

Making the Case for a Mixed Methods Design in a Bourdieusian Analysis of Family Firms

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Abstract: This paper justifies a mixed methods design in a Bourdieusian analysis of SME family manufacturing firms in the UK. Despite the extensive use of Bourdieu in sociological research, there have been few attempts to apply his powerful “thinking tools” of doxa, habitus and fields (Bourdieu, 1979) to business studies. The research methodology outlined in this study adopts a fresh approach to a Bourdieusian analysis of the distinctive nature of family firms, known as “familiness” (T. M. Zellweger, Eddleston, & Kellermanns, 2010). Bourdieu used diverse research methods, including in-depth interviews, photographs and large-scale questionnaires to develop his concepts of doxa, fields and habitus. Therefore the philosophical underpinning has suggested a particular methodological design. Adopting a QUAN + QUAL approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 110), this paper will describe the rationale for the choice of mixed methodology, the relationship of the design to the research aim and objectives, the challenges of each research stage and the case for a mixed methods research design. The quantitative stage identifies trends and correlations between innovation and family firms in the manufacturing sector using a government-commissioned dataset. The qualitative stage is an in-depth analysis of 27 interviews with family firms. The final stage will compare and contrast the analysis from both stages to arrive at a fuller understanding of the phenomenon of “familiness”. This paper will not outline the results from the study, which will be the subject of further papers. It is intended that the contribution of this study will assist family firm researchers to design effective research approaches when exploring the complex nature of family firms. Furthermore, the research design will demonstrate the case for selecting a mixed methods approach for these types of research questions.

Keywords: Mixed methods; Bourdieu; family firms; familiness; manufacturing; innovation

1 Introduction

This paper seeks to make the case for using a mixed methods approach to investigating the nature of “familiness”, through investigating how innovation takes place in SME family manufacturing firms. The importance of innovation in maintaining a family legacy, particularly in the highly competitive manufacturing industry, is paramount. Yet the concept of “familiness” is poorly understood in family firm literature (De Massis, Frattini, & Lichtenthaler, 2012). Hence innovation has been selected as the most relevant business activity for understanding how “familiness” is manifested across a sector and within individual firms. The quantitative study explores the relationship between innovation and familiness across a sector, and the qualitative study explores this relationship within individual firms. This research design uses a complex and unusual methodological approach to which does justice to both the idiosyncratic nature of the family firm and also to the complexity of Bourdieu’s sociological theories. This paper will initially outline the research aim with the supporting ontological and epistemological assumptions and then proceed to explain the research process flow and research design. This paper concludes with an evaluation of the validity and the challenges of this research design.

2 Research Aim, Research Questions and Research Objectives

The key aim of the research is to understand the nature of “familiness” through an exploration of innovation activities in family firms. “Familiness” is defined as a family’s unique qualities, which provide a means of gaining sustainable competitive advantage over non-family rivals (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Tokarczyk, Hansen, Green, & Down, 2007; T. M. Zellweger et al., 2010). The research aim has been broken down into two questions: firstly, “what significant empirical differences exist between family and non-family firms in relation to business performance?” Secondly, “how does “familiness” affect innovation in individual family firms?” The research objectives which are derived from the research questions, are as follows: firstly, “establish the extent and attributes of familiness through analysis of secondary data, with reference to habitus, doxa and fields. Secondly, “explore the nature of familiness through analysis of primary, qualitative data, with reference to habitus, doxa and fields.” The paper will now turn to a discussion of the Bourdieusian concepts.

3 Bourdieusian Concepts

3.1 Habitus – the habits

“Habitus” is Bourdieu’s attempt to ground practices in terms of both historical and cultural ideologies and also in terms of an individual person’s ideology (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002, p. 15). Bourdieu acknowledged that the concepts of habitus derive originally from Aristotle’s “hexis”, which is translated as a “state” or “way of being” (Rodrigo, 2012). Bourdieu was also influenced by Husserl’s idea of “Habitus” or “Habitualität”, or how people develop habitual styles of thinking, which then become ossified into permanent convictions (Moran & Cohen, 2012).

There are three ways in which habitus can be understood. Firstly, we can understand habitus as a concept in an individual’s head, that drives his or her activities in a way that the individual cannot fully articulate. Furthermore, habitus may be not in the rational interests of the individual who performs it. This is where the concept of habitus meets Bourdieu’s theories of power: the dominant or elite “who move in their worlds as fish in water” (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 108) and who do not need to engage in rational thought as to how to achieve the goals that best suit their interests. Their habitus will naturally generate socially desirable actions which meet their interests. Those who are not dominant in a society either do not understand the habitus, or the habitus does not meet their individual interests.

