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Title: Family business women in media discourse: the business role and the mother role

Purpose – Writings in the media have the potential to influence our standpoint and, thereby, our actions. In this paper, we analyze how women in family business are represented in media to understand the frames set by this discourse in terms of women owning and leading family businesses. The aim of this paper is to explore how the counterposed roles of business person and mother are presented in media and what implications this might have for role enactment.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper opted for an exploratory study of 308 articles about women in family business over a fifteen year period. In the interpretative, qualitative analysis of media texts, the discursive construction of the mother role and the business role are explored.

Findings – The paper provides empirical insights into how the mother role is taken for granted while the business role is approached as problematic in portrayals of women in family business. We discuss whether the media discourse reinforces traditional roles or stimulates role innovation.

Practical implications – Understanding role as something separate from the individual provides a means to critically review expectations of women in business and how these expectations hinder business activities.

Originality/value – The study examines data over a fifteen year period in the Swedish media setting and describes changes in attitudes about women's roles in family business. Regarding the family business as an arena for performative acts provides a perspective that can highlight the intertwining of the private and professional arenas in family business.

Key words: Family Business, Women, Media Articles, Discourse, Role

Introduction

Media, with its possible influence on our everyday discussions, has the potential to influence our standpoint and, thereby, our actions. Therefore, it is interesting to analyze how topics are represented in media to understand the frames set by this discourse. 20 years ago, a study in the U.S. context showed how women in family businesses were portrayed as an unusual and surprising phenomenon:

Unfortunately, newspapers and magazines most often like to print articles about the “little girl” who became a successor in a family business, about how the devastated widow rescued her late husband’s business, or about how the little sister became more successful than her older brother in an automobile dealership. It is distressing that the media treat the topic as rare, cute, and surprising despite the fact that 51.2 percent of the U.S. population is female and that an estimated 50 to 60 percent of the Gross National Product is associated with family businesses. (Salganicoff, 1990: 127)

Given that the study was performed in the U.S. context 20 years ago, an additional study, this time of the Swedish media discourse, may yield valuable insights, as Sweden is recognized as a country that is forward-thinking and supportive of women and work-life issues. Understanding the image of women in family business projected in media has relevance for understanding the situation for women owning and leading family businesses. Recognizing the importance of the family system is crucial for an understanding of family business (Zachary, 2011), and the concept of role can be useful in this pursuit. The concept of role captures the structural patterns and shared expectations as a first step toward discussing and understanding (business) identity processes. In the analysis of media texts about women in family business, two common roles were strikingly contradictory: the business role and the mother role. The aim of this paper is to explore how the counterposed business and mother roles are presented in media and what implications this might have for role enactment. The paper starts with a brief background regarding the need for language-centered research in family business. This is followed by a literature review on women in family business and a section about the concept of role. After a discussion on methods, the empirical results and analysis are presented.

Understanding family business through language

Language-centered research, such as the interpretation of discourses of family business or identification of discourse styles (Budge and Janoff, 1991, Danes, Haberman and McTavish, 2005), has the potential to further our knowledge of the social construction of family business. Budge and Janoff (1991) describe how families in business draw on the family and business discourses simultaneously and how difficulties may arise if the patterns of the two discourses are different. Based on the assumption that language is used to reflect on and engage in the ongoing construction and interpretation of everyday events, the discursive level of family and business roles may be explored in different settings to contribute to the overall understanding of family business. Looking at family business in the media setting is thus far a neglected area of study. Because the media discourse influences which topics are discussed in the public setting and in interpersonal communication, newspaper analysis can be a fruitful way to understand cultural issues (Achtenhagen and Welter, 2003).

The inclusion of how women's roles are constructed in the media discourse draws attention to a new and important empirical context and responds to calls for research on gender role ideologies (Rothausen, 2009) as well as research on women's professional careers and running the family firm (Martinez Jimenez, 2009). Understanding contemporary family business strategy and management requires sensitivity to the family business system (Collins and O'Regan, 2011). In considering roles and the interrelation of roles, it is our goal to contribute to building knowledge that can provide new perspective regarding the management of family firms.

Women and the family business

The family business is regarded as a highly traditional setting. One example of this is the rule of primogeniture, the right of succession belonging to the firstborn child, usually focused on the father-son relationship (Tucker, 2011). The notions of values such as stability and safety that form part of family business identity are also associated with inflexibility (Krappe, Goutas and von Schlippe, 2011). Historical analyses reveal that women have been supporting family businesses for centuries: for example, women have contributed to successful family businesses in Spain (Gálvez Muñoz and Fernández Pérez, 2007) and in Greece since at least the eighteenth century (Pepelasis Minoglou, 2007). Contemporary studies show that family business women are more likely than women in non-family firms to enter the business arena and achieve leadership positions (Barrett and Moores, 2009a, 2009b; Harveston, Davis and Lyden,

1997). An explanation for this may be found in the most general characteristic of family business: the integration of family and business (Hall, 2003; Budge and Janoff, 1991). The entwinement of the private and professional contexts in family firms may lessen the distance between gendered contexts and make women more likely to take on leadership roles as they become familiar with the business. The family system in family business provides a suitable arena for studying the combination of and possible competition between women's roles in the family and in the business. The challenge to the conventional division of male roles in the professional arena and female roles in the private arena may influence the roles ascribed to or taken on by women in family business.

