

# Family Business Research in the New Millennium

## An Overview of the Who, the Where, the What, and the Why

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The authors' analysis of 291 family business articles published in 30 management journals between 2001 and 2007 reports the contributions of individual scholars and academic institutions to family business research. To better understand the interrelationships among scholars who have contributed to family business research, a network analysis of coauthor relationships was conducted. The authors also provide a content analysis of the articles and offer suggestions for future research. By analyzing the who, where, and what of family business research, the reasons why the developmental trends have occurred and how the field's momentum can be maintained and directed toward productive ends become clearer.

**Keywords:** *family business research topics; family business research directions; scholarly networks; scholarly impact; university impact*

### Introduction

In 1997, Shane published a study on the contributions of authors and institutions to the development of the field of entrepreneurship. His analysis was timely, as the field of entrepreneurship was growing rapidly and was beginning to gain prominence among management scholars. Family firm research, a field whose domain significantly overlaps that of entrepreneurship, has experienced similar growth in recent years (cf. Katz, 2003; Sharma, Hoy, Astrachan, & Koironen, 2007). Indeed, scholarly articles on family firms have started to appear in premier journals (e.g., Gómez-Mejía, Hynes, Núñez-Nickel, & Moyano-Fuentes, 2007; Schulze, Lubatkin, Dino, & Buchholtz, 2001), and a host of special issues have been published (e.g., Chrisman, Sharma, & Taggar, 2007; Chrisman, Steier, & Chua, 2008; R. K. Z. Heck & Mishra, 2008; Rogoff & Heck, 2003). Because family firms appear to dominate the world economy (Cromie, Stephenson, &

Montieth, 1995; Donckels & Frölich, 1991; Westhead & Cowling, 1998), the growth in research is overdue. As a result, a need has emerged to systematically evaluate the contributions of researchers and universities to family business research, show the interconnectedness of those contributions, and take stock of the content of the articles in question (see also Casillas & Acedo, 2007; Chrisman, Chua, & Sharma, 2005; Sharma, 2004).

This article addresses this need by identifying the researchers who have contributed to the field of family business and the institutions where the research has been conducted. The article also analyzes what the content areas that have been studied over the period of 2001 to 2007 are. Finally, by providing an analysis of the network relationships among the authors we are able to provide a more nuanced understanding of why certain scholars and institutions have been productive and why some topics have received greater attention than others. We concentrate on

the publications in 30 leading “management” journals because most of the scholars who conduct family business research publish their work in those outlets.

Our article contributes to the field of family business in several ways. First, this study identifies the scholars whose work has made the largest contribution to the recent development of the family business literature based on their number of contributions, adjusted by the quality of the outlets in which they have published and the number of coauthors with whom they have worked. As our analysis will show, research in the field has been dominated by a relatively small number of scholars who appear to be connected in terms of backgrounds, institutional affiliations, and interests.

Second, we provide a listing of the academic institutions that have been the most active in contributing to family business research. Our findings suggest that factors such as critical mass, resource availability, and administrative support are important in developing an institutional focus on emerging research fields whose importance may not be apparent to those committed to more mature research disciplines. By presenting evidence of the contributions to knowledge that the institutions that have invested in family business research have made, we hope to provide justification for continuing investments and perhaps stimulate the interest of external stakeholders to provide additional investments in the future (Shane, 1997).

Third, we conducted a network analysis to gain a better understanding of the extent to which family firm scholars are collaborating, the relationships among the individual scholars, and how the nomological net of family firm research has developed (Acedo, Barroso, Casanueva, & Galan, 2006). Although the family business research community is growing, it remains small and closely knit, which suggests both that knowledge diffusion will be rapid in the years to come and that further efforts are needed to expand that community. Because the network analysis illustrates the importance of scholarly networks to the advancement of research, we hope to encourage other scholars and institutions to link with those networks as well as build new networks of their own.

Finally, by analyzing the topic areas that have been covered in family business research and comparing that coverage with prior periods, we are able to identify research trends and areas that deserve further investigation. Because these trends and gaps are related to the individuals, institutions, and networks involved in family business research, we hope to stimulate scholars in existing and emerging networks to build upon the momentum gained in particular areas of inquiry as well as to incorporate new topic areas into their repertoire in order to fill the gaps in knowledge identified in this article.

## Method

To conduct the analysis, we reviewed articles published in 30 management journals between 2001 and 2007. We derived our initial list of journals from earlier studies that focused on journal outlets appropriate for entrepreneurship research (MacMillan, 1993; Shane, 1997). In addition to the journals identified in the aforementioned studies, we included journals that were either family firm specific (i.e., *Family Business Review*) or published numerous family firm articles in the time period of our investigation (e.g., *Journal of Business Research*). Finally, we added journals that a survey of scholars suggested were appropriate outlets for publishing family business research (Chrisman, Chua, Kellermanns, Matherne, & Debicki, 2008).<sup>1</sup> In addition, we reviewed *Business Ethics Quarterly* as its editors have indicated an interest in family business research as evidenced by their announcement of a forthcoming special issue on family firms.

Publications considered relevant to this study included peer-reviewed articles, invited publications, substantive editorials, and research notes. Book reviews were not considered, nor were family firm–related books or book chapters in edited volumes. Applying a lenient definition of family firms (i.e., firms where there was significant family involvement or support) to the journal articles, the two lead authors of this article identified 291 family business articles. To categorize the articles, their titles, keywords, and abstracts were examined. In cases where a clear determination could not be made from the initially obtained information, the entire article was reviewed. For example, in cases where the terms *family business* or *family enterprise* were not used explicitly but the context indicated that the article was part of the nomological network of family businesses research, the article was classified as a family firm article. In cases of disagreement, the third author reviewed the article and made a final assessment, which was necessary for 10 articles.

## Individual and Institutional Research Productivity

We determined the research productivity of individuals and institutions in the following ways. In the first step, the two lead authors counted the number of articles that each individual authored or coauthored. A list of all authors with two or more family business publications during the time period analyzed is provided in Appendix A. As the publication counts do not take the number of coauthors associated with the article into consideration, we calculated the adjusted number of appearances for each scholar using the following formula: Weights of one were assigned for each sole

authored article, weights of one half were assigned for each article with two coauthors, weights of one third were assigned for each article with three coauthors, and so on. This formula has been used in previous studies of the contributions of authors in entrepreneurship (Shane, 1997), finance (J. L. Heck & Cooley, 1988), and international business (Morrison & Inkpen, 1991).

