Although the authors’ disciplinary backgrounds are varied, further developments could follow from contributions from other disciplines, two in particular. An earlier study of mine found that three disciplines, poorly represented in family business studies, could be of considerable value: law, anthropology, and history (the only one of these represented in the volume). Legal contexts are often noted as important contextual factors to explain the prevalence and endurance, yet there are no legal scholars represented. Similarly, chapters focus on culture (Chapter 6) and refer to their title to “kinship” (Chapter 8). However, the former does not refer to anthropology and the latter does not in fact discuss kinship. (It is, rather, an overview of work by financial economists.)

In many ways the volume reflects the current state of the family business field. Chapter 2 includes an effort to define what the term “family business” means, but consensus is lacking on what is meant by the term (p. 3), a problem this does not stop the authors from referring to management, ownership, or organization all in the same argument. Another common feature is a back-and-forth depiction of the liabilities and the benefits of kinship involvement in business (e.g. Chapters 3, 4, 7, 8, 11). Yet another common feature of the current scholarship is a tendency to dichotomize the world into “family” and “non-family” firms with little effort to provide needed contextualization. James’s chapter (p. 65) provides an example of the recognition of the limitations of this approach, in contrast with specifying the role of specific variables (in this case, firm age).

The volume does not only discuss the longitudinal dimension of firms themselves, but also attends to the development of scholarship in the field (especially in Chapter 1, but also Chapter 9). Moreover, it provides suggestions about topics needing further research and reflection (as in Chapters 4 and 8). As these contributions suggest, the intended audience for the volume is largely that of scholars conducting research or developing theory in this field. For this audience the volume is a valuable addition to the literature.

Alex Stewart
Marquette University, Wisconsin, United States of America
http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.the.2015.07.008