In family business research, it has been shown that women take on important but subtle roles in the family business, helping to achieve continuity and growth of the family firm (Martinez Jimenez, 2009). These roles are related, however, to the private setting rather than the professional setting. We do see a growing interest among women to enter the family business and pursue a professional career (Cole, 1997), but research on women in family businesses is still fragmentary (Danes and Olson, 2003; Sharma, 2004; Vera and Dean, 2005), and we need to know more about how women enter and run the family firm (Martinez Jimenez, 2009). Critical studies have shown that the notion of the manager/owner/entrepreneur displays gender bias and assumptions of masculinity (Ahl, 2002; Mulholland 1996). This furthers the interest in understanding how women in family business bridge private and professional roles that are seemingly contradictory. Women play a key role in the creation of family wealth, but they have been ignored and marginalized from management and ownership (Mulholland, 2003). A growing body of research on women in family business works on the assumption, however, that the role of women is changing from passive, family-oriented roles to active, business-oriented roles. Frishkoff and Brown (1993) state that new visions are emerging as more women take active roles in the family business and that women as well as businesses benefit from the shift in traditions. Based on the family business literature, we have categorized the review of previous research into three main areas: (a) women as invisible in family business, (b) women moving into business via succession, and (c) business women active in the firm.

(a) Women as invisible in family business

A reading of recent literature shows that women continue to be portrayed as nameless nobodies (Ahl, 2007) and that it is still relevant to acknowledge the prevalence of what Hollander and Bukowitz (1990) have referred to as *the invisible women*, not least

because women play a unique, but common role as stewards in successful generational transitions (Poza and Messer, 2001). In previous studies, the family business is portrayed as a network of male family members, while the private setting is portrayed as belonging to women (Wigren, 2003; Pettersson, 2002). “Hidden” women are more frequent in family businesses, compared to self-employed entrepreneurs (Dhaliwal, 2000). Invisible women are family members, wives, mothers, daughters, etc., who have power and influence over the business but do not have formal roles or titles (Gillis-Donovan and Moynihan-Bradt, 1990). An alternative view of women’s invisibility is that it can be an active strategy for managing from behind the scenes (Barrett and Moores, 2009a). Although not always recognized, women in family business actually constitute core elements of the business partnership (Mulholland, 2003).

(b) Women moving into business via succession

In succession, studies of the father-daughter dyad complement knowledge on father-son dyads (Haberman and Danes, 2007; Dumas, 1989, 1990; Salganicoff, 1990). When daughters enter the business in a succession process, shifts in identities and roles create tensions, but over time the daughters learn to work with their fathers in a collaborative way (Dumas, 1992). The likelihood of daughters being compared with their mothers’ managerial styles may create greater tensions in mother-daughter successions than those present in father-daughter successions, due to the identification of same sex (Vera and Dean, 2005). In patriarchal/familistic cultural systems, daughters are less likely to be systematically trained and prepared for leadership roles in the family business (Howorth and Assaraf Ali, 2001; Perricone, Earle and Taplin, 2001; Dumas, Dupuis, Richer and St.-Cyr, 1995), making gender awareness in the succession planning process crucial (Harveston, Davis and Lyden, 1997). Daughters have been shown to take on roles in emerging, strategically important areas, whereas sons take on roles that are more in line with the way things have been done in the past (García-Élvare, López-Sintas and Gonzalvo, 2002). As female ownership and female CEOs in family businesses are becoming more familiar and accepted (Fahed-Sreih and Djoundourian, 2006; Getz and Petersen, 2004), it is interesting to continue to study these changes.

(c) Business women active in the firm

Family business, as an arena where the disparate units of family and business are integrated, constitutes a unique institution. The presence of corporate responsiveness to family needs as well as corporate recognition of professional contributions could make the family business an especially congenial work environment for women (Hollander

and Bukowitz, 1990). Family intensity, the number of family investors and family members employed are important for women entrepreneurs (Gundry and Welsch, 1994), as well as personnel management (Danes, Stafford and Teik-Cheok Loy, 2007) and the “gender type” of the business (Wicker and Burley, 1991). Advantages of entering a career in the family business could include avoidance of the glass ceiling phenomena that might exist in other businesses (Cole, 1997), as well as higher incomes and more flexibility in terms of work schedules (Salganicoff, 1990). Traditional expectations, however, can still partly explain why daughters are not always seen as potential future managers of the business (Harveston, Davis and Lyden, 1997). The balance between seemingly contrasting roles, such as “mother” and “manager”, is believed to cause difficulties for women as they face the expectations of traditional roles (Cole, 1997). Generalizations of women in family business as a homogenous group, however, are neither fruitful nor representative. We need to recognize variations and combinations (Poza and Messer, 2001; Hollander and Bukowitz, 1990; Curimbaba, 2002; Frishkoff and Brown, 1993).

