



Doing family: The constructed meanings of family in family farms

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the meaning of family in family businesses and enriches the notion of ‘familianness’ as a resource conferring competitive advantage to the business. This paper responds to calls for the need to explore further the family as a socially constructed concept. Taking as its focus case studies from five Scottish family farms, it examines the ways in which family is performed and enacted. Emergent findings demonstrate that family is done and displayed through the core business, its diversification activities and embedding practices. Core activities provide scope for family members to negotiate their positions within the family and also demonstrate these outside of the home. Diversification activities are used as a way of extending the boundaries of the family business, providing roles for family and extended family. Family firms are shown to benefit from the wider networks and strong and weak ties of individual family members. Finally, it is shown that the accumulation of these practices can result in a stronger more enduring family businesses.

1. Introduction

The focus of this paper is to explore the meaning of family in family business and ‘familianness’ as a resource conferring competitive advantage to the business. Within broader family business literature there have been calls for more focus on the role of the family with Jennings et al. (2014) noting that over the last 25 years the field has become dominated by business theory at the expense of family theory. They argue the consequential ‘virtual disappearance’ of family-oriented theories is lamentable because it limits the range of topics studied, giving an insufficiently differentiated view of family firms, and under-emphasis on theorising the enterprising family (Moore, 2009). Others argue (Frank et al., 2019) that knowledge concerning the functioning and management of families in family businesses remains limited and that family theory is needed to develop a well-founded understanding of the business family, usually the most important stakeholder in family businesses. Without this understanding, they argue, research findings “do not adequately account for the complexity of the specific reciprocal influence between the business and the family system (Ibid: 264).”

In this paper we draw upon a social constructionist perspective of family to understand the performativity of ‘doing’ family (Finch, 2007; Pylyser et al., 2018) within small diversified family farming businesses. In this view, family is a fluid concept that is understood through “a shared history and a shared future” (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2004, 71), with boundaries that are socially constructed (Koerner and Fitzpatrick,

2002; Von Schlippe and Frank, 2013). We examine the consequences of this understanding on the notion of the family business and family entrepreneurship. We draw upon cases-studies of diversified family farms within Scotland across a range of agricultural sectors. We show how family is both done and displayed through their core business and diversification activities and embedding practices.

1.1. Definitions of family business

Family businesses are presented as bounded entities, restricted to businesses directly involving family members (Anderson et al., 2005; Upton and Petty, 2000; Whiteside and Brown, 1991) through ownership and control, involvement in management of the firm, and the wish to pass on the business to the next generation (Chua et al., 1999; Litz, 2008). In these definitions the business system is ‘interpenetrated’ by another system, namely the family. These definitions are argued to be under-explained since a family business is simply a business run by a family; with little further consideration of the meaning of the ‘family’ in this context (Jennings et al., 2014). This is despite business families being a special type of family, because they have characteristics of both a family and business. This dual nature is argued to place special demands on them and business families must manage family and business demands in a way that neither the family nor the business system is compromised (Frank et al., 2019). Strong theorisation of the family aspect of family business is therefore argued to be both essential and

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lacking in understanding the success of family businesses.

Most of the work within the family business literature considering ‘family theory’ utilises system theory (Jennings et al., 2104) to consider how the systems of firm and family relate. Sharma and Nordqvist (2008) provide a review of the development of this theoretical perspective in family business literature. Key frameworks include new systems theory, the open systems approach, family eco-systems and the resource-based view.

New systems theory (Luhmann, 1995; Von Schlippe and Frank, 2013), classifies the family, business, and ownership as three subsystems with different meanings and types of communication. This approach considers problems arising when these subsystems overlap. Family members can belong to several of these subsystems with each representing different expectations resulting in confusion and conflict.

The open-systems approach (Pieper and Klein, 2007; Tagiuri and Davis, 1996), also addresses the interactions among family business subsystems, but also draw on the effects of the external environment in terms of cultural and economic setting for these family firms and group and individual level dynamics.

Family eco systems (Habbershon, 2006) like the open systems approach considers social and economic contextual factors and the family business system, in terms of family, individuals and business. The focus within this framework is on the reciprocal input–output relationships they have with one another. As each subsystem part interacts in the ecosystem, they generate distinctive resources and capabilities that form the resource profile of the family business as both an output and input back into the system.

Finally, the resource based view (Habbershon and Williams, 1999; Pearson et al., 2008; Weismeier-Sammer et al., 2013) considers that interaction between the family and the business delivers unique resources which are not present in non-family businesses. All these approaches generally consider the family as a structural unit of analysis rather than delving below the surface to consider the ways in which family is defined, constructed and performed by the family members. Albanese (2010, 17) argues that within a structuralist viewpoint “each family member has clearly defined roles to fulfil in order to guarantee successful functioning of the family unit”.

We argue that most of the existing approaches to family theory in the family business literature and certainly the dominant structuralist approaches largely consider family as an observable entity with clear boundaries, and that there is much to be gained by opening the literature to postmodern concepts of family, here family is a more fluid and ambiguous concept. Using social interactionism we can delve below the surface of observable family structures to discuss how family and in turn family business is constructed through social interaction. This approach focuses on interactions between family members and the impacts of these on individuals, the family and the family firm. In these approaches the family is viewed as a social grouping and meanings of family and individual identities and roles are negotiated through interactions (James et al., 2012; LaRossa and Reitzes, 2004).