Secondly, in a more refined definition of habitus produced in 1989, nine years after his initial formulation, habitus becomes an expression of cultural norms:

“The habitus, as the system of dispositions to a certain practice, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for the regularity of modes of practice, and if practices can be predicted, the effect of the habitus is that agent who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances.” (Bourdieu, 1986)

In this second definition we can understand habitus as “acquired dispositions” that can be observed through the individual’s interactions with each other and with their environment. Habitus can be replicated without explicit direction, so that a group of individuals will display the same set of behaviours. Therefore, habitus has predictive power: we can formulate hypotheses for future actions, based on previous actions. This makes the concept of habitus particularly useful for this research, which attempts to understand how familiness, a type of habitus unique to the family firm, can predict behaviour in relation to innovation.

Thirdly, habitus is an organising principle for actions: habitus will “underlie the unity of the life-style of a group or a class” (Bourdieu, 1990) and is therefore durable. Habitus allows a family business to learn through the lens of what is normal and acceptable behaviour, but also prevents learning, in that it privileges past behaviours. The habitus of a family will be shared by its members and the concept of habitus gives weight to historical events. History forms the cornerstone of habitus.

Bourdieu himself noted in his study of the Kabyle that their “habitus” discourages innovation, but also that “if innovation is always suspect – and it is not only inasmuch as it flouts tradition – it is because the peasants are always inclined to see it as the desire to distinguish oneself, to stand apart, as a way of challenging others and crushing them.” (Bourdieu, 1979, p. 18). A pre-industrial, agrarian, rural society based on wide kinship is clearly different from SME manufacturers based on nuclear family structures in the UK. Here, innovation is actively encouraged to be part of the habitus of modern manufacturers (Foresight, 2013; House of Commons Library, 2015b). It can therefore be envisaged that SME manufacturers, whether family or non-family, have developed a “habitus” that rejects tradition, embraces competition and are keen to innovate.

3.2 Doxa – the rules

Habitus is created and reinforced by doxa. Bourdieu, in observing Algerian and his own French societies, developed the concept of doxa: the cultural competencies which are shorthand to interpreting the world around them. Bourdieu provided another formulation of doxa as the “sens pratique”, where it displayed in an individual’s “commitment to presuppositions – doxa – of the game” (Bourdieu, 1990d, p. 66). Doxa provide the ability to instantly understand the rule of the game, or the specific, unspoken assumptions of a particular

field. Doxa, therefore, refer to the normative rightness of accepted ideas, or what an individual considers probable, and can be contrasted with scientific demonstration.

Doxa are acquired by birth, or “through a slow process of co-option and initiation which is akin to a second birth” (Bourdieu, 1990d, p. 68). The implication for the field of family businesses is that the family members acquire their understanding of their doxa i.e. the values and behaviours of both the family, and their business from birth. Entrepreneurial family business members also need to acquire an understanding of the doxa by which their customers, suppliers and employees operate, in order to grow their businesses. The ability to learn new doxa relating to the fields of business, while being able to smoothly navigate the doxa of their own families, is a distinguishing feature of the family firm. Outsiders, who may be familiar with the doxa governing a particular industry, may be unfamiliar with the doxa governing the family who are involved in the business.

3.3 Fields – the spaces

For Bourdieu, the social world is a relational space, and a field is an autonomous area of activity that contains the doxa, or the rules of functioning; the doxa define the relations amongst the individuals within a particular field. The field is a structured space, of positions between individuals, where each individual is struggling for a better position.

“Fields [are] historically constituted areas of activity with their specific institutions and their own laws of functioning. The existence of a specialized and relatively autonomous field is correlative with the existence of specific stakes and interests via the inseparably economic and psychological investments that they create in the agents endowed with a certain habitus, the field and its stakes (themselves produced as such by relations of power and struggle in order to transform the power relations that are constitutive of the field) produce investments of time, money and work etc.” (Bourdieu, 1990c, p. 87).

In this description, each agent of the field is characterised by their level of power, their interests and their habitus. There are, therefore, the dominated and dominating agents in the field. The practices and strategies of the agents in the field can only be understood relationally: in terms of how an agent interacts with those around them.

Bourdieu was interested in the forces that generate struggles between agents, in fields where resources are scarce and competition is fierce to obtain them. If agents are struggling for resources within the field of the firm, then efforts are diverted to managing these struggles, which can be counter-productive for firm performance, as formulated in agency theory (Fama & Jensen, 1983). We can therefore designate the family and the firm as being two distinct, but overlapping fields, with the same players taking up different positions (father-owner; son-employee), but with similarities in terms of their power. Figure 1 below explains how habitus, doxa and fields correspond to the structure of the family firm.