To account for the quality of the publications, the mean Social Science Citation Index impact factors between 2005 and 2007 were utilized.<sup>2</sup> The journals' average impact factors and number of family business articles published are provided in Table 1. Of the 291 articles family business articles published during the time period analyzed, 46.7% were published in *Family Business Review*, the only dedicated family business journal in existence. Another 29.6% of the articles were published in three entrepreneurship journals: *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, and *Journal of Small Business Management*.

Finally, we established institutional productivity scores by aggregating the individual journal publications, which were adjusted by coauthorship and journal quality to the university level. To do so, we recorded the primary institutional affiliation of the authors at the time in which the article was published.<sup>3</sup>

**Network Analysis**

Coauthorship of research articles can also be analyzed in terms of networks formed by scholars, as well as the central positions certain authors might occupy in such networks (Acedo et al., 2006). To understand a scholar's influence, importance, or value of his or her social capital, it is necessary to analyze that individual's position in the network. To carry out this analysis, we used the concepts of degree centrality (the number and strength of an author's connections to others), neighborhood size (the number of an author's connections without regard to strength), and betweenness centrality (an author's impact and importance in the network), which connote different facets of an individual's network position (Freeman, 1979). All three indices have been employed in previous research (Acedo et al., 2006) to evaluate an individual's position in scholarly networks in organizational studies. We utilized UCINET 6 (Borgatti, Everett, & Freeman, 2002) to establish the various indices and the plotting software to map the networks of scholars. A detailed interpretation of the indices is provided in the result section.

**Content Analysis**

The two lead authors reviewed the articles and coded them based on six broad topic areas and 21 subcategories,

**Table 1**  
**Journal List: Mean Social Science Citation Index (SSCI; 2005-2007) Impact Factors and Number of Family Business Articles Published**

Journal	Mean SSCI Impact Factor (2005-2007)	Number of Family Business Articles
<i>Academy of Management Journal</i>	3.5	4
<i>Academy of Management Review</i>	4.4	1
<i>Administrative Science Quarterly</i>	2.7	3
<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	0.7	0
<i>California Management Review</i>	1.1	0
<i>Corporate Governance</i>	1.4	11
<i>Entrepreneurship &amp; Regional Development</i>	0.9	2
<i>Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice</i>	1.8	44
<i>Family Business Review</i> <sup>a</sup>	0.7	136
<i>Harvard Business Review</i>	1.4	1
<i>Human Relations</i>	0.9	2
<i>International Small Business Journal</i>	0.8	9
<i>Journal of Applied Psychology</i>	2.9	0
<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	0.6	2
<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	0.8	13
<i>Journal of Business Venturing</i>	1.8	24
<i>Journal of Management</i>	1.8	0
<i>Journal of Management Studies</i>	1.8	5
<i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>	1.8	1
<i>Journal of Small Business Management</i>	0.8	18
<i>Leadership Quarterly</i>	1.7	1
<i>Long Range Planning</i>	1.2	1
<i>Management Science</i>	1.8	0
<i>Organization Science</i>	2.6	1
<i>Organization Studies</i>	1.6	4
<i>Organizational Dynamics</i>	0.6	0
<i>Sloan Management Review</i>	0.8	1
<i>Small Business Economics</i>	0.7	3
<i>Strategic Management Journal</i>	2.5	1
<i>Strategic Organization</i> <sup>b</sup>	0.9	3
Total		291

a. Impact factor for 2007 only was used because the journal was not listed in the SSCI prior to that year.

b. Not listed in the SSCI. Median impact factor for all business journals used (0.9).

which were based on previous research (Chrisman, Chua, & Sharmal, 2003). The categories included (a) goals and objectives with 3 subcategories, (b) strategy formulation

and content with 9 subcategories, (c) strategy implementation and control with 6 subcategories, (d) management with 3 subcategories, (e) other topics relevant to strategic management, and (f) nonstrategic management topics. To provide a more detailed assessment, the content of each article was coded based on their primary topics.<sup>4</sup> Disagreements in coding were resolved by discussions with the third author. This was necessary for 27 articles.

## Results

### Ranking of Authors

Table 2 presents the ranking of the most productive scholars in family business after adjustments for coauthors and journal quality. The final scores were calculated by multiplying appearances, adjusted by number of coauthors, by the journal quality ratings (for a detailed description of the calculation see Shane, 1997). After adjustments for coauthors and journal quality, the most productive scholar between 2001 and 2007 was Steier, followed by Chrisman, Chua, Sharma, and Kellermanns. Not surprisingly, some of these scholars were frequent collaborators on studies of family firms, as shown in our network analysis reported below. It should also be apparent that to a great extent these scholars (as well as other scholars on the list in Table 2) share present or past primary or secondary institutional affiliations and are connected in other ways such as journal editorships and involvement in conferences and professional organizations.

### Ranking of Institutions

Ranking of institutions according to their contributions to scientific fields has previously been established in fields such as accounting (Andrews & McKenzie, 1978; Bazley, Nikolai, & De Coster, 1975), marketing (Henry & Burch, 1976), and entrepreneurship (Shane, 1997). Similar reviews have been done to assess the impact of institutions on other disciplines. For instance, Eisenberg and Wells (1998) ranked the scholarly contributions of law schools.