1.2. Socially constructed family

The sociological literature has long recognised that the family is a socially constructed concept Baca and Eitzen (1993, 102) define it as “an ideology of relations that explains who should live together, share income and perform common tasks”. In most cultures, the family forms the focus of individual daily interactions, encompassing those whose company and opinion is regularly sought (Nicholson and Seidman, 1995). Morgan (1996, 186) discusses that family is characterised by fluidity, diversity and multi-facetedness such that it becomes an aspect of social life rather than a taken for granted social institution that structuralist approaches typically employ: a ‘quality’ rather than a thing. The family as an ideological construct (Pahl and Spencer, 2010) for many people extends to other households “through dissolved marriages, cohabitation past and present ... step relationships broader kin relationships and

same sex partnership” (Finch, 2007, 68). Family therefore can include consanguineal kin, affinal kin (marriage, step relationships etc.) and ‘fictive or social kin’ to include Godparents and social ‘aunts’ and ‘uncles’ who may be more part of the family than distant consanguineous family (long lost cousins etc).

An individual’s understanding of family is argued to be in part subjective, rooted in their own biography and subject to change over time: so ones family may refer to parents and siblings, partner and eventually children and grandchildren as well as the extended conceptions considered above (Finch, 2007, Pylyser et al., 2018). This subjectivity is particularly evident among those who live within ‘chosen’ families (Weeks et al., 2001) embed themselves using strong friendship ties conceptualised as ‘fictive’ kin. The actions and interactions of individuals within family structure are argued to be the means by which family is both formed and understood (LaRossa and Reitzes, 2004). Family remains a robust concept (Park and Robert, 2002) but because of its more fluid nature it has taken on a performative dimension as something which must be ‘done’ or ‘displayed’ (Finch, 2007; Sarkisian, 2006). This performative perspective emphasises the role of social actors creatively constituting their own understanding of family, such that family becomes an ‘adjective rather than a noun’ (Finch, 2007, 66). Sarkisian (2006, 804) defines doing family as follows: “interactional work and activities that create and sustain family ties, define family boundaries, as well as specify appropriate behaviors for different family members”. Finch (2007, 2011) goes further and argues that family must also be displayed, emphasising the fundamentally social nature of family practices where the meanings of actions need to be conveyed to relevant others within the family and to external audiences and understood by them.

Performativity and display therefore suggest that kinship ties and the processes of building family are not necessarily obviously reflected in a simple genealogical look at the composition of a kin group (Yan, 2001). Indeed Turgo (2016) suggests that kinship is both performed and forgotten. There is a selectivity to the extent and boundaries of family, restricting it to only the relatively few who help secure resources for the unit. Kinship relationships are de-activated if they are regarded as unsatisfactory. Sahlins (2011, 5) argues that “people are not constrained by a rigid consanguineal kinship but can choose much of their universe of kin”. Huff and Cotte (2016, 894) also discuss how families and their meanings change through transitions, conceptualising the family as both “a state of being and a process of doing.”

Nelson (2006) and Sarkisian (2006) argue that processes and performances of doing family become especially relevant in complex families (such as step-families) and business families too have been recognised to be particularly complex (Frank et al., 2019). Even traditional business families comprise this complexity and so unpacking what constitutes a family and the roles of the actors may be understood from this performative perspective building knowledge concerning the functioning and management of families in business (business families) which remains still limited (Hamilton et al., 2017).

1.3. Familiness

Familiness is an important concept in understanding the uniqueness and heterogeneity of family businesses (Chrisman et al., 2003; Habbershon and Williams, 1999; Nordqvist et al., 2014; Zachary, 2011). Originating in the resource based view, Habbershon and Williams (1999) first introduced the term “familiness,” and more recently it has been theorised using social capital (Pearson et al., 2008) and systems theory (Zachary, 2011). Familiness refers to the embedded nature of the family relationship within the business (Habbershon et al., 2003) and the consequent resources and capabilities unique to the family’s involvement and interaction in a family business (Pearson et al., 2008; Rautiainen et al., 2012). It arises from synergies among the behavioural and social resources of the family firm and describes the influence of the family on the family business (Pearson et al., 2008; Zellweger et al.,

2013). Familiness is often proposed as a core source of differentiation within family firms when compared to non-family counterparts (Irava and Moores, 2010). This concept recognises that these resources and capabilities are not just internal to the firm (Pearson et al., 2008) but also ‘embedded in, available through and derived from the network of relationships’ (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998, 243) possessed by individual family members and the family firm itself (Irava and Moores, 2010). Irava and Moores (2010) argue for this as process resource, the familiness advantage derived from maximizing the benefits of the firm’s strong and weak ties. Paraphrasing McKeever “‘family firms’ are embedded in networks, places and communities which socially frame resources and opportunities” (McKeever et al., 2015, 50), the performance of this embedding work is carried out by the business family (Irava and Moores, 2010). Numerous studies illustrate the benefits of embeddedness, including access to resources, information and emotional support (Casson and Giusta, 2007; Ozcan and Eisenhardt, 2009; Slotte-Kock and Coviello, 2010).