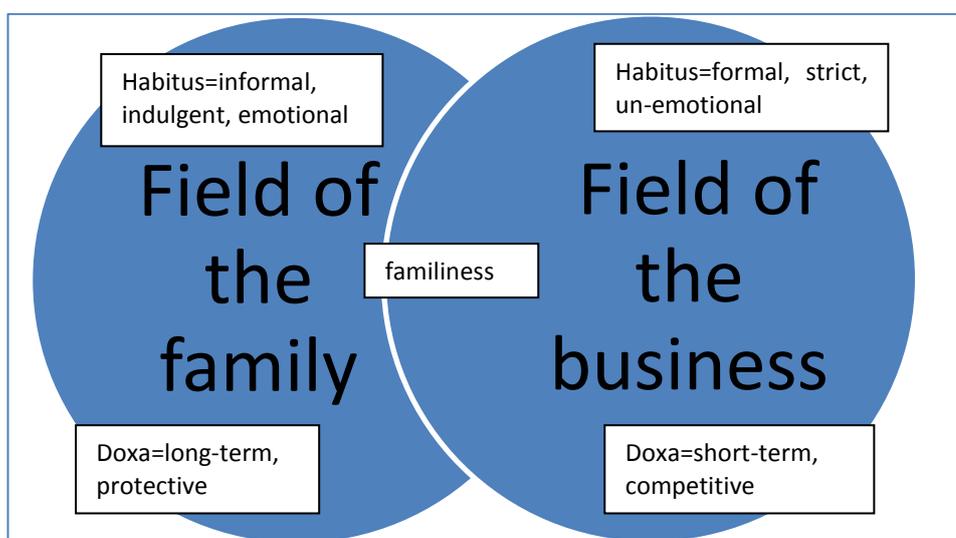


Figure 1: An Illustration of Habitus, Doxa and Fields in the Family Firm

In the case of a firm owner, who is also a father, the father-owner is an agent, operating both in the “playing field” of family and the “killing field” of the business. He would have a distinct habitus for the field of family, one that may involve informal dress, an indulgent approach to his children, gestures, such as hugs, and emotional language, such as endearments. His habitus and his field would be operated by doxa, the rules which organise and give meaning to his behaviours. The rule of family operates on a long-term basis, which is the lifespan of each agent. The family rules prioritise the care and protection of the other agents, or family members. Despite this harmonious example, there may still be elements of a power struggle in the family as time wears on: an ageing parent, who becomes frail and dependent on their children; a re-marriage, which introduces a new agent in the form of a step-parent, with a different level of power to children. The family field is autonomous: family rules and behaviours operate independently of the business.

We can also hypothesize the field of business, where the owner dresses, speaks and behaves differently. The doxa, or rules of business, favour the shorter-timeframe of business, and encourage a competitive attitude towards other employees. A firm is the site for power struggles between its employees: for pay, training, status and other resources.

Familiness is the intersection between the fields of family and of the business. In other words, familiness is where doxa and habitus interact within the overlap between family and business. Bourdieusian field theory says little about the intersections between fields, even though individuals are active in more than one field in an industrialised society. This methodology required will be one that can examine the intersection between fields. It is this intersection that the research will define as, in Bourdieusian terms, as the source of familiness. This study will go onto also understand how habitus and doxa compete or complement each other in this intersection, and whether the resulting familiness is of benefit or hindrance to firm performance.

4 Research Approach

The research approach has been informed by Bourdieu’s methodology, which reconciled quantitative data with the insights gained from in-depth interviews, photographs and observation. Bourdieu, while using quantitative data, was sceptical of a purely positivist approach (Bourdieu, 1990). He was reluctant to interpret large-scale datasets without reference to the social and political power relations that structure an individual’s attitudes and behaviours.

4.1 Philosophical, Ontological and Epistemological Assumptions

While there is an increasing acceptance that the debate over the validity of mixed methods is not as prevalent as it once was (Alvesson & Kaj, 2009), recent research warns that a study that includes both data types without strong philosophical, ontological and epistemological justification is simply a “collection of methods” (Harrison, 2013). This research attempts to engage both the positivist and anti-positivist epistemological viewpoints by adopting a pragmatic philosophy. The pragmatic philosophy is able to do justice to both objective realities and subjective viewpoints and can be used as the basis for a mixed methods approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2003). Pragmatism is based on a common-sense, truth-seeking approach to problem-solving, which distrusts a priori arguments:

“Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from any one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, saving labour; is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally. This is the view that...truth in our ideas means their power to “work”. (James, 1907).