We follow the aforementioned approach by analyzing contributions to family business research by different academic institutions. As outlined earlier, to address the argument that the scholarly impact might in fact depend both on the number of coauthors and the quality of journals in which the research is published, we incorporated both of those adjustments in the rankings that appear in Table 3. As this table shows, when adjusting for both coauthors and journal quality, the University of Alberta is the top ranked

**Table 2**  
**Most Published Authors Adjusted by Number of Coauthors and Social Science Citation Index Measure of Journal Quality**

Author	Adjusted Publications
Lloyd Steier	10.30
James J. Chrisman	9.42
Jess H. Chua	9.15
Pramodita Sharma	6.03
Franz W. Kellermanns	6.00
Joseph H. Astrachan	4.84
Shaker A. Zahra	4.55
W. Gibb Dyer, Jr.	4.45
Michael H. Lubatkin	4.33
Danny Miller	4.30
Michael Carney	4.20
William S. Schulze	4.07
Isabelle Le Breton-Miller	3.95
Frank Hoy	3.80
Kimberly A. Eddleston	3.10
Ramona K. Z. Heck	3.00
Michael D. Ensley	2.97
Luis Gómez-Mejía	2.87
Paul Westhead	2.87
Richard Dino	2.87
Timothy Habbershon	2.75
Mattias Nordqvist	2.66
Eric Gedajlovic	2.30
Carole Howorth	2.28
Katuska Cabrera-Suárez	2.23

institution, followed by Mississippi State, University of Calgary, Jönköping International Business School, and Kennesaw State University.<sup>5</sup> As with the scholars themselves, institutional relationships appear to exist among the top-rated universities. For example, the University of Alberta, Mississippi State University, and the University of Calgary are cosponsors of the Theories of Family Enterprise Conference.

### Coauthorship Network Analysis

The position of an author in the network of scholars was first evaluated using the number of connections an author had to others (degree centrality), including multiple connections between specific coauthors who worked on several articles together. Degree centrality considers the number of scholars an author cooperates with, which determines the options and possibilities of collaboration on projects as well as potential access to information or data. Degree centrality

**Table 3**  
**Most Active Institutions Adjusted by Number**  
**of Coauthors and Social Science Citation**  
**Index Measure of Journal Quality**

Institution	Adjusted Publications
University of Alberta	20.10
Mississippi State University	17.27
University of Calgary	10.52
Jönköping International Business School	8.53
Kennesaw State University	8.23
University of Connecticut	7.80
Arizona State University	7.28
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	6.83
Wilfrid Laurier University	6.15
Babson College	6.08
Brigham Young University	5.70
Concordia University	5.60
Case Western Reserve University	5.33
National University of Singapore	5.10
University of Nottingham	4.93
Nanyang Technological University	4.55
HEC Montreal	4.53
University of Minnesota	4.46
Baylor University	3.93
Baruch College	3.90
Northeastern University	3.80
Grand Valley State University	3.40
Erasmus University	3.07
University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	3.00
University of Navarra	2.80

also reflects an author's autonomy, which means that network members are linked to other scholars using different paths (Acedo et al., 2006). As shown in Table 4, Chrisman and Chua have the highest degree centrality scores, followed by Astrachan, Sharma, Danes, and Steier.

Another measure of a scholar's position in a network is neighborhood size (Acedo et al., 2006). This measure is designed to reflect the number of scholars with whom a specific author has worked, without regard to the "strength" of connection (i.e., treating each link as one, even if authors worked together on several projects). Here, we find roughly the same set of authors, albeit in a somewhat different order: Astrachan, Danes, Sharma, Chrisman, Chua, and Zahra. This classification method introduces several changes in the positioning of the authors on the list. For instance, Steier falls from the sixth spot in the degree centrality ranking to a significantly lower position according to the neighborhood size, which indicates in his case that he has worked with fewer coauthors and has more single-authored publications.

Finally, we assessed betweenness centrality, which assesses an individual's impact and importance in the network (Acedo et al., 2006; Cross & Cummings, 2004). This measure illustrates to what extent an author is able to connect others within the network (Cross & Cummings, 2004; Newman, 2005). Members of a network who would otherwise have no connection can potentially link with each other through another individual to whom they are both connected. Acedo et al. (2006) referred to those individuals who perform such a connecting role in a network as "brokers." As shown in Table 4, Astrachan has the highest betweenness centrality score, followed by Sharma. The next four positions are held by Chua, Smyrnios, Steier, and Chrisman. It is instructive that all of these scholars have contributed to the field as journal editors, associate editors, special issue editors, and/or conference organizers. In effect, these roles have allowed them to develop connections with one another and with other scholars. Furthermore, their activities in these roles appear to have led to connections among other scholars.

Because the overall network diagram was too complex and dense to present, we prepared a reduced diagram to provide a more transparent picture of the interrelationships among the most active scholars in the field (see Figure 1). The reduced network focuses on the connections between scholars who had published three or more family business articles. Some of these authors may have worked with more individuals, but if those coauthors published less than three family firm articles, they are excluded from the diagram. The picture also includes scholars who have published three or more family business articles but have no connections to other individuals with similar productivity (three or more articles). These are portrayed on the upper left corner in the figure. Again, these authors might have worked with coauthors who are not portrayed in the diagram.

Our network approach shows distinct clusters of scholars. The primary cluster includes 19 scholars. As this diagram shows, authors like Astrachan and Sharma have important linking positions in the network and are connected with many authors such as Hoy, Klein, Smyrnios, Keyt, Zahra, Chua, and Chrisman, who in turn have multiple additional connections. As noted earlier, Astrachan and Sharma's connections to one another and to other individuals that link the upper and lower portions of the largest network illustrate their high levels of betweenness centrality (see Figure 1).

Aside from the dominant network, the diagram indicates that there are four smaller networks that are not directly connected. Of course, these smaller networks (i.e., Danes and Heck; Howorth, Westhead, and Wright; Craig and