More specifically within the embeddedness literature there has been some focus on the familiness benefits deriving from family connections, specifically the resources provided by the strong ties of family members (Aldrich, 1999; Aldrich et al., 1986; Chrisman et al., 2003; Starr and MacMillan, 1990). This perspective considers that all economic activity is embedded in a social context (Granovetter, 1973) and concepts of social embeddedness and associated capitals have been considered as particularly impactful on the abilities of rural enterprises to maintain successful and sustainable business models (Tregear and Cooper, 2016). Through embeddedness, advantage is derived by mobilising local resources and assets including the socio-cultural fabric of community relations in which the family and associated family business are embedded (Lorendahl, 1996). This social capital is the sum of actual and potential resources embedded within, available through, and derived from this network of social relationships and, within a family firm, is a deeply embedded resource (Pearson et al., 2008). A family firm’s embeddedness represents the nature, depth and extent of all the individual ties of the family and business family. Embedded exchanges are particularly relevant to family firms which have been modelled as containing both emotional and rational systems entwined (Labaki et al., 2013). Embeddedness relies upon these types of entanglement which have distinct features of relationships characterised by trust and personal ties rather than explicit contracts and that outcomes of the relationship are focused on more than short-term economic maximisation, rather there is a longer-term objective of cultivating co-operative ties (Romo and Schwartz, 1995; Dore, 1983).

There are calls within family business research for more focus on understanding how familiness shapes firm behaviour (Klein et al., 2005; Nordqvist et al., 2014; Zellweger et al., 2010). Irava and Moores (2010) suggest that literature has yet to fully investigate how the characteristics of a family business emerge as a source of competitive advantage. The construct domain of familiness sits at the intersection of the family and the business that is often included in models of family firms (e.g., Gerstlitz et al., 1997). Arguing that this takes an ‘undersocialized approach’ to the context in which family firms operate, Pearson et al. (2008) adopt a social capital perspective to explain how familiness is created through the social relations of individual members, the “idiosyncratic bundles of resources and capabilities that result from the involvement of the family in the firm” (Pearson et al., 2008, 956). Taking an internal view of social capital, they focus on internal capital within the firm derived from familiness rather than the embedded social capital which is derived from external familiness ties, an area into which this study seeks to extend.

In this paper we apply a social constructivist perspective to understandings of familiness. If the family is understood as a subjective, ideological construct rather than a system of interactions among family business subsystems, what does this mean for our understandings of the unique behaviours, resources and capabilities a family contributes to a business and the ways in which family shapes family firm behaviour? (Pearson et al., 2008). Drawing on an embeddedness perspective (Uzzi,

1997) we recognise that these resources and capabilities are not just internal to the firm (Pearson et al., 2008) but also ‘embedded in, available through and derived from the network of relationships’ (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998, 243) possessed by individual family members and the family firm itself (Danes et al., 2009). Our research questions are thus:

RQ1: How does a social constructivist perspective enrich our understanding of familiness?

RQ2: How are these family specific resources and capabilities derived?

2. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative, case study approach (Yin, 2013). This approach focuses on understanding “the dynamics present within single settings” (Eisenhardt, 1989: 534), meaning that issues can be explored in depth within their own natural context (Hoaglin et al., 1982). For our study this means that the roles and practices of family members within the family and within the various family businesses can be discussed and specific events and their consequences are anchored to this specific context (Huberman and Miles, 2002).

Scottish farming was chosen for our empirical study for three key reasons. First as with agriculture within the UK generally, this is an industry with a high proportion of family businesses. We purposefully chose diversified family farms as our case studies to explore the meaning of family in family businesses and the relationship between core businesses and diversification activities. Almost half of Scottish farms gain income from other businesses that are diversified from the core business of the farm. We draw upon cases-studies of diversified family farms within Scotland across a range of agricultural sectors to explore the boundaries of the family business. Finally through a combination of snowball and judgment sampling researchers were able to take advantage of the small and well-connected nature of the Scottish farming community to gain access to key informants. Using the guidelines provided by Yin (2008), 10 interviews were conducted with members of 5 Scottish family farms across a number of agricultural sectors (Table 1). Following Clark (2009), all these businesses were self-defined as family owned and managed. Potential farms were identified from the researchers’ own farming networks and additional networking at agricultural events such as the Royal Highland Show and agricultural markets between 2015 and 2016 generating the final sample. Each farm was purposively chosen (Eisenhardt, 1989) because of the combination of strong family ownership; a core farming business; and diversified activities which operate from the home farm. As shown in Table 1 the core businesses covered a range of agricultural activities including arable, livestock and fruit farms. In line with our sociological understanding of family, the characteristics of each family living on the farm was distinctive, often including multi-generations with varying degrees of involvement in the core agricultural business and diversified activities.

Researchers spent time on each of the farms observing both their core farming activities and their diversified businesses. Where possible, individual interviews were then conducted with key members of the family farming business including consanguineal kin (children and grand-parents) and affinal kin (wives, married in sons and daughters-in-law). Both researchers have agricultural and food industry research experience and so come to the field with some contextual understanding, however, observations and informal interactions helped further contextualise the business situation, clarify our understanding of family farming practices and associated constructed identities. Informal interactions were in the form of short conversations and micro-interviews of 5–10 min. Our observations and informal interactions with additional family members, during research visits, were captured in the form of fieldnotes. Formal interviews were semi-structured focused upon family roles, relationships and daily practices within family business,

Table 1
Informant profiles.