The role concept

Roles in family business

Historically, cultural norms have stated different roles for men and women (Birley, 1989). Even though this is changing, change is characterized by inertia, and it is still pertinent to study the current state of affairs in order to understand the relevant changes. Daughters and younger sons entering the family business struggle with changing family role-expectations and may experience problems with parental ambivalence, sibling rivalry and self-esteem (Barnes, 1988). The roles operating in the family are often transferred to the family business. This can cause some women to feel locked into traditional role expectations, unable to develop business and leadership skills needed to succeed in business (Hollander and Bukowitz, 1990). The division of feminine and masculine roles in the family culture thus poses a problem for women’s careers. The inclusion of differences between women in studies of family business, as opposed to treating women as a homogenous group, (Cole, 1997) is one way to study different notions about women in family business; in the present study, the role concept is used to represent variety in the family business. For examples of roles used to describe women in family business, see Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

The illustration of roles in Table 1 demonstrates that gender roles and expectations seem to have changed over time. In the earlier works, around 1990, mainly family roles were prevalent in the research articles. Around 2000, business roles started to appear in descriptions of women in family business, and in 2009, Barrett and Moores wrote about women as founders of family businesses. In this article, we want to study the existence of parallel roles on a discursive level and discuss this in terms of role enactment.

A framework for role enactment

One way to approach the role concept is to study how people identify with different roles and how this influences interaction based on role expectations (Goffman, 1986). Although the present discussion might resemble previous studies on roles and identity (e.g., Shepherd and Haynie, 2009), the concepts of role and identity are not used synonymously with these earlier studies. We approach role as a construction, a socially shared frame for expectations, which guides individual interpretations in social interaction. Individuals tend to occupy several roles. These roles bring with them different role-specific behavioral expectations that influence emotions and actions of the role-occupant. Although the idea of role expectation is attractive in its suggestion that human beings are rational, thoughtful, perceiving beings and that roles are guides to action and to controlling behavior, it is also necessary to acknowledge that roles are not static (Biddle, 1979). The role concept is nevertheless useful when discussing socialization processes.

Earlier studies have acknowledged different dimensions of role enactment in socialization processes, such as role-person merger, role ambiguity, role innovation (Hall, 2003), role conflict (Biddle, 1979) and role transition (Ashforth, 2001). Role-person merger is an extreme form of role identity wherein a person defines herself in terms of a role. Role ambiguity refers to ambiguity regarding the requirements of the role itself making it unclear how one is to enact the role. Role innovation is a creative act of expressing character to personalize the role to fit the individual, rather than the contrary. Role conflict occurs when a person is subjected to roles with incompatible expectations. Finally, role transition concerns the movement within or between roles.

Of main interest in this paper is the discursive construction of roles. Following the empirical description of how roles are described in media articles, we will turn to a model that illustrates two dimensions in role construction. In this model, we have

included role separation-role integration as one dimension and role conservation-role innovation as the other dimension (see Figure 1).

Insert Figure 1 about here

The first dimension, role separation-role integration, concerns the degree of role-person merger, i.e., to what extent the role is regarded as a role. An example of separation could be that a woman working as a CEO goes into character at work to fit role expectations but leaves this role as she leaves work. This can be done symbolically by wearing a suit to work and taking it off upon arriving home. Another woman might act as a mother at home as well as in the work place, not separating the mother role from herself. The second dimension, role conservation-role innovation, concerns the degree of freedom of act in a role. If a role construction is conservative, the role expectations are based on old norms and values. Role innovation is performed when an individual finds new ways to act in a role. In a family business, role conservation might entail imitating the parents' managerial style, while role innovation could be finding new ways to act in a managerial position.

Roles are associated with social positions and are contextually bound (Biddle, 1979). In this paper, we focus on how the roles are defined in society, not on the process of how people identify with roles, because we see a need to understand the role construction of two highly valued, but contradictory, roles – the mother role and the business person role – before we can take the next step and discuss role enactment. These highly valued roles are considered to be very central to individuals' identification processes; they are often visible, permanent and socially desirable (Ashforth, 2001). Mother is a central, visible and permanent role in the family (Moxnes, 1999), and Hall (2003) states that top management roles, similar to what we call 'business person' in this text, correspond to the description of highly valued roles in strategic biographies.

Method

Discourse studies are a means to understand various aspects as well as inputs and outputs of the continuously evolving process of social construction. This text departs from the general definition of discourse as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)” (Phillips and Jørgensen, 2006, p. 1). Differences among groups of speakers are produced by a rule-governed subset of

language that is implied in the term ‘discourse’ (Budge and Janoff, 1991). The combination of two key dimensions – the connection between discourse and meaning and the formative range of discourse – can be one way to position types of discourse analysis (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2000). Although meaning can be durable and can be said to exist in a stable manner ‘beyond’ specific linguistic interaction (ibid), we are interested in the meaning emerging from specific interaction in locally situated contexts as a means of understanding the relation between discourse and society.

In this paper, the area of study is role construction in relation to women in family business. It has been suggested that women’s entrepreneurship should be explored regarding national culture (Barrett and Moores, 2009a), and we have examined the construction of the mother role and the business role in a Swedish media context. The argument for choice of empirical setting is twofold. First of all, the Swedish setting is familiar to us, as we are Swedish citizens studying at a Swedish University. Therefore, we have previous cultural understanding of the field. Secondly, Sweden is often described as providing opportunities for women’s work-life. There are legal structures that support the combination of work and family through provision of child care and generous parental leave and directives regarding gender equality in organizations, and the number of women in business continues to increase (Bjursell and Melin, 2011). In owner-managed companies, however, the number of women owning and leading companies is as low as 5 % in some regions (Melin, Bjuggren, Ericsson, Hall, Haag and Nordqvist, 2004). Regardless of the legal support, the combination of private and professional roles is not unproblematic.