**Table 4**  
**Top Authors According to Network Measures**

	Degree Centrality		Neighborhood Size		Betweenness Centrality (Normalized)
James J. Chrisman	30	Joseph H. Astrachan	16	Joseph H. Astrachan	.350
Jess H. Chua	29	Sharon M. Danes	14	Pramodita Sharma	.245
Joseph H. Astrachan	18	Pramodita Sharma	12	Jess H. Chua	.102
Pramodita Sharma	16	James J. Chrisman	10	Kosmas X. Smyrnios	.101
Sharon M. Danes	15	Jess H. Chua	9	Lloyd Steier	.092
Lloyd Steier	14	Shaker A. Zahra	9	James J. Chrisman	.083
Michael H. Lubatkin	12	Andrew D. Keyt	8	Shaker A. Zahra	.078
Kosmas X. Smyrnios	12	Kosmas X. Smyrnios	8	David Pistrui	.067
William S. Schulze	10	Ritch Sorenson	8	Andrew D. Keyt	.058
Paul Westhead	10	Luis Gómez-Mejía	7	Harold Welsch	.046
Richard Dino	9	George A. Tanewski	7	Daniel L. McConaughy	.038
Andrew D. Keyt	9	Ramona K. Z. Heck	6	Sabine B. Klein	.026
Shaker A. Zahra	9	Michael H. Lubatkin	6	Danny Miller	.026
Luis Gómez-Mejía	8	David Pistrui	6	Sharon M. Danes	.021
Danny Miller	8	Kathryn Stafford	6	Pietro Mazzola	.019
Ritch Sorenson	8	Harold Welsch	6	Franz W. Kellermanns	.010
George A. Tanewski	8	Paul Westhead	6	Reginald Litz	.008
Carole Howorth	7	Mike Wright	6	Ritch Sorenson	.007
Paul Karofsky	7	A. Frank Adams, III	5	Isabelle Le Breton-Miller	.006
Franz W. Kellermanns	7	Keith Brigham	5	George A. Tanewski	.006
Robert Millen	7	Karen A. Duncan	5	Paul Westhead	.006
Kathryn Stafford	7	Paul Karofsky	5	Carole Howorth	.005
Mustafa R. Yilmaz	7	Franz W. Kellermanns	5	Mike Wright	.005
Ramona K. Z. Heck	6	James Marshall	5	Eric Gedajlovic	.004
Isabelle Le Breton-Miller	6	Robert Millen	5	Michael H. Lubatkin	.004
Yan Ling	6	Mattias Nordqvist	5	William S. Schulze	.004
Mattias Nordqvist	6	Patricia D. Olson	5	Lars-Goran Sund	.004
David Pistrui	6	Alan Reifman	5	Yan Ling	.002
Claudio A. Romano	6	Claudio A. Romano	5	Mattias Nordqvist	.002
Nancy Upton	6	Holly Schrank	5	Patricia D. Olson	.002
Harold Welsch	6	William S. Schulze	5	Nancy Upton	.002
Mike Wright	6	Lloyd Steier	5		
		Nancy Upton	5		
		Richard Wampler	5		
		Elizabeth Wieling	5		
		Mustafa R. Yilmaz	5		
		Virginia S. Zuiker	5		
Network mean values	2.479		2.13		.003

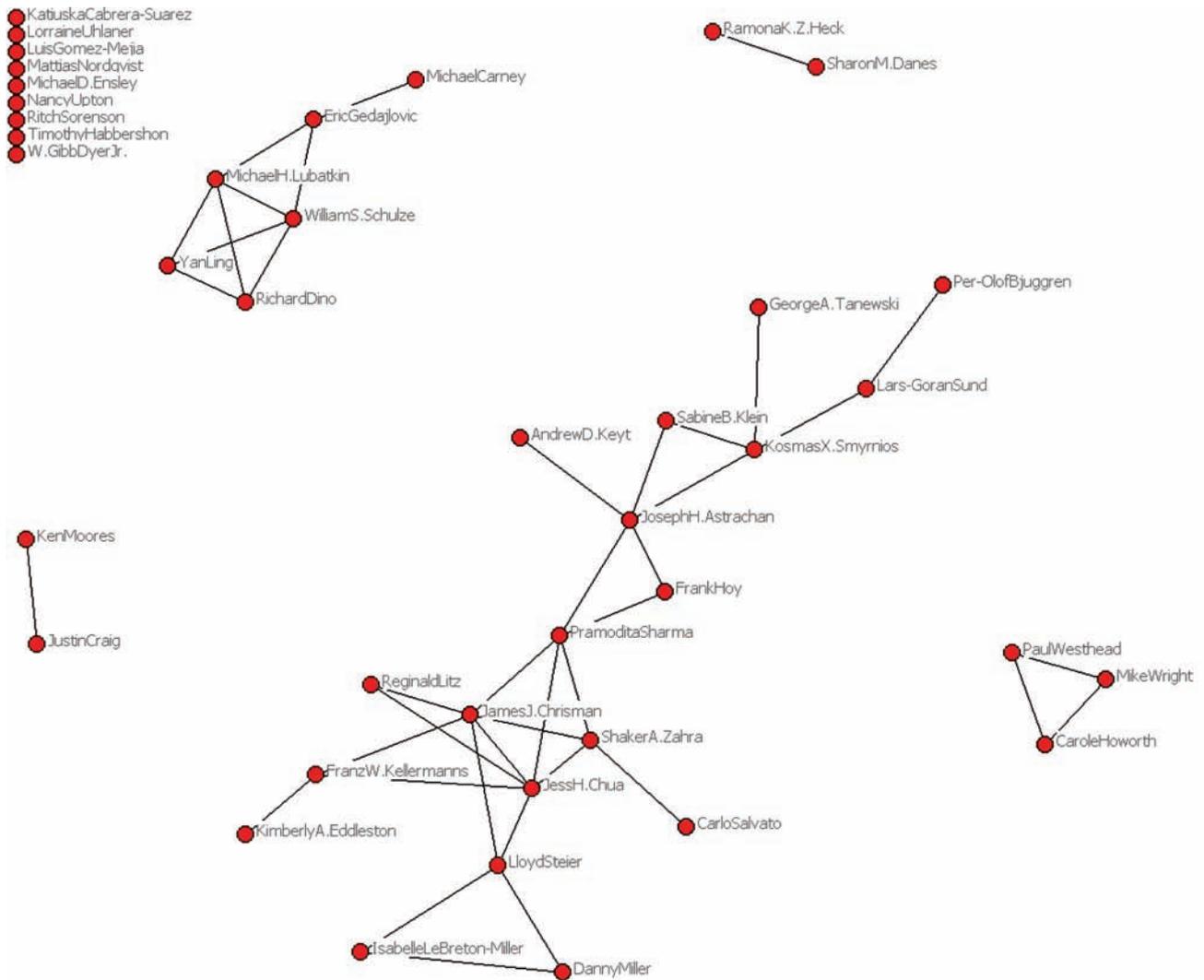
Moores; Carney, Dino, Gedajlovic, Ling, Lubatkin, and Schulze) may have connections to the larger network in ways that cannot be depicted in the diagram restricted to scholars with at least three family business publications. Furthermore, the lack of connections in the diagram does not mean that these scholars do not frequently interact at conferences or build upon one another's work. For example, the series of articles on agency and altruism in family firms by Schulze, Lubatkin, and colleagues (e.g., Schulze et al.,

2001) has been instrumental in shaping the work of scholars in the other networks depicted in Figure 1 (e.g., Chrisman, Chua, & Litz, 2004).