Interviewees	Positions within Family Farm	Additional informal interactions	Nature of Family living on farm	Core Product	Diversification
Andrew Sarah	Farmer Second wife	Informal interaction with grandparents – living on the farm (returned migrants from Australia). Young children present.	Farmer in 2nd marriage with young and teenage children, step-children and grandparents (returning farmers).	Cattle and Sheep	Stables, B&B, Wind Turbine, Off-roading
Gordon Richard	Farmer Second son	Meeting and informal discussions with – mother and elders son’s wife and children.	2 generations of farmers- father, mother and eldest son with wife and young children. Middle son renting farm building for diversified activity.	Arable, cereal crops	Rape-seed oil
James Agnes Tom	Farmer Daughter Son-in-law	Additional informal discussion with eldest son and family (also living on home farm).	2 generations of farmers, father mother and eldest son with wife and teenage children. Additional family unit of daughter, son-in-law and baby.	Arable, cereal crops	Rape-seed oil
Helen Alison	Wife Daughter	Father main farmer, process of handing over to daughter.	2 generations of farmers- father, mother and daughter.	Fruit Farm	Jams, Farmers market, Farm shop
Alistair	Farmer	Informal interactions with all (2) children & wife.	Farmer, wife and teenage children involved in all activities.	Fruit Farm	Jams, Farm shop e-commerce

considering also their wider social networks and probing interesting responses as these emerged (Patton, 2005). These interviews of between 45 min and 1.5 h and were audio-recorded to allow “conversation to flow, eye contact to be maintained and interaction to occur” (Wilson, 2012, 105). After each interview the researchers discussed initial impressions and observations, taking notes to crystallise the main themes emerging (Bryman and Bell, 2003). Analysis progressed by using the constant comparative method (Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994) to compare commonalities and differences in participants responses and perceptions as these related to emerging themes. Individual interpretations of the same piece of text can differ, which is why such a collaborative approach is beneficial (Gartner, 2007). Three core themes emerged during the analysis process. They relate to displaying core family practices, diversifying activities and embedding processes. Core activities provided scope for family members to negotiate their positions within the family unit and also to demonstrate these outside of the home. Diversification activities were used as a way of extending the boundaries of the family business, providing roles to family and extended family over time. Embedding processes enabled family firms to benefit from the wider networks and strong and weak ties of individual family members.

3. Findings

In our data we find three ways in which family is performed within our context. We structure our findings around these emergent themes of: Displaying the core, diversifying and embedding practices.

3.1. Displaying the core

Our data demonstrates a strong convergence of family and firm identity with the cases within our study (Reay, 2009; Zellweger et al., 2013). Our findings show that the family farm business, particularly the core agricultural business, is key to the identity of farming families. They discussed at length the importance of preserving farming within their families. While the ways in which each family in our study and each member within the family constructed and understood their family differed (Pahl and Spencer, 2010), there was a strong cognitive embeddedness in the idea of family and the family farm which was evident through their practices. In many of the accounts while the farmer and his 1st son were the owners of the farming business there was a much larger family unit working to sustain the future of the business. This included consanguineous kin - teenage children and affinal kin-wives and son in law. James discusses this in relation to their peak farming time around lambing:

Because obviously at lambing time ..., so it's times like that that you think if there's more ... we need more hands. At the end of the day I was

working with 800 sheep and 85 cattle, I was doing it all myself. But at lambing we need to be all hands on deck. It needs the whole family to get involved and we're just working through the night to get them safely delivered. It's good for the children to be involved and they start to learn about the business at these times. I bring someone in to help when I'm busy with sheep and things like that but essentially we did it all ourselves. (James)

This active participation in mundane but essential farming tasks was a key way for family membership to be established and acknowledged within the internal family audience (Finch, 2007). It is a means for individual actors to demonstrate belonging and commitment to the family and the family farm and acts as a way of constructing their identities within the families through their actions (Huff and Cotte, 2016). As Turgo (2016) suggests kinship is both performed and forgotten, the boundaries of family remoulded and restricting to the relatively few who help secure resources. In our farming families we see that the business family is moulded in this way through the performance of hard, dull and everyday farming tasks. Gordon who has three sons, discusses the tension of making space for family members in the business family. Gordon (the main farmer) has 3 sons, the youngest has left farming behind and has a small removal business far from the farm:

I haven't got three farmers and I haven't got three farms but we're nearly there and I think the day I pop my clogs there'll be enough there for the two of them so they won't have to have a huge fight over. My youngest son isn't farming anymore he's got a wee removal business in Belfast so he'll not want to be farming now. (Gordon)

While consanguineously Gordon's youngest son remains part of the family, by removing himself both geographically and actively from the farming business, he loosens his ties and in terms of succession becomes an inactive member of the business family. This is akin to the forgotten kinship of Turgo (2016). Thus, participation in the family farm is a strong indicator of family membership and without participation individuals become 'lesser' and are a weaker part of the family. Tom also discusses this and the sense of loss that family members leaving the farming business can cause:

It's just the family unit. Well, you met Agnes (daughter). I am understaffed at the moment. I lost my son to another business last year. He was working full time for me. I was going to just say I lost my son, and you would ... He started up his own business. (Tom)

The family farming businesses are strongly reliant upon the labour of the whole family unit including children so much so that when the child may leave the business to develop education or their own business venture it can almost feel like a bereavement in the family (Turgo, 2016), a great loss of that person to the family farming business. This often instils a strong desire for these estranged members to return to the

family business and become a core part of the family again. Richard is Gordon's second son, he discusses his feelings when separated from the farm through work or study demonstrating a strong motivation to situate himself back within the family business unit:

So the home farm is where the home is based and where all the ... the hub of the farm if you like. I always had this hankering to come back to the farm, I always had this hankering to come back. (Richard)