The empirical material in this study consists of media texts about women in family businesses over a fifteen year period (1994-2008). This time period allowed us to read about two generations of women in family business. There have been two political discussions influencing the occurrence of reporting on women’s business. One is the debate on quotas in business. The other discussion relates to an extensive governmental effort to promote women’s business. The program started in 2008 and has earned substantial media attention. In addition, technological development has greatly changed the way the media communicates, and this has resulted in continual increases in the number of available media sources in databases.

To collect material, we carried out a search in Affärsdata, a database that includes the major Swedish business publications as well as local newspapers. The inclusion of press other than strictly business press was intentional, as Salganicoff (1990) has shown that the topic of women in family business is not always considered a

business topic in media. We found this to be the case in our material as well. In total, the database has 1073 sources, of which 122 are business press. We carried out a whole-text search of the keywords (exact phrase) “kvinn*” [wom*n] + “familjeföretag” [family business]. The search was made for the time period 1 January 1994 – 31 December 2008. This resulted in 1632 hits. As a comparison, a search using the key word “familjeföretag” [family business] resulted in 14,518 hits. Sources that had recurring reporting on the topic were Dagens Industri, Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Veckans Affärer, Hufvudstabladet, Sydsvenska Dagbladet, Affärsvärlden, Göteborgsposten, and Kristianstadbladet.

After a first reading of the material, we sorted the media articles according to three categories: reportage about women in family business (our empirical material in this paper); reportage mentioning women in family business incidentally (such as “my wife also works here”, similar to the “invisible women” in the family business literature); and unrelated documents that happened to use the two key words. Fiction about women in family business (reviews of books or TV shows) has not been included. In this search, we may have missed media articles about women in family business in which none of the key words are mentioned. Furthermore, Poza and Messer (2001) explain how media seldom addresses spouses in family businesses. Despite these shortcomings, the search resulted in rich descriptions of women in family businesses; the selection of articles consisted of several elaborate portrayals of business women in different industries. The first category was further narrowed down as we removed duplicates (often articles that were published in print as well as on the internet). This resulted in 308 articles for the interpretative analysis. Table 2 shows the number of articles, by year, analyzed in this study.

Insert Table 2 about here

The analysis of the media articles was performed using an inductive approach. We started out by reading the texts and looking for patterns in the material. Our first impression was that there were many descriptions of business persons as mothers and as women in the media articles, i.e., explanations of how they managed to be mothers and/or women at the same time as running a business. A second impression was that there seemed to be a need to make sense of what it means to be a business woman. We interpret this need to make sense of what a business woman is as an expression of women not being the norm in business. An additional aspect of the media texts is that

among the family business women in the articles there are two major groups: the heiresses, rich and often well-known women from Swedish industry dynasties; and entrepreneurs, women active in small and medium size businesses (SMEs), sometimes founders of family businesses. These groups seem to be described based on different media interests: there is an interest in the heiresses as persons, whereas the entrepreneurs are written about for something they have done. In this paper, we have not distinguished between the two groups, but we see this categorization of class within a role as a promising venue for future studies.

Based on the first reading, we decided to analyze the tension between the business role and the mother role. After sorting the texts according to these two broad role categories, we re-read the texts with this division in mind to understand how the two roles are constructed in the media. The results are presented below, with quotes from the media texts weaved into the description to construct a collage that aims to illustrate the content of the categories that we have chosen to work with. All quotes are our own translations from Swedish.

Empirical description

Family business women in media

Twenty years after Salganicoff (1990) wrote about how women in family business were portrayed as cute, rare, and surprising, we still see that this is a common pattern in the media discourse. The increase of articles over the time line studied may be interpreted as an increased interest in women in business or as mirroring an actual increase of women in business. In any case, it is striking how frequently the combination, and maybe even confusion, of private and professional roles appears in the articles: there is a need to make sense of the combination mother/woman and business person. These are what we call highly valued roles, and although we recognize that there are different ways to set boundaries within and between the roles, we will attempt to portray them as two typical roles that women in family business are given and/or take.

The empirical setting for exploring roles is the Swedish context, often characterized as incorporating egalitarian values. Equality between the sexes is an openly debated topic in Swedish society. Politicians as well as the media critically watch and discuss the status of equality in companies. Even in this supposed egalitarian society, however, the family business setting remains traditional. The situation for

women in one of the most well-known Swedish dynasties has been described as that of being excluded from business:

They were not supposed to be seen or heard. And most important, they never received power. The Wallenberg family women have always been in the shadow. ‘The family is very old-fashioned and they stick to traditions. They worship their fathers,’ says Professor Ulf Olsson, who has written several books about the Wallenberg family. For 150 years, the Wallenberg family has been the most powerful family in Sweden. However, the women have been excluded from business. They have been completely invisible. ‘There have been many strong women in the family throughout the 20th century but they have not been allowed to enter the business,’ says Ulf Olsson. (Johannes Nesser, GT Sunday, 7 January 2007)

Among the Swedish dynasties, the Axel Johnson AB group stands out as different in being described as a matriarchy. Antonia Ax:son Johnson, fourth generation of the Axel Johnson family and chairman and director of the company, has become a role model for women in business. She also works to create conditions for the combination of family and business and often has the opportunity to comment on this in interviews.