### Content Analysis

Research activities in the six research categories taken from Chrisman et al. (2003) varied widely by category (see Table 5). The overall activity with regard to primary topics

**Figure 1**  
**Family Business Research Coauthorship Network (Three or More Publications per Author)**



of the articles is as follows: goals and objectives (2.8%), strategy formulation and content (28.2%), strategy implementation and control (42.3%), management (33.7%), other topics relevant to strategic management (11.7%), and nonstrategic management topics (9.6%).

In addition to the six main categories, there were 21 subcategories (two of the main categories had no subcategories), which are displayed in the left-hand column of Table 5. The work associated with the subcategories is diffuse, as would be expected among scholars who pursue their own unique research agendas.

*Research focal points.* The most attention in the period of time covered by our review in terms of primary topic areas was given to family business issues associated with corporate governance, which was classified as part of strategy implementation and control. Specifically, this category included investigations of agency theory, stewardship theory, and other governance concerns. Indeed, corporate governance was the primary topic of 56 (19.2%) of the family firm articles published in the 21st century.

Consistent with earlier reviews (Chrisman et al., 2003), matters of succession, as well as leadership and ownership,

**Table 5**  
**Topic Areas in Family Business Research**

Strategic Management Topic Classification	Current Study ( <i>n</i> = 291) <sup>a</sup>		Chrisman, Chua, and Sharma (2003; <i>n</i> = 190)		$\Delta\%$ <sup>b</sup>		
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%			
Goals and objectives	1.1	Economic goals	5	1.7	5	2.6	-33.8
	1.2	Noneconomic goals	3	1.0	5	2.6	-60.4
	1.3	Goal formulation process	0	0.0	1	0.5	-100.0
Strategy formulation and content	2.1	Strategic planning	9	3.1	6	3.2	-3.4
	2.2	Resources and competitive advantage	25	8.6	11	5.8	48.1
	2.3	Environment opportunity and threats	4	1.4	4	2.1	-34.8
	2.4	Corporate strategy	4	1.4	3	1.6	-14.4
	2.5	Business strategy	5	1.7	2	1.1	56.4
	2.6	Functional strategy	6	2.1	7	3.7	-44.3
	2.7	International strategy	6	2.1	6	3.2	-35.6
	2.8	Entrepreneurship and innovation	15	5.2	10	5.3	-2.8
	2.9	Stakeholders, ethics, social responsibility	8	2.8	4	2.1	31.0
Strategy implementation and control	3.1	Corporate governance	56	19.2	18	9.5	102.5
	3.2	Structure	12	4.1	3	1.6	157.5
	3.3	Systems, processes, and networks	8	2.8	5	2.6	5.8
	3.4	Behaviors and conflict	19	6.5	12	6.3	3.7
	3.5	Culture and values	13	4.5	9	4.7	-4.9
	3.6	Evolution and change	15	5.2	3	1.6	221.9
Management	4.1	Leadership and ownership	46	15.8	14	7.4	113.6
	4.2	Professionalization	8	2.8	4	2.1	31.0
	4.3	Succession	44	15.1	42	22.1	-31.6
Other	5	Other topics relevant to strategic management	34	11.7	19	10.0	16.8
Nonstrategy	6	Nonstrategic management topics	28	9.6	43	22.6	-57.4

a. Articles can have more than one primary topic. Therefore, the totals do not equal the number of articles examined.

b. Represents the change in the percentage of articles on each topic in comparison with Chrisman et al. (2003) as shown in the following formula: [Percentage of total articles on topic (current study) – Percentage of total articles on topic (prior study)] ÷ Percentage of total articles on topic (prior study).

both constituted significant portions of family business research in the time period investigated. These two areas were both primary topics for more than 15% of the articles examined. Furthermore, in keeping with the emerging importance of the resource-based view in the domain of

family business (e.g., Habbershon & Williams, 1999), the resources and competitive advantage subcategory of strategy formulation and content constituted a significant portion of research: 8.6% of the articles had this area as a primary research topic.

Family firm behavior and conflict also received substantial attention as a primary topic of research (6.5%). Although this research area has a long history in the family firm domain (e.g., Levinson, 1971), the continued interest in this topic suggests that processes leading to the occurrence and resolution of conflict in family firms are still not fully understood.

*Research gaps.* By contrast, it is also instructive to examine the topic areas that have received little research attention. Among the most striking is the lack of attention to the economic and noneconomic goals of family firms, as well as the process in which goals are formulated. The lack of attention to noneconomic goals is especially surprising for at least two reasons. First, concepts such as altruism (Schulze et al., 2001) and socioemotional wealth (Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007) are considered to be important drivers of family firm behavior and both have a pronounced noneconomic element. Second, the recent work of Basco and Rodríguez (2009) suggests that family firm performance will be better when attention is given to the governance of the family (which is likely to pursue noneconomic goals) as well as the governance of the firm.

Other areas of note that have received relatively little research attention include family firm strategy (corporate, business, functional, and international), stakeholders, ethics, social responsibility, and professionalization.

*Research trends.* The rightmost column of Table 5 provides comparative statistics with regard to trends in research between this study and the period covered by Chrisman et al. (2003).<sup>6</sup> Although their classification of articles published from 1996 to 2003 and our classification of articles published between 2001 and 2007 have overlaps, the comparison is still instructive. Thus, among areas that have received significant attention as primary topic areas it is interesting to note that the relative proportion of studies that have focused on leadership and ownership and corporate governance have more than doubled. Similarly, the emphasis on resources and competitive advantage has increased substantially with the portion of total articles focusing on that topic increasing by nearly 50%.

By contrast, while still constituting a significant percentage of published articles, the relative attention to succession issues has declined by nearly one third. However, given that the number of articles included in our study is substantially greater than in Chrisman et al.'s (2003) study (291 vs. 190), the total number of articles studying succession as a primary topic has remained relatively constant.

Excluding work using the resource-based view, there seems to have been a small absolute increase in the number

of family business strategy articles, but the relative attention to strategy seems to have declined overall. Conversely, the relative emphasis on professionalization and stakeholders, ethics, and social responsibility has increased by 31% and doubled in absolute numbers, but this belies the fact that not much work has been produced on either of these sets of topic areas.