This philosophy is suited to the complex ontological world of family firms, and to the problem-solving approach of understanding the nature of “familiness”. The first problem is to understand the nature of “familiness”, including the extent to which it exists; the second problem is the extent to which “familiness” can be theoretically explained by Bourdieusian concepts of doxa, fields and habitus. Solving the first problem requires that external, objective realities are studied, using a quantitative epistemology. Solving the second problem requires an in-depth investigation of internal, subjective viewpoints, using a qualitative epistemology. Bourdieu shares with the pragmatic philosophers, the belief that there can be multiple logics, and a historical and contextual dimension to interpretation of data. The pragmatic philosophy therefore forms the backbone

to a mixed methods position, allowing for both the constraints of positivism and the laxity of anti-positivism to be successfully navigated.

4.2 Convergent Parallel Research Design

The research design selected for this study is a convergent parallel design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2003). The convergent parallel design has the following characteristics:

"[it] uses concurrent timing to implement the quantitative and qualitative strands during the same phase of the research process, prioritises the methods equally and keeps the strands independent during analysis and then mixes the results during the overall interpretation."
(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 70)

The convergent parallel design was described in earlier mixed methods handbooks as the concurrent triangulation design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2003) and has since been re-named, as presumably all mixed methods studies could be said to triangulate between data points. However, the convergent design is where the "convergence" occurs at the problem-level. In this study, qualitative and quantitative data will be triangulated in order to converge on the answer to the research aim and to provide a critical analysis of the nature of "familiness."

This study uses the type of convergent parallel design, together with sequential timings and is outlined in Figure 2 below.

In this design, qualitative and quantitative data collection occurs during Time T and comparison of data at Time T+1 and interpretation of data at Time T+2 starts once the data collection process has been completed.

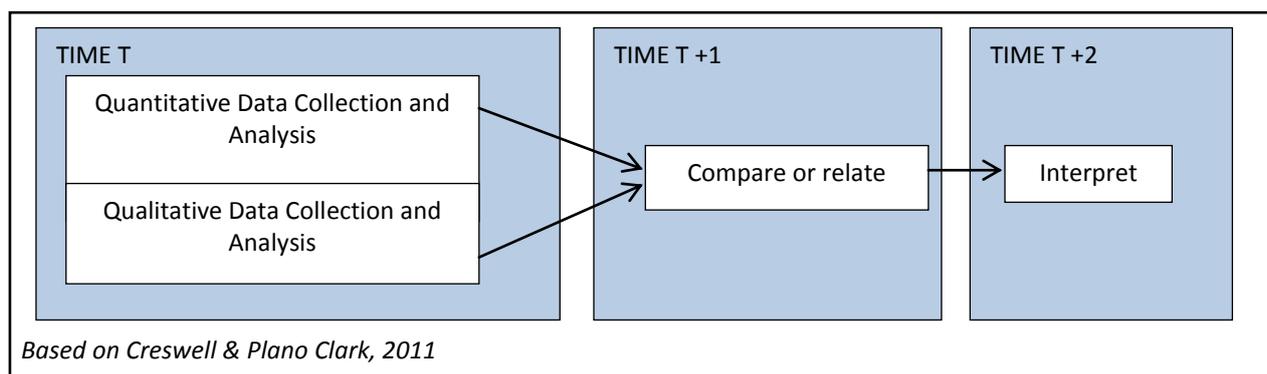
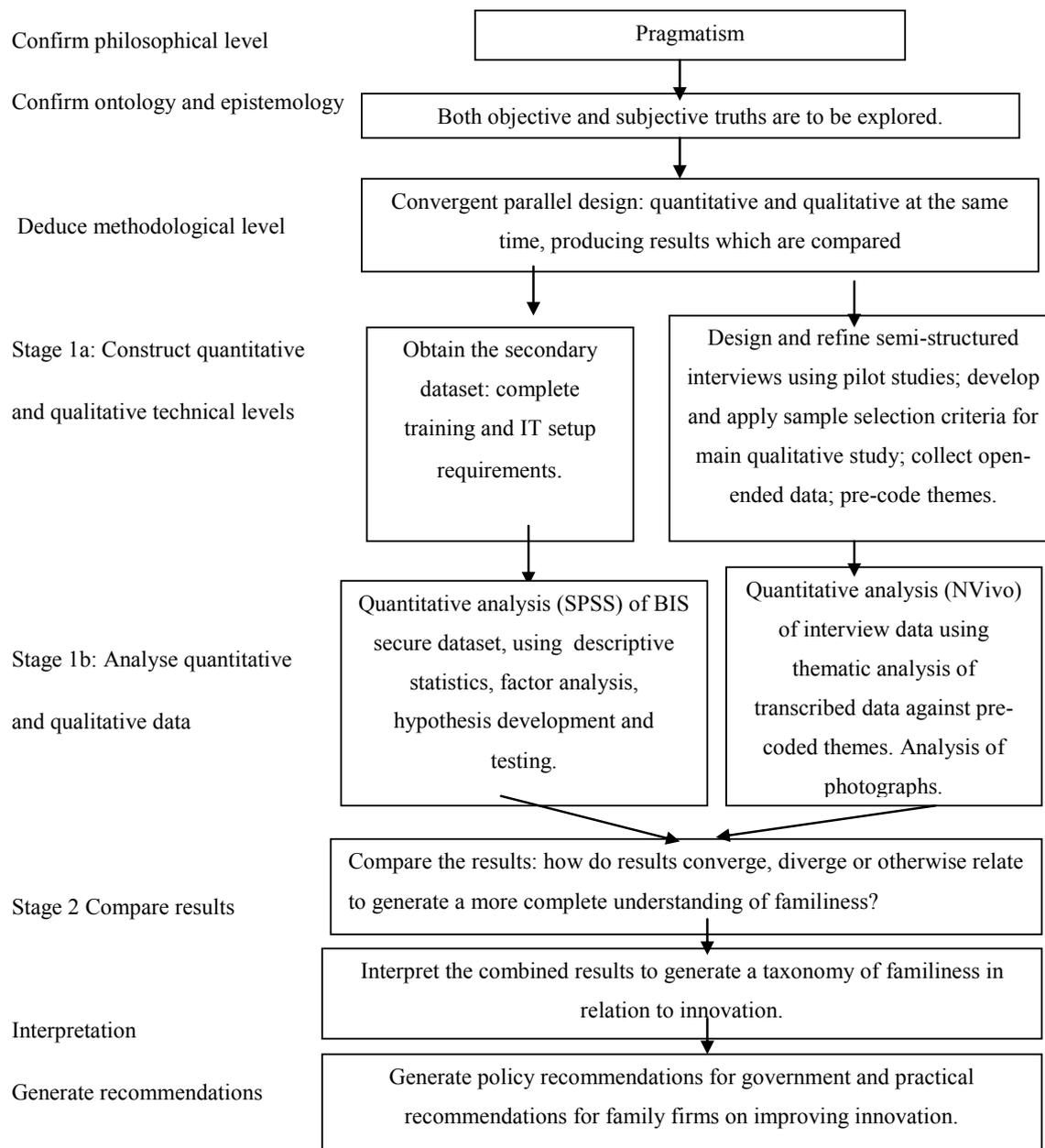