The doing of family is not only evident in activities on site but can be demonstrated by bolstering the overall resources of the business, even where this involves work off the farm. Sarah is Andrew's second wife, she is engaged in full time work off the farm but she still considers this as an important contributor to the family:

Yes it's all go, head down and get on with it. So I drop Jemima at nursery, straight to work until 5pm, come back, tea, I see to Jemima first, I see to her up until she goes to bed at 7:30 and then it's my time to do the business stuff ... (Sarah)

Pluriactivity is a key aspect of family farming businesses (Evans and Ilbery, 1996; Tonner and Wilson, 2015) many wives take paid employment outside of the farming enterprise because family farms have precarious profitability which cannot sustain multiple incomes. This external work presents tensions for the family and family business. While, these activities are undertaken to bolster the sustainability of the farm business (Shorthall, 2002), at the same time, the diversion of family labour to these off-farm activities can limit the development of the family farm business, as Sarah discusses:

If I wasn't working fulltime I think we could increase the sheep numbers relatively easily and it wouldn't be that difficult. But the wives, the vast majority now are working fulltime, eventually we hope for a possibility to come back but there we go. (Sarah)

Our findings also highlight the burden on wives for responsibility of off-farm employment, diversification activities and domestic activities, with "women ... committed to their families and farms and engaging in survival strategies to maintain the survival and well-being of both," (Shorthall, 2002, p. 171).

Sarah's husband Andrew also recognises the difficulty of prioritising the practices which most effectively aid the development of the farming business. Andrew recognises that his financial sustainability is derived primarily through his diversified businesses however he devotes significant time to the agriculture because he sees it as core to the identity of being a farming family.

You've still got to try and get the drive and the motivation for farming but we've actually got all this income from all these other things. Why the core thing? You do wonder that sometimes, the diversification is allowing that core thing to keep going, but you look out at where we are and the view and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else and I want my family to have that ... it's a way of life (Andrew)

At the heart of all of these businesses there is a strong idea of family and the family unit and this is deeply intertwined with the business such that it becomes difficult to disentangle the aspects of their practices which are 'doing' family and those which are 'doing' business (White-side and Brown, 1991). 'Farming is a way of life' such that familiness in farming families therefore is comprised of entwined performances of 'family' and 'business'. Sarah and Andrew discuss this and the embeddedness of farming in all aspects of their family including their holiday time. These performances also act to display family to an important external audience of other farming families in the wider farming community (Finch, 2007):

So right when we go to like the Royal Highland Show with this whole umbrella of everything we do, we weren't showing animals this year we were just there as a family. It's our holiday, one of our few holidays this

year maybe. I'm from Keith, up there, so everybody was meeting at the Highland Show. A guy I was at school with got in touch last week and he was like "hi will you and your family be there – we'll be there with all our kids". (Sarah and Andrew)

There was also a feeling among some respondents that farming is part of a person's very identity and that only those with a strong farming heritage would understand and accept the demands of the farming lifestyle and how it becomes ingrained within the other aspects of family life:

Well Sarah is my second wife we've only been together 2 years but she knows farming. (Andrew)

I grew up in a farming family in Huntly up in Aberdeenshire and I worked as a teenager on my aunt's livery, so I've really worked with horses and animals my whole life. (Sarah)

I kind of think you need to have grown on a farm to understand. I mean we go to the Highland Show as a family. (Andrew)

Thus familiness, the entwined combination of family and farming practices serves to convey meanings associated with the identity of the farming family (Finch, 2007). These are done to situate individual members with roles within the business family unit, to create the resources of familiness combining performances of family and business, and displayed to signal this meaning to external audiences (Finch, 2007). These shared meanings underpin practices undertaken by those working in the family business irrespective of their centrality within the ownership of family or the family farm. These practices are ways by which all family members are inculcated in learning about both the ways of 'doing' the business but also the broader guiding values of the family (Frank et al., 2019; Jennings et al., 2014). As such these practices also have stewardship properties, a way of imbuing family practices and values into the next generation of the family farm (Davis et al., 2010; Zahra et al., 2008).

3.2. Diversifying

While the family farm has a strong pull for family members its relatively traditional structures can make it difficult for individuals to find space for inclusion. As Alistair a farmer who has two teenaged children discusses when thinking about how to maintain the integrity of the farm while allowing for succession planning for multiple children:

If you look at the French way of doing it you just split the farms up and they get smaller and smaller and smaller as people come back. (Alistair)

There is a recognition, among the case studies, that the agricultural aspects of most family farms can only really sustain one or two full time incomes; that succession cannot easily include all the family members while keeping the business functioning as a sustainable unit and that, as such, even within modern families choices must be made. Diversifying is employed as practice in these farms to allow space to extend the business family and enable individual family members to fulfil a productive role (Hansson et al., 2013; Turgo, 2016). Traditional succession endures in agricultural families and prioritises the eldest son as the inheritor of the core agricultural business (Brockhaus, 2004; Cavicchioli et al., 2018; Chrisman et al., 1998). Richard as a second son discusses how diversifying acts as his means of remaining with the family farming business when the agricultural role is already filled:

I had studied agriculture as well, but obviously had an older brother who had always been much keener on the farm and was already back farming with dad. And I guess just partly through tradition ... I guess that the oldest would inherit. It just so happened that it was the eldest that was the keenest and came back to the farm first. And it was like if I am going to come back I don't want to just come back and dilute my brother's

business; what could I do to enhance it if you like, and I found a way of adding value to a product that we were growing on the farm. (Richard)

Diversifying can also impact on the relationship that develops between the different business structures. Rather than existing as totally separate businesses, the parts (agriculture and diversified activity) become intertwined, drawing upon the resources and success of the other part and of the whole, as the different family members use the familiness to extend the sustainability of the family wealth into the coming generations (Tonner and Wilson, 2015). As Tom discusses:

I think that stewardship has been a big drive in diversification. It's about making the farm something that's sustainable going forward. So the brand name of my (diversified) company is the home farm name as you can see coming down the road and everything yes, actually everything, from the Farm. (Tom).