Again, the more troubling statistic is the sharp decline in studies that consider goals, whether of the economic or noneconomic variety, especially as the numbers of studies conducted were so few to begin with. If we do not understand what the goals of family firms are, we will be less able to understand their behavior and how it might be adapted to achieve desired ends.

## Discussion and Conclusions

Our study identified the individuals and academic institutions that have contributed the most to family business research in the past 7 years as well as the topics of interest that these authors investigated. As expected, the publication of family business research is heavily skewed toward journals that specialize in family business or entrepreneurship, particularly *Family Business Review*, *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, *Journal of Business Venturing*, and *Journal of Small Business Management*.

Although we reported the adjusted contributions of scholars and institutions, the rankings shown in Tables 2 and 3 are generally consistent with the unadjusted lists shown in Appendices A and B.<sup>7</sup> Thus, it appears at this point in the field's development that family business research is dominated by a relatively small number of scholars from a small number of schools. These small clusters suggest that continued efforts to expand the field through exposure to family firm research at mainstream conferences such as the Academy of Management and at specialized conferences such as the Family Enterprise Research Conference (FERC), International Family Enterprise Research Academy (IFERA), Eiasm Family Business Workshop, and Theories of the Family Firm Conference are needed. Although currently scholars seem to work together in relatively stable groups and publish their work in the same set of outlets, as the field grows this will undoubtedly change. In the meantime, however, the relative concentration of scholarship at this stage of the field's development does seem to suggest that progress will be rapid and that the opportunity to build a research paradigm for the field is reasonably high.

These conclusions are supported by our network analysis of the patterns of authorship among the scholars involved in the field. Although the overall network density was low in absolute terms at 0.0032, this density was substantially higher than the network density of 0.0002 reported in Acedo et al. (2006) for management research. The 16 times greater network density tends to suggest that the family firm network would allow for more rapid knowledge diffusion throughout the research community and that scholars would be more aware of each others' research than in the overall management literature. In this respect, it is important to note that the roles of journal editors and conference organizers appear especially important owing to the early stage of development and small size of the field.

Our analysis also has implications for both universities and scholars alike. For universities, our research suggests that family firm research centers should be encouraged. As many of the successful universities in our study had established centers and a significant proportion of the most prolific researchers were located at universities providing this infrastructure, centers appear to have a reinforcing effect on family business research. For example, research shows that such centers facilitate collaborations within a university (Boardman & Corley, 2008). This is of particular relevance to junior faculty because the ability to develop a research program and work with other faculty will be a key to their progress toward promotion and tenure. As such, centers serve as important mechanisms to promote a common research agenda as well as in attracting new faculty because they may enhance the positive effects of departmental research productivity on early career research productivity (Williamson & Cable, 2003).

However, functioning research centers are not easily created. As the number of family firm centers has increased and competition has become more pronounced (Sharma et al., 2007), it is even more important now that universities provide an environment conducive to these centers. Particularly, sufficient funding for these centers is necessary (Stahler & Tash, 1994). Not only will this facilitate the attraction of a core group of faculty necessary to create the aforementioned research benefits, but it also will ensure the legitimacy of the research center. Specifically, centers that are aligned with the university's mission and leadership stand to benefit and enhance their survivability over time (Sharma et al., 2007).

We want to mention however that while hiring a "star" to create a center may be beneficial in attracting other faculty and that while championing and mentoring behavior is important to make research groups successful in the long run, this can only be one step of many. Buy-in of colleagues

and the recruitment of faculty interested in the subject area to create a critical mass remain essential. In fact, our experience has suggested that a critical mass of researchers is more important than funding and infrastructure in developing a research program in family business. Furthermore, building a critical mass can be accomplished without funding or infrastructure, although having all three components is obviously the most desirable situation.

However, not all universities have centers or a core group of faculty interested in family firm research. Here, family firm research conferences and university support facilitating the attendance at such conferences become important to the individual researcher. As the field is small and still developing, these conferences will often provide developmental activities led by senior scholars (e.g., *Family Business Review* editors started hosting paper development sessions at some of the aforementioned conferences). Moreover, family firm-specific conferences provide opportunities to forge relationships with researchers holding similar interests. Such opportunities are important because collaboration on research projects tends to increase knowledge, improve quality, and facilitate idea generation (Melin, 2000). This effect is nicely highlighted by our network portrayed in Figure 1, which shows research links between productive scholars within and across universities.

With regard to the content analysis of the study, our review of research areas using Chrisman et al.'s (2003) strategic management topic classification revealed the most widely investigated issues in the family business domain. Corporate governance, leadership and ownership, succession, resources and competitive advantage, and behavior and conflict were the most common themes. Conversely, our analysis revealed areas that have not been sufficiently examined, such as the general aspects of strategy formulation and content, professionalization, and stakeholder, ethics, and social responsibility issues. More important from our vantage point, family business goals have received scant attention in the literature. Gaining an understanding of how noneconomic goals affect behavior and performance seems critical for the development of a theory of the family firm.

Finally, our comparison of the topic areas covered in recent family business research with those covered in an earlier period indicates that the relative attention given to corporate governance, leadership and ownership, and resources and competitive advantage in family firms has increased while family firm succession and goals have received relatively less attention than in prior periods. Furthermore, although there does appear to be some growth in research on strategy, professionalization, and stakeholder,

ethics, and social responsibility topics, that growth has been relatively insignificant as evidenced by the scant attention those topics have been given in the literature. Of course, it should come as no surprise that the most productive scholars and institutions are among the leaders in the emerging emphasis on corporate governance and family involvement and influence as a source of competitive advantages and disadvantages in family firms.

## Limitations

This article documents the contributions of scholars to family business research over the past 7 years. Our approach to assess individual and institutional contributions to the field of family business was adapted from earlier approaches in entrepreneurship (Shane, 1997). However, there are several limitations to this study.

First, scholarly work is not limited to journal publications (Shane, 1997). Activities such as journal editorship, book authorship, organization of conferences, and doctoral student training are alternative and perhaps equally effective ways to support the development of the field (Sharma et al., 2007). Because these activities are not reflected in our article, a detailed investigation of how these activities contribute to the development of family firm research is needed.