Figure 2: Timing in the Convergent Parallel Design

The research design illustrated in Figure 3 starts with taking a worldview of pragmatism. As described earlier, pragmatism is problem-centred, pluralistic and real-world oriented (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Stage 1a has been completed, and Stage 1b is currently in the process of being completed.



Source: Adapted from Crotty (1998) and Creswell (2011)

Figure 3: Research Process Flow

4.3 Stage 1a: Quantitative Research Design

In Stage 1a, the quantitative data gathering is conducted simultaneously with the qualitative data gathering. The quantitative analysis is based on the dataset “SN 6856 Small Business Survey, 2010-2012”. This is a large-scale representative telephone survey of SME business owners in the UK, commissioned by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, the Scottish Government and Invest NI. This is the most recent and comprehensive survey of the SME manufacturing industry in the UK. As this study focuses on how doxa, fields and habitus can frame familiness, it was decided to use a dataset which included smaller firms, where familiness can more easily be observed. This is because larger firms are more likely to hire non-family managers and these formal management mechanisms dilute the family influence (Sonfield & Lussier, 2009; Zhang & Ma, 2008). Given the confidential nature of individual company records, SN 6856 is not available for

public access. Therefore, the researcher applied for and was granted “Secure Researcher Status” and was required to complete data confidentiality and data security training. .

The weakness of this dataset is that it is surprisingly small for a survey that is used to form UK government policy and represents only 0.1% of the total population of businesses. SN6856 consists of 5723 records from an estimated total of 5.24 million businesses (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2013). However, the random sample approach, which selected 6000 records at random from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR) database, and further sample stratification, is considered to have produced the most representative sample SMEs across the UK (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2014).

Descriptive analysis was performed using SPSS in order to compare the indicators of innovation from SME family firms in the manufacturing sector of the UK with that of non-family firms. The UK Data Service offers a choice of SPSS or Excel for data analysis. SPSS is more suitable for analysis of large datasets and more complex statistical analyses, such as the exploratory factor analysis and chi-squared techniques used in this study.