The way Tom uses the home farm name in his diversified business is indicative of Finch's (1997) 'family display' operating through these enterprises. He signals internally to the family the importance of their support and heritage in his new and risky endeavour but also uses familiness as a resource in the market as a means of displaying the authenticity and quality cues of his product and the centrality of the family to his business.

In the running of these businesses many of the resources can be shared among the original farm and their associated diversified businesses. Indeed many of the diversified business develop as means of more efficiently or profitably using the excess resources of the agricultural business as Helen a farmer's wife discusses:

We're actually soft fruit growers, it was actually my daughter Alison when she was nine that started it. She walked into the chiller and just started to take some of the second class fruit and started to jam it. Because we already had the fruit that had been rejected by the supermarket we obviously didn't need to go and buy that. She wasn't really producing enough for it to be a massive drain on the money. And we had the farm shop so she just sold the jam in there until word spread and more people wanted it. (Helen)

This sharing of resources is a familiness advantage which hasn't been explored in the extant literature but builds on reputational resources which have been identified as forming part of the concept (Irava and Moores, 2010). It is a key way in which the diversified business become established through their start up phases. Family members bring their skills within the family network and so the worth of the familiness resource grows as they augment the capabilities of the overall farming business. Tom is a son-in-law, as such he has no automatic role in the farming family but he discusses how he uses his existing skills to diversify the family farm:

Yeah. I'm originally an IT consultant. I started sort of working on the farm with my father-in-law. The family has been on this farm and in the surrounding areas for about 130 years. He said, "I can't afford to pay you anything." I said, "I don't care. I'm just learning" I said, "Look, what if I help with selling? Why don't I sell at markets? Go around farm shops, delis, restaurants, hotels, and try and get a bit of an income that side of it". From there I took their rapeseed and said "Can I buy a ten off you? I'll see where we go from there." So I bought a ten off him, found somebody to press it for me. We followed the same template of let's go to delis, farm shops, restaurants, hotels, and farmers markets and try and sell this product. That worked too well actually because by July we'd sold everything. (Tom)

This transfer of skills is again indicative of Finch's idea that family must be performed and that familiness is a performative resource. Tom discusses this particularly when trying to extend the business family and make space for affinal kin to find a role in the family unit. Tom isn't from a traditional farming family but has married Agnes and both are keen to return to live on the family farm. While Tom's father-in-law was keen to include Tom as part of the family farm it didn't sustain an income for

him (Agnes' older brother would inherit the agriculture) and it was clear to Tom that he must find his own way of doing family through the firm and to find a role in the business family: "*what else can I do on the farm?*". His IT and sales skills from his previous employment along with his entrepreneurial drive opened up the opportunity for him to contribute, 'do' family and add to the familiness resources of the farming family through his diversified business.

Diversification practices are thus a way of extending the boundaries of the family business and expanding the familiness resources of the business family. They do this by opening roles for additional, non-inheriting family members within the business family. This extension of the family business can be motivated by stewardship and an alignment of values between the family and the firm (Arregle et al., 2007; Davis et al., 2010; and Zahra et al., 2008). This extension of the boundaries of the firm through diversification practices is not just functional. The diversified businesses are seen to draw on the symbolic and emotional capital associated with the core farm business to display their associated value to the market (Finch, 2007). Anchoring these businesses to the heritage of the farm also acts as an internal signal to the rest of the family of members' desire to be part of the business family and family business (Finch, 2007).

3.3. Embedding practices

In our cases we also see the firms pulling on the wider networks and weak ties of individual family members as a familiness resource: providing access to information and opportunities; a means of incentivising trust; and a way of gaining power and advantage in the marketplace (Granovetter, 2005; McKeever et al., 2015; Uzzi, 1997). Richard's family farm grows rapeseed as its core agricultural output and he discusses how he has drawn from experiences off the family farm to develop a new on-farm business. He spent time volunteering in Africa and was inspired by the farming practices he saw there to both adapt farming practices for his own family farm business and also start a new diversified farm business on the family farm.