- What have you done to bring more women into business?
- Sweden is a very traditional country, with its basic industries in forestry, iron, mining, and hydroelectric power, and it has a male dominated business life. And then we have a huge public sector where women have worked. That’s why we have had few women to recruit in business. With this background, we have actively tried to enlarge our pool of women on all levels. We have increased from 20 percent female middle managers to 40 percent today. [Antonia Ax:son Johnson] (Dagens Industri, 23 May 1998)

Overall, there seems to be agreement that individuals as well as society should work to promote women’s participation in business life; however, the problem is referred to as a conflict between private and professional roles. To explore this conflict, we present a description of how the business role and the mother role are portrayed in media articles.

Business role

One type of occasion on which media writes about women in family business is when they are breaking the norm: women that are very rich or rank high in terms of power or women that have received awards of various kinds receive attention. In the illustration of the business role below, we will describe two overall characteristics. The first section describes the characteristics that represent women in business in general. The second section describes the characteristics that are related to being a family business member.

Characteristics of the role in terms of being a woman in business

In media, business women are often described as a sensational occurrence, often because they are the first to enter a new domain. Another characteristic is that, because women are described as something other than a traditional business person, they are not considered the norm and they are often invited to comment on and define how a female business person ought to be.

Examples of the mention of women as pioneers range from the historical to the contemporary: “When 27 year old Emma Johansson got her diploma last Saturday, she made history. She is the first woman to become a certified sheet-metal worker. ‘It feels wonderful. Finally I got proof that I know this and I don’t have to defend myself as much anymore as one often has to do as a woman in this profession’” (Byggnadsarbetaren, 8 Dec 2008). Not being the norm is expressed in terms of both problems and advantages. The problems concern not being taken seriously: “I have to prove myself competent in a way that a man doesn’t need to do. I guess there are a lot of prejudice and preconceived notions still around” (Byggvärlden, 4 November 2008). Several women, however, like the “queen bee” position in business: “I’m being taken care of in every situation” (Piteå-Tidningen, 30 March 2007). There is a discussion in media about what it means to be a female business person: “As an entrepreneur, especially as a female, you’re supposed to be so damn good” (Gotlands Tidningar, 26 April 2008). “You have to be humble, but still tough and go for it” (Metro, 16 June 2006). Beyond defining what it means to be a woman in business, journalists ask up front about femininity and masculinity:

- What is femininity?
- I often think about how I’m perceived in this male dominated world. I have learned male behavior after 20 years in this environment, but my children encourage me to remember my other sides. And womanliness in my leadership? I

like people; I'm intuitive and I listen to that. But I can be misunderstood, too. They take me for cold when I'm shy, suspicious when I'm reflective, power-hungry when I'm action oriented, harsh when I show integrity. The same behavior is interpreted differently depending on whether you're a man or a woman.

- What is masculinity?

- The new CEO for H&M described himself in words such as analytical, ambitious and competitive. That's a very male way to describe oneself. You have variation both between men and between women. It's more about the role you are expected to live up to – to play tactics, to position yourself and guard your territory – and you see this already at a young age with small boys. The image in media is often unfair. When I started in the company, I met men who were 20 years older than me who had never told anyone they had a family. No one even knew if they were married. I have been able to choose people to work with and I often have chosen men who embrace their feminine sides. (Dagens Industri, 23 May 1998)

Both journalists as well as the people interviewed seem to share the assumption that being a manager is something other than being a female manager.

Characteristics of the role in terms of being a family business member

The other group of characteristics concerns belonging to a family business. These include being an heiress to the business, being a representative of the owner family, and opposing quotas from the ownership perspective.

Apart from the rule of primogeniture, heiresses stand in an advantageous position for a career in the family business. Among the heiresses, Antonia Ax:son Johnson represents the generation that entered business life in the 1980s: "I was only 31 years old when my father got sick and I had only worked in the business for a few years. I was surrounded by older men who did not know what to do with this young woman. Should they supervise, teach, coach, criticize or yell? I was met with a lot of skepticism, both within and outside the company" (Dagens Industri, 23 May 1998). In the generation entering business in the 1980s, women mostly entered the family business if there were no brothers, but today heiresses are starting to see the family business as a possible career alternative. Even though daughters entering the family business today are aware of the opportunity, they might not actively seek out positions in the company: "Sofie Gunolf was not even 40 years old [when asked to be a CEO] and had no formal

education. Her father questioned whether she would manage, and that's what made her decide to go for it. [...] 'Now I'm ashamed that I did not think of myself as a possible CEO candidate, but that's how it was. Some kind of female insecurity, I guess. I talked a lot with my mother and she helped me find my confidence'" (DN.se, 26 June 2006). Although the family business can be an advantageous route to a career, women in family business perceive that belonging to an owner family can create resistance: "I often get the question whether it's hard to be a woman in a masculine industry, but I always answer that it's harder to be the owner's daughter" (Svenskt Näringsliv, 16 May 2008); "I have worked here all my life, but in the 1980s I was actually on my way out of here. Everybody saw me as the daughter of the owner. My father was everywhere. To become an individual in a family business is much more difficult than that which people assume might be a problem—being a woman in this industry" (Sydsvenskan, 2 March 2008). Maybe these experiences, together with the ownership perspective of the business, can explain why women in family business are so firmly against quotas in business. The discussion of how to promote women in business concerns competence rather than legal structures: "It has to be a question of competence" (Affärsvärlden, 8 March 2006). As members of the family, the women interviewed had to deal with issues of legitimacy:

- Are there any differences between male and female leadership?
- The biggest difference is between individuals, not sex. That's why I don't get the debate. I'm against quotas, too.
- Wouldn't quotas be good for a period of transition?
- It's embarrassing that so few companies don't recognize the diversity women bring. At Indiska we have 93 percent female managers. Women have to learn to go for it. But I don't think that quotas are the right way. If I were to get a position because of quotas, it would be like I didn't deserve the job.
- So you're saying that as a grandchild [to the founder] you are not "quota-d" to the position as CEO?
- Touché. (laughs) Maybe that's why I always wanted to show people that I can make it on my own. I feel the pressure to perform beyond expectation. I cannot make a single mistake and I always have to justify my position [Sofie Gunolf]. (Veckans Affärer, 24 Aug 2006)

The aspects that appear specific to being a woman in family business have to do with a woman's having a potential shortcut to higher positions in the organization combined

with her need to make sense of such a position in terms of how to act and how to justify that position.

Mother role

In the media articles, motherhood is mentioned in terms of how to combine a professional role with a role in the family. The description of the mother role is not problematic—everybody knows what a mother is.

- How was your childhood?

- Lovely, I was very happy. My mom was a real mother who stayed at home and baked cookies. (Dagens Industri, 10 April 1999)

The problem is not how to be a mother but how to stay a mother when taking on the business role, and women who successfully manage both private and professional roles are presented as heroines.

A striking example of a heroine is Signhild Arnegård Hansen. As a mother of six, she started a food manufacturing business together with her husband to be able to combine work-life and family. When she was elected chairperson of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, she was presented as a superwoman, able to combine the prestigious position as chairperson and run a business, while also being the mother of six children:

“I have six children and I’m the CEO of a company. To make it, I have an office at home. I don’t have an office at the business or at the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise. I get up an hour earlier than I have to in order to gather my thoughts and focus on the right things. It’s so easy to go wrong otherwise. I need that moment.” (Göteborgs-Posten Ekonomi, 15 November 2004)

When it comes to how women combine private and professional roles, the ability to prioritize is emphasized: “Sure, it can be hard to run a business, especially when you have small children, but you can plan your time so that you can make it to the kindergarten on time,” says Vicktoria Säll, who has two children (Borås Tidning, 29 February 2008). One way to do this is to see one’s husband and extended family as a supporting resource that can provide space for business activities: “It’s also about being married to the right person, otherwise it won’t work” (Upsala Nya Tidning, 29 September 2008).

To sum up, the mother role displays tension between two alternatives. If the mother and the business roles are maintained separately and in line with traditional expectations, this is presented as heroic. The other emerging view is that the surrounding family steps

in to provide support in the private arena so that women can fully engage in the business role.

Discussion

Readings of the media discourse show that family business women do not comprise a homogeneous group. The group contains women of different class, working in different industries, on various hierarchical levels, and belonging to different generations. After the description of the two roles in the empirical section above, we now continue with a discussion about role enactment and role construction. We begin by relating the media discourse to previous research on roles in family business, followed by a reflection on the ownership role. The analysis concludes with a discussion of discursive role construction.

Relating the media discourse to roles in family business

As a starting point for discussion on women's roles in family business, we wish to emphasize that the mother role is not about being a mother. Rather, it represents preconceived notions we share about motherhood, and this means that there can be different role expectations in different cultural groups. Looking back at previous studies of roles in the family business literature, there has been a shift over time. Around the 1990s, the focus was on roles in the family. Ten years later the interest included business oriented roles, and recently, Barrett and Moores (2009a) recognized women as founders of family businesses. The same trend can be seen in the media study. There is an increase of articles about women in family business as well as an increased number of different women portrayed over time. Due to the character of the discourse, the invisible women remained out of the spotlight. Similarly, there were no portrayals of women taking on roles such as the jealous spouse, chief trust officer, or values keeper, but the media discourse presents a rich and valuable material for learning more about women active in business. The media articles present women as business partners, vice presidents, anchors, professional heiresses, and entrepreneurs. When it comes to the mother role, the women reason about the combination of roles rather than about whether they are stuck in caretaking or over-nurturing roles. This could indicate that the media articles present women who, for different reasons, do not take on nurturing roles. Another possibility is that it may be hard for a person to recognize herself as over nurturing, so an individual may simply fail to ascribe this characteristic when speaking about her leadership. One interesting assumption in the media discourse is that it seems

as if female leaders, managers, and owners are assumed to be something other than managers in general. The women in the articles are often asked by journalists to talk about the problems of being a female manager, about problems with role combinations, and they are even asked to define womanliness. The people interviewed rarely object to such questions as irrelevant. Thus, all parties involved in the discourse share the notion that the combination of private and professional roles is hard for women. We argue that this can be understood in terms of the incorporation of the mother role into the business role for women managers. This can be compared to the separation of roles for male family business members as shown in previous studies (Wigren, 2003).