The results from this quantitative phase will compare innovation indicators, such as the introduction of new product and services, the investment in innovation, the intention to innovate in future and the adoption of industry best practice. This stage will analyse family firm behaviour in relation to turnover and growth, use of business support, export capability, experience of accessing finance. This analysis will confirm whether family firms are indeed different to non-family firms across a number of key variables relating to innovation and business performance. Given the large size of the dataset, both Exploratory Factor Analysis and parallel analysis techniques will be used to produce a statistically-derived conceptual grouping of the variables of interest. This conceptual grouping will be analysed for Bourdieusian themes. For example, whether their rules of engagement can be explained through doxa, their approach to training and staff development can be explained through habitus and their willingness to interact with the outside world can be explained through the concept of fields. The results of the descriptive statistics and factor analysis will result in the development of a number of hypotheses, which relate the key factors to each other. Finally, these hypotheses will be tested using a chi-squared technique.

4.4 Stage 1a: Qualitative Research Design - Cross-Case Study

In Stage 1a, the quantitative data gathering is conducted simultaneously with the qualitative data gathering. The qualitative research design selected is a cross-case study design and will collect a cross-sectional set of data. The advantage of cross-case analysis is that it enables the researcher to generate knowledge through individual interviews, by comparing and contrasting cases and thereby accumulating knowledge (Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008). Case studies are considered particularly appropriate to organisation studies because they promote “understanding the dynamics present within single settings” (Eisenhardt, 1989, pg533) by using a variety of lenses, which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be explored and defined. This ability to study multiple systems is particularly relevant to family business research because family firms operate at the intersection of two systems: the business and the family (Tagiuri & Davis, 1992). This research therefore provides a novel and innovative research design to explore how the unique nature of that intersection can be understood.

The validity of the cross-case study method is based on the view that the case study method is inductive and concerned with building theory from a small number of cases that can be generalised (Gillham, 2000). The cross-case study design assumes that the case study is inherently generalizable, as there is a micro-macro link in social behaviour (Gerring, 2007) and that, by understanding a small, but key part, we can better understand the whole phenomenon. The cross-case research design in the study of family businesses enables theoretical replication (Chirico, 2008; Nordqvist, Melin, & Hall, 2008), which enhances the external validity of the findings. The cross-case study approach in this study will be used to investigate the nature of familiness in-depth, within the setting of family manufacturing firms. This cross-case approach will rely on the triangulation of data points (Yin, 2013), in order to generate a family firm taxonomy which could apply across an industry (manufacturing) and organisation type (family firm). The known problem of the unit of analysis in family business – is it the family or the business? – is neatly avoided by the case study approach, which allows the researcher to view both the family and the business within the same study. Case studies are therefore considered a valid and appropriate methodology for the study of family firm issues: (Giovannoni, Maraghini, & Riccaboni, 2011; Michael-Tsabari, Labaki, & Zachary, 2014; Salvato, Chirico, & Sharma, 2010).

4.4.1 *Cross-Case Study Selection Criteria*

The initial selection of case studies was a random selection of 200 companies taken from the FAME database, which is provided by the firm Bureau van Dijk. Case study selection is considered problematic, as it depends on a very small selection of cases that are nevertheless expected to provide insight into a causal relationship across a larger population (Gerring, 2007). Purposive sampling was selected as means of avoiding sample bias by selecting firms based on variables of interest.

Using the purposive sampling technique, firms were selected which:

- Fitted the criteria of SMEs as per the definition used in the Small Business Survey
- Had activities in the manufacturing industrial codes used in the Small Business Survey
- Scored both “high” and “low” under the widely used F-PEC familiness scale (Astrachan, Klein, & Smyrnios, 2002).
- Scored both “high and “low” under the same definition of innovation as used in the quantitative dataset

By selecting firms which scored “High” and “Low” across two dimensions, polar sampling was used in this study. Polar sampling across the two key dimensions allowed contrasting patterns in the data to be more readily observed. Polar sampling is recommended for researchers of family business (de Massis, Kotlar, 2014) as the theory created from extreme cases is more likely to be relevant across a variety of types of family firm.

4.4.2 *Familiness Scale*

These questions are based on Astrachan et al’s (Astrachan et al., 2002) F-PEC scale. The scale was slightly adapted for this study so that the questions could be answered from publically available material:

4.4.3 *Power*

- Are more than 50% of owners family members are owners? Yes = High No =Low
- Are more than 50% of the governance board also family members? Yes = High No =Low

4.4.4 *Experience*

- Has the family business been established two or more generations ago? Yes = High No = Low

4.4.5 *Culture*

- Does the website and marketing materials promote the family nature of the firm? Yes = High No = Low

4.4.6 *Innovation Scale*

These questions were developed based on the innovation questions used in the SBS 2012 survey, and also so that they could be answered from publicly available data.

- Does the website and marketing materials mention the introduction of new products in the last 2 years? Yes = High No = Low
- Does the website and marketing materials mention the introduction of new processes, including internationalisation, in the last 2 years? Yes = High No = Low
- Do the accounts include R&D expenditure on innovation in the last 2 years? Yes = High No = Low

The initial interview questions were tested on a pilot study of 10 family SME manufacturing firms. The questionnaire was redesigned following the pilot study, in order to establish the most effective questions and interview approach.