Yes so we'd been growing it probably since the '70s I think and it was all just being sold in bulk on to the world markets if you like and it would go off to Germany to get turned into standard vegetable oil or whatever. But I got the idea for the rapeseed oil business from a charity project in Kenya where I'd seen them crushing sunflower seeds and I thought that's quite a simple process I wonder if I could do that with the rapeseed at home. And dad thought I don't think anyone ... never heard of anyone doing that, can't see that taking off. (Richard)

This experience was then consolidated through his experiences with his much closer networks and stronger ties when he came home. The information gleaned from these networks reinforced his feeling that he had a really good business idea:

I was obviously still studying but began to see a few ... I guess obviously it's like when you get a new car you end up seeing them everywhere and I started to spot rapeseeds around the place and I was at this dinner party and they had fantastic roast potatoes and I said how do you do your roast potatoes? In rapeseed oil, must be something in this. So I started doing a bit more research into it and then just thought yes really ought to give this a go before I miss the boat. (Richard)

The advantages to the core business and the diversified activities of being part of the overall family business are considerable. In common with other research we find that the diversified activities can be seen to shore up the financial viability of the 'family farm' (Evans and Ilbery, 1993; Evans and Ilbery, 1996; Marsden et al., 1986) while conversely the more entrepreneurial activities are supported by the heritage and solidity of the established business (Finch, 2007). The family business often provides access to resources and competitive advantage without capital investment (Slotte-Kock and Coviello, 2010). Richard discusses

the advantages his diversified business enjoyed as a result of being an embedded part of the family farm:

Although I am a separate standalone business I'm lucky in that I'm ... I get my raw material sources from my family business. If I was just a totally separate business it would be much more of a headache at the start of the year trying to work out how much seed you needed to get you through the 12 months to the next harvest and also the cash flow because you'd have to be buying it up front whereas I've been lucky in that the farm has been able to just guess how much seed I'll need and they've held enough for me and then billed me as and when I take it. Then if there's any leftover it gets sold off at the end of the year. The ability to collaborate with the farm business is a huge bonus for a business like mine. If you're a salad dressing company that doesn't grow the raw materials yourself and you're buying everything in you don't have that same level of control over what you've got coming in and over your cash flow. (Richard)

In a number of cases the core agricultural family business was also seen to be bolstered by the diversified businesses, allowing the family farms to survive beyond the current generations. When talking about his own farm Andrew expressed the importance of the diversified activities on the long-term sustainability of the farm:

I mean the great vision is that all these diversified things are keeping the core [agriculture] ... which isn't the core financial business; the core time ... it's always going to be the main thing as far as I'm concerned. It might not be financially strong or whatever but it keeps it going, it keeps it updated, it keeps it ticking over. It's a way of life and I think we mentioned the succession thing earlier on and yes hopefully Donald, or Dot or Fiona are there who want to do something or take it on, either one of them. Hopefully because you are, you're just preserving it for the next generation and trying to improve it is the ideal kind of thing but you've got to have drive. And as I say most of the diversification was just being in the right place, right time and fell into place. I never actually went out and looked and said right what am I going to do but we need the diversified things now to keep the whole business going. (Andrew)

Embeddedness of the family business in the local area and the personal ties this provided enabled the businesses to bring new expertise into the farm (Lawson and Lorenz, 1999). This access to resources was often happenstance or serendipitous that can come from familiness, as related by Richard:

Well the actual ... coming up with the brand name funnily enough I went to these expensive designers and hated everything they came up with. So I do have an eye for ... once I like something I know I like it and actually it was having a moan to ... Annie that does the Highland Pottery and her son came into the room and said you should talk to my friend Freddie at Art College in Edinburgh he's really good at that kind of thing. (Richard)

The trust engendered through these rich social relations allowed for new relationships to be forged and reciprocity and sharing between individuals with no prior connection but common personal ties (Oreszczyn et al., 2010). The trust engendered through these third-party ties meant that these relationships were very quickly close and informal, even if as in this case it was acknowledged by both parties that the mutual advantage of the relationship was likely to be short-lived. Continuing his account of brand development, Richard notes:

Went for a beer with Freddie and told him what I was trying to get at and about three weeks later I had the brand and I think he nailed it ... but he's now been snapped up by a fancy design agency down in London. (Richard)

Being embedded within a local, geographic community can provide an opportunity for dense and rich social relationships to develop (Kalantaridis and Bika, 2006). Using and expanding existing networks can be a key means of growing the business. Being a dominant family in the local environment provides the opportunity for using the family's

reputation to forge ties and access new markets and business opportunities and expand the familiness resources. Richard discusses how he uses both his family's reputation and his own ties in the farming and local food community to expand his product portfolio:

You've got to bring a presence. So we started—we tied up with Strawberry Fields Fruit Farm over at Comrie. Started selling their fruit vinegars: "There you go. There's a bottle of oil. There's a vinegar. Make yourself a dressing. Use the recipe card." That's how we started. Enough people asked me for a dressing, so I've made a raspberry dressing. That was the first one I made. I made it in my kitchen on my own, and it just sold immediately. I discussed it with a local chef, and he said ... at the time there was an offer going on between him and a large Scottish catering company. He part owned it so that's how this deal came about. (Richard)

The inclusion of the wider family into the family business provides an opportunity for the extension of familiness as new networks develop. Tom discusses how he used networking practices to access information and build a collaborative relationship with a mentor to develop his expertise and through his positive experience of this he then went on to mentor others demonstrating reciprocity (McKeever et al., 2015). He makes these learning resources (Irava and Moores, 2010) part of the familiness of his diversified business but also embed them in his wider network of loose ties:

I think I just Googled cold press of rapeseed or something and he was a really nice and helpful guy. He let me go down ... because obviously other people are not that keen. It's funny, I've started taking that approach when people have phoned up and asked me because I had such a good experience with Alan, so I thought what comes around goes around. (Tom)