A reflection on the ownership role

There are some characteristics of the business person role that seem to be connected to the ownership position in the family business. Belonging to a family business provides access to a career that may not have been possible in the absence of kinship. Against this background, it is interesting to see that as owners, or future owners, the women in the media articles unite in their resistance to quotas. It is relevant in studies of women in family business to look at variations and combinations of the owner, family member, and employee roles (Frishkoff and Brown, 1993), as the ownership role has thus far received little attention in research on women in family business. We see the ownership role as an important characteristic of women's roles in family business, as it represents a different perspective compared to the business role.

The family unit is upheld as having a support function when a woman combines the business role and mother role. We believe that there may be extra incentives for business families to consider this alternative because it can benefit the family and the business in the long run. Women who can master both roles successfully on their own are presented as heroines. A study performed in the German context by Achtenhagen and Welter (2003) found that the presentation of female entrepreneurs may actually contribute to maintaining traditional roles.

“Female entrepreneurship is fostered in addition to the roles of housewife and mother. Therefore, even successful role models, as depicted in several articles, can serve to strengthen the traditionally prevailing “housewife” model in German society instead of inducing societal changes” (Achtenhagen and Welter, 2003, p. 95).

The increasing occurrence of family business women in media can be a means to role innovation as it can increase understanding of women as owners and leaders of family businesses. At the same time, the overly heroic role models of media articles can function, in effect, as keepers of traditional roles. The presentation of single successful cases can serve to glorify the mastering of role combinations. An alternative would be to look at various alternative business persons and ownership roles. Family businesses come in many shapes, as do women; therefore, we think that it would be fruitful in future studies to explore and provide a wider range of role interpretations that could serve as inspiration and role models for family business women in different contexts. A corresponding area that is underdeveloped today is a discussion on men's roles: What does it mean to combine a father role and a leadership role? This is another area to further explore that could provide beneficial insights into role conservation-role innovation in the on-going socialization processes in family business.

Discursive role construction

Who gives and takes roles in the media discourse? Role taking and role giving are useful concepts to understand human interaction. In practice, roles can be given involuntarily to persons or role taking/role giving can be based on mutual understanding of a situation. In the media texts examined, the roles seem to be agreed upon. An exception would be the discussion on quotas, in which women in family business approach the topic from an ownership role, wanting to choose their boards without restriction, whereas some journalists take a critical position, pointing out that as daughters in a family business, the women themselves have been "quota-d" into the business. Beyond role giving in media, we as researchers are also involved in role giving. In this paper, we have divided the material into two types of roles. The reason is that we see this division as representing and highlighting intriguing contrasts in the material. We are aware that the material could have been presented in other ways and that by making this division we are also involved in role giving and possible role reproduction. The reason for this division is that we hope to raise questions about the combination of roles in family business; furthermore, this division is in line with the assumptions about social positions in the role concept.

It is also important to understand how roles are represented in the media in order to understand whether and how these media representations contribute to role conservation or role innovation. The construction of roles in media reflects structures in the societal discourse, and in media articles these constructions are built upon some

logic for creating a story. For example, one type of popular story found in media is of a woman in a masculine setting. The tension inherent in these types of stories is not constructed in the sense that it lacks correspondence to peoples' daily lives. Rather, it works because it confirms our preconceived notions—a woman in a masculine setting is odd, that is, a sensation. In this sense, the roles that are constructed in media are relevant for understanding processes of socialization and role construction in a broader context. Media articles are shared illustrations of our notions and they simultaneously influence our reconstruction of the everyday. The two roles described in this text support role conservation and role innovation at the same time. When traditional expectations are met, this reproduces and strengthens the current notions of women's roles. At the same time, the inclusion of women's roles in the media discourse helps to keep the topic on the agenda, providing possibilities for further development of roles over time: today it is not uncommon to present a woman as an owner and a leader of a business, whereas in the 1980s, it was more of a unique occurrence.

Even though we have described the mother role as a separate role in this text, an alternative could be to see motherhood as integrated into the female business role. The boundaries of the female business role may be considered to extend over motherhood as well, and thus, the female business role would be defined in a different way than the male business role. This view entails understanding female business persons as something other than strictly business persons, in line with descriptions in the media articles. In earlier literature, Butler (1988) argues that gender cannot be understood as a role, but should be understood as a self, not only constituted in social discourse. The Goffmanian view (1986), on the other hand, is that a self can assume various roles on the everyday stage. Following the latter, we argue that a shift from intra-role tension to inter-role tension can be a way to explore gendered roles in performative acts. This could in turn stimulate further questioning of and challenges to current role boundaries to make role innovation possible.