Second, although this study focused on measuring contributions based on the number of published articles, the extent of coauthorship, and the quality of the journals in which the work was published, we did not consider the impact of the authors' individual publications. Future studies using citation counts and cocitations are therefore needed to more fully understand the contributions of authors and their work to the development of the field (for recent examples see Casillas & Acedo, 2007; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Bachrach, 2008).

A third limitation of this study is that we focused solely on research published in the 21st century. Given the early stage of development of the field of family business, this appeared appropriate. However, the scope of our inquiry does exclude a number of influential studies published before 2001. Future research could correct this limitation by considering longer time periods and providing a more detailed analysis of research trends.

Fourth, the results of our study are further influenced by the journals we selected to analyze. Our study started and expanded upon an initial list of journals identified for entrepreneurship research (MacMillan, 1993; Shane, 1997), which have a management bias. Our focus on management journals should not be construed however as an attempt to diminish the important contributions made by scholars in

other research fields. Rather, management journals were selected because most family business research is published in such journals. Inclusion of additional journals however may have slightly shifted the rank order of authors or institutions (e.g., the study by Schulze, Lubatkin, & Dino, 2002, published in *Managerial and Decision Economics* was not counted as the journal was not on our journal list). We believe however that a representative picture of the state of the field was provided.

Finally, the classification of articles according to topics was driven by Chrisman et al.'s (2003) scheme, which is biased toward strategic management topics. Although our approach allowed comparisons with their prior work, our use of strategic management topics is not meant to imply that research grounded in other management or business disciplines has not been conducted or that these disciplines have nothing to add to the study of family business. Indeed, we could have selected another way to organize our discussion of topic areas (e.g., Sharma, 2004) and this would have of course provided a somewhat different, although equally valid, perspective on the research being conducted in the field.

## Future Research Directions

Aside from studies that correct the limitations of the current study by including a wider range of journals over a longer period of time, analyzing scholarly contributions using citations, and presenting alternative representations of the literature, our content analysis revealed topic areas that appear to warrant more extensive assessments in future research. Although it would exceed the scope of our article to comment on all of the specific areas that have potential as future research topics, we nevertheless would like to highlight the following.

First, based on our analysis, noneconomic goals remain an underresearched topic in the family firm literature. Recent research has made an attempt to systematize the emotional aspects of family firm performance (e.g., Astrachan & Jaskiewicz, 2008; Basco & Rodríguez, 2009; Zellweger & Astrachan, 2008). However, more research on noneconomic goals and performance seems necessary to develop a complete theory of the family firm (Klein & Kellermanns, 2008). According to Chrisman et al. (2005), family firms often pursue goals—such as family well-being and providing jobs for family members—that differ from those pursued by nonfamily organizations. Therefore, noneconomic goals are likely to be important to many family businesses, and indeed some of the differences in behaviors and performance between family and nonfamily firms appear

to be tied to the greater pursuit of noneconomic goals in the former versus the latter (e.g., Gómez-Mejía et al., 2007). The process in which these goals are formulated may help explain the success or failure of family firms, particularly as the types and importance of noneconomic goals may differ among family members. How family firms deal with the trade-offs between economic and noneconomic goals and avoid potential relational conflicts that goal incompatibilities might entail deserves much more research attention than it has received heretofore.

Second, as noted by Chrisman et al. (2005), agency theory and the resource-based view of the firm appear to be the dominant theoretical perspectives in the literature in the new millennium. This is further emphasized by our findings that studies of corporate governance and resources and competitive advantage account for substantial portions of the studies conducted and that the relative attention paid to those topic areas are growing rapidly. Because these perspectives represent two important bases for the distinctiveness and within-group variations in the behavior and performance of family firms, this attention appears warranted and will hopefully continue. We also believe however that this work could be augmented by the application of related theoretical approaches such as stewardship, stakeholder salience, and transaction cost economics.

Third, the application of agency theory and the resource-based view should also be applied to other topics of importance to family firms such as professionalization and succession. The former is especially in need of good empirical work because little has been done. Furthermore, succession continues to receive significant attention in the literature, but that topic area would also benefit from a more systematic application of theory to its study. Related to this, with the exception of the study by Howorth, Westhead, and Wright (2004), selling out as an alternative to intrafamily succession has received almost no attention in the literature. Additional work is needed in this area because it is clear that intrafamily succession is not always a viable option (DeMassis, Chua, & Chrisman, 2008). Likewise, more work along the lines of Lambrecht and Lievens's (2008) article on how the involvement of family members or certain branches of the family is reduced over

time to preserve the advantages of the family, ensure continuity, and/or reduce conflicts is also needed.

Finally, although not analyzed in this study, we need to mention that about half the papers were not empirical and of the empirical papers many were case studies. A diversity of approaches in a young field is welcomed and should continue. However, we also need to reemphasize the need for greater methodological rigor and multilevel analyses (Chrisman et al., 2007), definitional convergence (Chrisman et al., 2005), and a fuller reporting of sample characteristics (e.g., family firm size) and descriptive statistics (e.g., means, standard deviations, and complete correlation matrices). More sophisticated and stringent statistical analysis techniques should also be encouraged where appropriate (e.g., structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling).

## Conclusion

In closing, this study examined individual and institutional contributions to family business research and the scholarly networks that have emerged in the early years of the 21st century. The content of the journal articles was also analyzed and compared to that reported in a previous study (Chrisman et al., 2003). Through our findings and a discussion of their implications, we hoped to provide a reference point for doctoral students and faculty who are interested in this field of study by identifying who is doing family business research and where, as well as what questions are trying to be answered. Our study also provides useful productivity and journal quality benchmarks for scholars and institutions that are already so engaged. Our network analysis indicates that the field exhibits a relatively high degree of connectivity among scholars and suggests that knowledge generation and diffusion are likely to be purposeful and rapid in the years to come. Finally, our analysis of the coverage of topic areas in the field provides an illustration of research trends and helps to identify the major gaps in our knowledge. Our hope is that this study of the who, where, and what of family business research will serve as an acknowledgement of the work already done and serve to encourage future work that builds on those foundations.

