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FAMILY FIRM

A Distinctive Form of Organization

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Abstract: Family firms are organizations where the influence of the family over the firm and distinctive configurations of ownership, management, and governance create unique opportunities and challenges. Organization theory (OT) offers a wide array of theoretical concepts to understand the inner working of family firms and their role in society. Family business (FB) research has also pointed at singularities of these organizations, which offer insights for extending organization theories. Yet, cross-fertilization between FB research and OT studies remains limited. In this Element, the authors reinvigorate calls to explore avenues to further integrate these two research fields. They present the FB literature in management journals and categorize these papers based on four types of theoretical contribution: Embedded, Integrative, Challenger, and Generalized. The authors discuss opportunities for dialogue between FB and OT for each type in three research domains: (i) managing hybridity; (ii) mastering tensions, dualities, and paradoxes; and (iii) modeling time and temporality.

This Element also has a video abstract: www.cambridge.org/OrganizationTheory_EvelynMicelotta_abstract

Keywords: organization theory, family business, hybridity, paradoxes, temporality

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