

I

Overview

Vipin Gupta and Lynda L Moore

In this volume, we scan a sample of empirical work on the family businesses—focusing on the Confucian Asian cluster. The Confucian Asian cluster is defined by the strong historical influence of China and Confucian ideology (Gupta and Hanges, 2004). Confucian societies are distinguished by their reliance upon “networks” which are coordinated through the mechanism of trust (Lowe, 1998, p. 328). Some distinctive Confucian teachings included the emphasis on learning through a hierarchical, family modeled institution, which taught principles such as diligence, self-sacrifice, and delayed gratification (Gupta and Hanges, 2004).

There is a strong tradition of family business in the Confucian Asian region, despite the weakening of family ties in Communist China and the removal of family leaders from the Japanese companies at the behest of the US government after the World War II. The family business is a dominant form of organization in South Korea; in China, the family business is a popular form of organization among the ethnic Chinese expatriate business families (El-Kahal, 2001).

The sample of selected articles in the Confucian cluster is given in Table 1. The articles cover five societies—China mainland, Hong Kong (China), Taiwan, Singapore, and South Korea. A diversity of research methodologies is represented by interviews, secondary datasets, grounded theory, ethnographic studies, and in-depth case studies.