The researcher made an initial assessment of whether the firm was a manufacturing SME firm using FAME and publicly available data. This yielded a sample of 200 firms. The researcher then followed up with a phone call to the firm’s Head Office to confirm:

- Whether the firm was a family-owned firm
- Whether the family would agree to be interviewed

The selection of 22 firms was made on the basis of familiness and innovation below:

Table 1 Firm selection based on familiness and innovativeness as in the F-PEC scale

	High-Familiness	Low-Familiness
High-Innovativeness	6	8
Low-Innovativeness	4	4
TOTAL	10	12

It is likely that there will be heterogeneity within the case study across a number of variables, other than familiness and innovation, such as the size of business, the number of employees. While this heterogeneity may make it hard to generalise across the wider population of family businesses in the UK, the variety will make for rich analysis of the extent to the theoretical concepts of power, experience and culture are displayed in terms of familiness. A dialectical analysis during the thematic analysis will help to explore the richness of the data.

Questionnaire Design

There is some debate over whether interviews should be idiographic, concerned with exploring the distinctive features of a single case (Bryman, 2008; Luthans & Davis, 1982; Tsoukas, 1989), or nomothetic, investigating a larger population and concerned with generalisation. This study takes the latter view, i.e. that the interviews with a small number of cases are inherently generalizable, as there is a micro-macro link in social behaviour (Gerring, 2007). Interviews are a popular empirical approach within family business research. Family firm research suffers from the problem of whether the family or the business is the unit of analysis. Case studies allow the researcher to view both the family and the business within the same interview. Multiple interviews across a number of family firms have been used to build up a more generalizable view of how familiness concepts operate across different types of firm in relation to innovation activity (Chirico, 2008; T. Zellweger & Sieger, 2012).

Even without the mixed method component, semi-structured interviews, combined with other data sources, are considered to have a relatively high validity within qualitative analysis (Gillham, 2000; Yin, 2013) due to their ability to triangulate data by using multiple sources, and a larger set of interviews, up to 27 in this case, enables us to further generalise our observations. The use of open-ended questions allows for more honesty in recollections than in structured, closed-ended questions (Flick, 2009). Yet, the use of pre-determined elements allows the comparison of key data points (Flin, O'Connor, & Crichton, 2008).

Ten pilot interviews were conducted prior to finalising the questionnaire. The pilot interviews asked explicit questions about "rules", "fields" and "habits", which caused confusion for interviewees. The final questionnaire was re-designed to explicitly ask questions about innovation, while questions about doxa, fields and habitus were avoided. The number of questions was also reduced, so that the interview lasted less than one hour. This allowed enough time to explore the main theoretical concepts while not being so long as to tire interviewees. Photographs were also taken, as in Bourdieusian analysis, in order to capture visual evidence of habitus and doxa, such as the dress code, size and layout of the family owner's office, photographs of family on the wall. This enabled the researcher to see how Bourdieusian concepts affected innovation "in vivo" (Gerring, 2007) as well as subsequently during data analysis. The questionnaire was designed to allow the researcher to witness the intentionality, the reasoning and the underlying mental and emotional in the business decision-making process in relation to innovation. The interviews were fully transcribed. Themes will be pre-coded in Nvivo, based on Bourdieusian concepts of doxa, fields and habitus. Nvivo was selected over other CAQDAS tools, such as ATLAS.ti, MAXqda, and N6, due to the large user base and availability of online tutorials (Zamawe, 2015). In addition to the use of "nodes", which are particularly suited to thematic analysis (Bringer, Johnston, & Brackenridge, 2004), Nvivo was evaluated to be the most appropriate for the systematic evaluation of qualitative data.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in family business research is problematic, as both the family and the business are simultaneously the unit of analysis (Holt, Rutherford, & Kuratko, 2009; Moores, 2009; T. M. Zellweger, Nason, & Nordqvist, 2011). For this research design, both the business and the individual family member are concurrently the unit of analysis. The family business member concurrently trades off their personal role within the family with their role within the firm. They are also balancing the needs of the family, such as to provide an income for future generations, with the needs of innovation, which require a more risk-taking

approach. Using a single unit of analysis will allow synergies, as well as counteracting forces, to be observed. Finally, the single unit of analysis allows the close study of theoretical constructs of fields, doxa and culture, which are relevant to both an organisation, as well as to an individual.