The bringing in of the wider family makes for a stronger family unit and concurrent family business. Indeed, we argue that it fundamentally changes the nature and scope of the core business. The extended family become a key familiness resource for strategic planning and the strategic development of an enhanced family farm extending their decision making resources (Irava and Moores, 2010). As Richard discusses, the diversified business and core farming business cease to be stand-alone units, rather they heavily impact upon the development of each part. Thus in this case we see symbiosis occurring in that the whole becomes larger and more impactful than the sum of its parts:

Certainly now we have common discussions about the future of all the businesses. My dad and my brother for the bulk stuff they are trying to grow they are wanting higher yielding varieties. We grow enough of my variety to keep me going for this year but we have then discussed new varieties that I can try out ... I'll press some, it might turn out to be better tasting. We need to all think about how our decisions effect the whole business. (Richard)

So, as well as day to day business decision making, this symbiosis is evident in broader brand development and building where the family is strongly embedded and utilised to add value, build authenticity and credibility and enable brand story-telling (Holt, 2004). Richard's website for his diversified brand strongly situates it within the family business and the heritage which that has. Richard uses story-telling to tell of the generations on the farm and his own journey to deeply embed this new business as part of the family story. The imagery and language used is highly evocative of a romanticised rurality and most of the story is about farming rather than the diversified enterprise:

Yes well the farm is the brand name of my rapeseed oil company. It is the home farm name as you can see coming down the road and I use the farm through all my brand development. In my website and on my packaging I totally integrate the farm with the product and build on the heritage that 150 years of farming this land has given us. (Richard)

Thus we see multiple ways in which embedding practices enable

family firms to extend their familiness and benefit from the wider networks and strong and weak ties of individual family members. Individuals were seen to draw on practices from wider networks as inspiration for their own family farm businesses. Embedding practices were also seen to confer advantages on both the core and diversified farm businesses. Family firms benefit from the wider networks and strong and weak ties of individual family members. Familiness allows diversified farm businesses to draw on other capitals from the core farm business – material economic capital, cultural capital in terms of accumulated cultural knowledge, skills and education from both the family and the family farm, and symbolic capital in terms of the legitimation drawn from association with the heritage of the family farm (Drakopoulou Dodd et al., 2018; Pret et al., 2016).

4. Discussion and conclusions

In this paper we contribute to an understanding of family businesses by expanding upon the limited literature which exists on performative views of business family (Koerner and Fitzpatrick, 2002). We respond to calls for a need to explore further the family as a socially constructed group (Frank et al., 2019; Jennings et al., 2014; Moores, 2009) and the consequences on family businesses and family enterprise. We draw upon sociological understandings of the performing of family (Finch, 2007) and uncover a range of practices which are used in family farming business to perform family.

We demonstrate that family can be both done and displayed through the core business in a number of ways. First through practices of doing mundane but necessary work. Pooling the family resources at times of need is a way of consanguineous and affinal kin to be established and acknowledged as core business family members. Thus we see this as an activity which legitimates their positions. Conversely, those who leave the family business become forgotten and distant from both the family and its associated businesses. In our findings this estrangement engenders a strong desire for absent family to return to the home farm and to re-establish themselves as part of the family business and indeed the business family. This performativity can be demonstrated through pluriactivity, however this presents tensions because short-term sustainability and long term development come into conflict. The core family is also displayed outside of the home and we see the mixing of social and business activities which blurs the boundaries between family and family business. By taking this performative view we extend the understanding of familiness as resources which consist of practices of intertwining the family and the family business (Litz, 2008).

Traditional succession limits the scope for all family members to engage in the core agricultural business. We highlight how families use diversification activities as a means of extending the boundaries of the family business and allowing individual family members to remain within an expanded business that is synonymous with business family membership. Diversification acts as a means of increasing the opportunities to perform family within the family business and legitimising a wider range of family members in the family firm and the family itself.

In our study we further see that the notion of family is co-opted by these diversified business activities to build their familiness resources. It is used as a way of signifying authenticity and quality and strongly anchored to the agricultural core, allowing the diversified businesses to gain strong business advantage and value. We also suggest that the core agricultural business benefits from the influx of familiness skills and resources from these other businesses.

These family farms have process resources derived from their familiness (Irava and Moores, 2010) because they are all strongly embedded in the local area and the trust engendered through these rich social relations allows for new relationships to be forged and reciprocity to be shared. Existing farming networks are used and expanded into the wider local community and become a strong familiness resource for an expanded family business. Bringing the wider family in allows the business to extend familiness and to benefit from a broad range of

networks. Notably, in line with Shaw et al. (2017) we see the importance of weak ties for these family businesses in providing the firms with both tactical and strategic benefits. Finally, we demonstrate that the accumulation of these practices results in a stronger family business. In our cases the symbiosis of core and novel units creates a strategically more impactful family business which can endure and create wealth into subsequent generations.

A benefit of case study research is that it provides rich data within its context. (Cope, 2011). While we feel that this paper has deepened understanding of the performative nature of family within family farming businesses we recognise that there is scope to explore these issues in other business contexts. For example, family farms have traditional succession structures, wealth is heavily tied within the land and they are bounded by and to a specific place. In exploring other contexts not similarly bounded, there is the opportunity to further expand on the range of practices which may be employed by family members to demonstrate their family belonging.

We believe that using performative family theory, that remains largely outside of current entrepreneurship and the family business literature, has enabled a deeper understanding of the performativity of practices that give meaning to the notion of family and which in turn become familiness resources for the family business. We suggest that further multidisciplinary approaches could help our understanding of the relationships between family and family business.

Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2020.06.002>.

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