findings do and do no apply.

Family business is a boundary-crossing field of study, requiring expertise in the familial and the commercial domains. However, much family business research has been solid on business variables but thin on the kinship side (Stewart & Hitt, 2012). This weakness is especially true at the level of detail that is found in good ethnographies and that, for family business ethnographies, can refer to details that matter in business (e.g. the example above of a daughter's unwillingness to marry a successor to her father). Unfortunately, as we have also noted, few ethnographies of family firms have been equally alert to business variables as they have to the familial domain. Therefore, those business school scholars who do develop the competencies considered above could make outstanding contributions to the family business field. Moreover, their writings would have a level of real-world detail that could capture the imagination of a practitioner readership.

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[i] Whereas “families” are subsets within kinship systems, “households” – being defined by function and by residence – include non-kin (e.g. servants, boarders) and comprise subsets within (extended) families (Brettell, 2002; Sanjek, 1996). As a unit of analysis, households are thus less useful than (extended) families in research on family firms (pace Aldrich & Cliff, 2003), but their human and physical arrangements are important variables (Blim, 1990; Bruun, 1993).

[ii] I prefer this distinction to modernist versus "postmodern" due to the slipperiness of the latter construct, particularly in the context of ethnography rather than the arts (Pool, 1991).