5 Making the Case for a Mixed Methods Design

This paper concludes with making the case for the mixed methods design chosen above. Mixed methods is defined in this study as “a combined methodology that uses the qualitative and quantitative approaches into a single study” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010, pp. 17–18) and the six points of defence are presented below:

5.1 Response to the research aim

In this study, the research aim has been central to driving the choice of mixed methods. This follows advice from Creswell (2003) that a “research problems suitable for mixed methods are those in which one data source may be insufficient [or] results need to be explained”. In this study, the research aim is to explore the nature of familiness. One data source will be insufficient due to the complex and contested nature of familiness. The research aim can only be answered through multiple questions, such as “Does familiness exist?” and “If so, what are the key differences in family firm performance?”. These questions must be answered through reference to a large-scale dataset. This calls for quantitative analysis. The research questions which ask “What accounts for the key differences in family firm performance?” and “Can Bourdieusian theories of doxa, fields and habitus help us understand these key differences?” must be answered through understanding the subjective attitudes of family firm members. These questions call for qualitative analysis to explain the quantitative findings. Therefore, neither purely quantitative nor qualitative analysis will do full justice to the research aim.

5.2 Consistency with Bourdieusian approach

A mixed methods approach was also selected for consistency with Bourdieu’s methodological techniques. Bourdieu’s concepts of doxa, fields and habitus were derived from analysing both quantitative data, such as large-scale surveys and government records, and also qualitative data, such as interviews, photographs and ethnographic observation. His research publishes photographs and interviews alongside the quantitative data, which, together with analysis from quantitative data, converge to produce conclusions of how power and conflict play out in social fields. This study uses the same research approach, where by a quantitative and qualitative analyses are performed separately, with a discussion that converges the findings. The quantitative study analyses broad trends across the UK, while the qualitative study will delve more deeply into distinctive nature of power relations within the family.

5.3 Suitability for the complexity of family firms

A mixed methods approach is generally argued to provide a more complete set of data for investigating complex social phenomena (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2003), and in the case of this research, SME family businesses are a particularly complex social phenomenon (Ram & Holliday, 1993). Given the inherent complexity involved in the secretive and diverse world of family business, mixed methods provides a wider variety of methodological tools to apply to a phenomenon which mixes both the family and the business.

5.4 Calls for greater methodological diversity

A mixed methods approach will answer recent calls for more methodological diversity in the area of family business studies (De Massis et al., 2012; Litz et al., 2012; Melin et al., 2014; Sharma, Chrisman, & Gersick, 2012) and in the area of management studies more widely (Harrison, 2013; Thorpe & Ellwood, 2011).

5.5 Consistency with philosophical approach of pragmatism

This study is informed by a pragmatist viewpoint, which prioritises problem-solving and practical outputs (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010) in order to solve the problem of why some family firms do not innovate, and to also to develop practical policy support for family firms. Bourdieu is more helpfully thought of as a pragmatic thinker who defended the use of instruments of analysis in the social sciences. Bourdieu subsequently presented the body of his work as “thinking tools visible through the results they yield” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) or as “orienting tools for research” (Gorski, 2013).

5.6 Personal Experience of the Researcher

A researcher must possess an appropriate skill set if considering mixed methods (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In this case, the researcher has a postgraduate-level academic background in business and the sciences. This has provided the requisite ability to conduct and analyse statistical analysis using software packages and to understand the logic of hypothesis design. The researcher also has graduate-level academic background in the arts. This has provided the researcher with the ability to analyse qualitative data and develop themes based on textual data. The researcher also has considerable professional experience in working with family firms in the private and philanthropic sectors, and was therefore able to develop the trust required when conducting interviews.

6 Conclusion

This paper has outlined an ambitious research aim and objectives for a Bourdieusian study of familiness, using a mixed methods approach, and specifically a convergent parallel design. This paper has outlined the “thinking tools” of the study, including doxa, fields and habitus. The use of pragmatism has been described an overarching research philosophy. The convergent parallel design has then been described in more detail. Finally, the case for selecting mixed methods has been presented in six points of defence. The analysis of results, which is yet to be completed, will firstly demonstrate the extent of familiness in the world of SME UK manufacturing firms through the quantitative study and will secondly demonstrate the nature of familiness in individual firms, through the qualitative study.

Bourdieu argued that the conclusions of his research into culture and status could be valid in the US, or other societies. The mixed methodology described above is superior to either qualitative or quantitative approaches, in delivering “a reading that seeks to identify, behind the specific institution of a particular society, the structural invariant and, by the same token, the equivalent institution in another social universe” (Bourdieu, 2013, p. xiv).

Analysing a rich blend of large-scale trends and small-scale opinion, this mixed methods approach is designed to comprehensively identify common “structural invariants” in the fields of family and of business. This study therefore takes a mixed methods approach to argue that the structural invariants produced by this research will be more broadly applicable beyond the world of UK SME manufacturing family firms, to understanding the complex and contested nature of family firms more broadly.

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