Contributions

The aim of this paper has been to explore how the counterposed business and mother roles are presented in media, and based on this, to discuss possible implications for role enactment. Exploring the discursive construction of the two roles can be a way to question the taken for granted notions that continue to influence the (re)construction of roles and guide our everyday actions. In media texts, the mother role is approached as unproblematic: a good mother is nurturing and caring. In contrast, the business person

role appears to be something in the making. This is expressed in terms of tensions between being passive and aggressive, for example—female business persons should combine a humble attitude with a go-getter style. The question of how the business role can be combined with the mother role without suffocating the latter is also negotiated in the media articles. We suggest that a clarification that roles are something we have or are given or take on, rather than something we are, could provide new insights for understanding family business.

This paper contributes to the family business field by extending the on-going dialogue concerning women in family business. This is done by emphasizing the structural level of role as a way to discuss the intertwining of the private and professional dimensions of family business. To include interactions between the family and the business is a way to offer a broader and more comprehensive view of the family business (Zachary, 2011). In addition to this, the framework for role construction in combination with recognition of the family business as an arena for performative acts can be a way to discuss private and professional roles and the potential for change of/in roles. This has relevance for the use of the role concept in research and provides a framework for family business members to contextualize their role taking and role giving in day to day activities.

The continued exploration of role enactment in terms of role conservation-innovation and role separation-integration could benefit from the inclusion of a broader range of roles. Recognition of the hierarchy of social positions is another interesting route to explore in future studies. Although we have limited our study to women in family business, we recognize that a fruitful way forward could be to connect this study to the extant literature on gender and work-life issues. The inclusion of TV and radio in the media discourse could provide a promising venue for future studies and bring with it a new perspective to complement previous results. In studies of family business, the potential of the so-called linguistic turn has not been fully explored, and we argue that studies of language could add important and relevant knowledge to the field of business. To include language (see, for example, Budge and Janoff, 1991; Danes, Haberman and McTavish, 2005) could be a way to emphasize the social construction of family business. In line with this, the paper suggests the use of discourse analysis, a method that has boomed within social studies in general but has thus far been little utilized in the family business literature. Finally, the paper is coherent in its social constructionist approach and language use throughout the paper, as an alternative that compliments existing family business studies that most often are conducted from a realist stance.

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TABLE 1
Role descriptions from previous studies of women in family business

Reference	Role(s)	Role description
Salganicoff, 1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Caretaker 	<p>“... women are socialized to nurture, having modeled themselves after their mothers’ caring role. They seem to define themselves in terms of their relationships with others and fear separation from them.” P. 129</p>
Hollander and Bukowitz, 1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Overnurturer • The Invisible Woman 	<p>“The concept of overnurturing is intimately associated with the concept of mothering. We have used the term overnurturer to describe excessive immersion in this role and to emphasize that overnurturing is too much of a good thing rather than too much of a bad thing.” P. 142</p> <p>“In the family business, many women find that they are not viewed by others, whether in the business or outside, in the same way as male members of the business. For some, the degree to which they are not considered makes it seem as if they were simply not there – as if they were invisible.” P. 143</p>
Poza and Messer, 2001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Jealous Spouse • The Chief Trust Officer • The Business Partner or Copreneur • The Vice President of Human Resources, Finance, and Facilities 	<p>[Jealous Spouse] “... many spouses experience jealousy and live a life where competition with the business for time and affection is a prominent theme.” P. 29</p> <p>[Chief Trust Officer] “Some spouses see their major contribution to the family-owned business as providing the glue that keeps the family together through the predictable challenges families, especially families that work together, face.” P. 29</p> <p>[Business Partner or Copreneur] “Some spouses are critical to the business, whether through their financial investment in the business or their professional, technical, or administrative skills.” P. 30</p> <p>[Vice President of Human Resources, Finance, and Facilities] “Unlike the Business Partner, this spouse acts as a trusted</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Senior Advisor & Values Keeper • The Free Agent 	<p>employee, not an owner and, therefore, limits contributions and involvement to the function or project that he or she performs.” P. 30</p> <p>[Senior Advisor & Values Keeper] “Senior Advisors instill a sense of what the business stands for and what it means to the family. They often have no visible role in the business.” P. 31</p> <p>[Free Agent] “... this spouse chooses to grow and develop an identity that is very separate from the CEO and the family business. “My role is being me, not the wife and not the mother”.” P. 32</p>
Curimbaba, 2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Anchor • The Invisible Heiress • The Professional Heiress 	<p>[Anchor] “With great visibility inside the family business, the heiresses became essential for its continuity, in spite of passing through phases that demonstrated a tendency to reduce their significance. Nonetheless, they were never considered completely unnecessary.” P. 247</p> <p>[Invisible Heiress] “they were not seen as necessary to include in the successor managerial staff. Where there were a number of men in the family, the daughters were clearly not prepared from the time of their youth to be professionals in their family businesses.” P. 246-247.</p> <p>[Professional Heiress] “Women assigned to this group worked at mature companies with complex ownership structures, where a reasonable number of family men worked, but not an overwhelming majority. The female heirs had recognized opportunities.” P. 245</p>
Barrett and Moores, 2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Entrepreneur 	<p>“...women who start new ventures they see as family firms, or who act entrepreneurially in existing FCB.” P. 367</p>

TABLE 2
 Number of articles analyzed, by year of publication

Year	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Media articles	5	9	11	10	6	9	11	9
Year	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Media articles	18	24	35	29	34	38	60	308

FIGURE 1
Two dimensions of role construction