**Appendix A**  
**Published Authors by Total Number**  
**of Articles 2001 to 2007 (≥ 2)**

Author	Number of Family Enterprise Articles
James J. Chrisman	19
Jess H. Chua	18
Lloyd Steier	14
Pramodita Sharma	12
Joseph H. Astrachan	10
Danny Miller	8
Franz W. Kellermanns	7
Isabelle Le Breton-Miller	7
Michael H. Lubatkin	7
Paul Westhead	7
Shaker A. Zahra	7
Sharon M. Danes	6
Carole Howorth	6
William S. Schulze	6
W. Gibb Dyer, Jr.	5
Kosmas X. Smyrnios	5
Michael Carney	4
Justin Craig	4
Richard Dino	4
Kimberly A. Eddleston	4
Andrew D. Keyt	4
Sabine B. Klein	4
Mattias Nordqvist	4
Lars-Goran Sund	4
George A. Tanewski	4
Per-Olof Bjuggren	3
Katuska Cabrera-Suarez	3
Michael D. Ensley	3
Eric Gedajlovic	3
Luis Gómez-Mejía	3
Timothy Habbershon	3
Ramona K. Z. Heck	3
Frank Hoy	3
Yan Ling	3
Reginald Litz	3
Ken Moores	3
Carlo Salvato	3
Ritch Sorenson	3
Lorraine Uhlaner	3
Nancy Upton	3
Mike Wright	3
Pier A. Abetti	2
A. Frank Adams, III	2
Timothy Blumentritt	2

**Appendix A**

Author	Number of Family Enterprise Articles
Louise Cadieux	2
Steven Carchon	2
Erick Chang	2
Jennifer E. Cliff	2
Guido Corbetta	2
Marc Cowling	2
Margaret A. Fitzgerald	2
Miguel Angel Gallo	2
Ercilia García-Élvarez	2
Donald Getz	2
Michael A. Hitt	2
Peter Jaskiewicz	2
Paul Karofsky	2
Matti Koiranen	2
Jean Lee	2
Nancy M. Levenburg	2
Jordi López-Sintas	2
Pietro Mazzola	2
Greg McCann	2
Daniel L. McConaughy	2
Leif Melin	2
Robert Millen	2
Randall Morck	2
Deborah L. Murphy	2
Glenn Muske	2
Manuel Núñez-Nickel	2
Patricia D. Olson	2
Allison W. Pearson	2
Phillip H. Phan	2
David Pistrui	2
Ernesto J. Poza	2
Monder Ram	2
Claudio A. Romano	2
Holly Schrank	2
Thomas V. Schwarz	2
Samuel Seaman	2
David G. Sirmon	2
Kathryn Stafford	2
Jill Thomas	2
Lai Si Tsui-Auch	2
L.A.A. Van den Berghe	2
John Ward	2
Harold Welsch	2
Johan Wiklund	2
Bernard Yeung	2
Mustafa R. Yilmaz	2

## Appendix B

### Most Active Institutions According to Total Appearances 2001 to 2007 ( $\geq 3$ )

Institution	Appearances
Mississippi State University	29
University of Alberta	26
University of Calgary	22
Kennesaw State University	20
Jönköping International Business School	19
University of Minnesota	16
University of Nottingham	14
University of Connecticut	12
Wilfrid Laurier University	12
Case Western Reserve University	11
Concordia University	10
Northeastern University	10
Baylor University	9
HEC Montreal	9
Oregon State University	9
Arizona State University	8
Iowa State University	8
Monash University	8
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute	8
Babson College	7
Brigham Young University	7
Grand Valley State University	7
Texas Tech University	7
University of Cyprus	7
University of Manitoba	7
Erasmus University	6
European Business School	6
University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria	6
University of Navarra	6
Nanyang Technological University	5
National University of Singapore	5
RMIT University	5
San Diego State University	5
Baruch College	4
Bocconi University	4
California State University	4
Loyola University Chicago	4
Alfred University	3
Auburn University	3
Bond University	3
George Mason University	3
Harvard University	3
Indian Institute of Management	3
INSEAD	3
Lancaster University	3
Purdue University	3
Simon Fraser University	3
Stetson University	3

## Appendix B

Institution	Appearances
Texas A&M University	3
Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona	3
Universidad Carlos III	3
Universita Cattaneo	3
Universite du Quebec a Trois-Rivieres	3
University of Adelaide	3
University of Jyväskylä	3
University of New England	3
University of Oviedo	3
University of Pennsylvania	3
University of Texas at El Paso	3
University of Victoria	3
Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration	3
Wake Forest University	3

## Notes

1. The journals included were *Corporate Governance*, *Human Relations*, *International Small Business Journal*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Leadership Quarterly*, *Long Range Planning*, and *Strategic Organization*.

2. Because the *Family Business Review* was not included in the Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) ratings in years 2005 and 2006, its SSCI score for 2007 was used for the analysis. Furthermore, *Strategic Organization* is not yet listed in the SSCI reports. For that journal we used the median impact factor for all journals included in the SSCI categories of business, business finance, economics, and management (0.889).

3. In determining institutional rankings, the institution where an author worked when the article was published is credited for the publication even if the researcher subsequently changed his or her affiliation. However, we did not consider the secondary affiliations of scholars in the analysis. Although only a few scholars had a secondary affiliation, this decision should be noted because it affects our results, particularly for the highest-rated institutions.

4. It should be noted that an article might have more than one primary topic. Thus, the totals do not equal the number of articles examined.

5. The overall counts of article authorship by scholars at different institutions before adjustments are provided in Appendix B. It should be noted that the unadjusted counts in Appendix B are based solely on author affiliations; an institution could receive multiple credits for a single article if it was co-authored by several scholars from that school. However, because we were primarily interested in institutional involvement as measured by the contributions of scholars at that institution, this appeared to be a reasonable method.

6. These statistics were calculated as the proportional growth in the percentage that each topic area constituted of the articles published during the time period. The following formula was utilized: [Percentage of total articles on topic (current study) – Percentage of total articles on topic (prior study)] ÷ Percentage of total articles on topic (prior study).

7. We also used the assessments of journal quality found in Chrisman, Chua, Kellermanns, Matherne, and Debicki (2008) to determine the robustness of our rankings of scholars and institutions. Despite some minor variations in the rankings of top scholars and institutions, the results for both were highly consistent using the alternative approach.

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