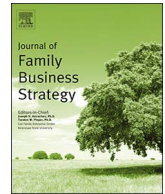




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## Navigating the waters of family business research: Options and learnings for young scholars

## ARTICLE INFO

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### 1. Promoting scholarship for young family business researchers: The options

The interest in family business as a distinct academic research field has grown significantly in recent years, mostly motivated by the prevalence of family businesses worldwide and an increasing number of people and institutions acknowledging their importance and recognizing the need to gain a deeper understanding of this particular type of organization. The aim of this editorial is twofold: (1) to reflect on how the family business community could help young scholars develop and navigate the waters of family business research, and (2) to present current and up-to-date family business research mainly realized by emergent scholars and featured in this special issue. We first present various conference opportunities which aim at promoting scholarship and exchange opportunities for (young) family business researchers. Furthermore, we disentangle the main challenges arising when young scholars approach our research field by providing some reflections on learning, discussing, and networking within the family business community. Next, we introduce the four articles of this special issue which all started their journey during the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Family Business Research Forum held in Naples/Capri in September 2016. We are pleased and honored to present this special issue within the *Journal of Family Business Strategy* as the result of the passion, the enthusiasm, and the work which have surrounded the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Family Business Research Forum (IFBRF) held in Naples/Capri in September 2016. The Forum and its format have been established in 2015 by Andrea Calabrò (IPAG Business School, France) and Alessandro Minichilli (Bocconi University, Italy) with the purpose to offer an alternative, innovative, and dynamic format in the articulated scene of the more generalist or

specialized workshops and conferences dedicated to family business research. Given the numerous possibilities that exist for researchers that want to embrace value-added and relevant academic research in the field of family business, it is thus of utmost important to discuss how the IFBRF aims to be an arena which continuously stimulates our intellectual curiosity, and particularly that of more junior colleagues. For this reason, we first describe and discuss each conference, workshop, and opportunity to promote family business scholarship and exchange opportunities, especially for young scholars, which currently exist in our field.<sup>1</sup>

#### 1.1. The international family enterprise research academy (IFERA)

The International Family Enterprise Research Academy<sup>2</sup> (IFERA) was established in 2001 with the aim to provide a platform allowing family business researchers to meet and exchange information on a regular basis. IFERA with its annual conference has been the first community of family business scholars sharing experiences and building a network at an international level. Today, IFERA is the largest membership-based association of family business scholars in the world. IFERA's mission is to promote family business as a scientific discipline and to help advance research and education on this important type of organization. A strategic alliance partner of the *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, IFERA offers its members free access to the journal, together with a range of other membership benefits. The IFERA annual world conference is usually held between the end of June and beginning of July and welcomes on average two hundred family business scholars from all over the world. The ambience is intimate, inspirational, and interactive, mostly focusing on collaboration and exchange

<sup>1</sup> It is important to specify that the list we are providing is solely based on the guest editors' experience within and outside the family business field. We are aware of the fact that more and more conferences are encouraging submissions of family business papers, but our aim is to mainly focus on family firm conferences, workshops, and forums which only and exclusively admit family business proposals/papers. In addition to that, we also include mainstream conferences that dedicate a structured space to family business papers.

<sup>2</sup> Please check the main website for further details: <http://www.ifera.org>.

of research. In addition to the annual world conference, IFERA also holds meetings at the regional level (e.g., Asia-Pacific, Latin America) and organizes smaller research development workshops (RDWs) that provide scholars additional opportunities to gather around a specific topic or an emergent theme. Typically smaller in size, RDWs allow for focused discussions and latest knowledge sharing during round-table sessions, seminars or small-group meetings with the aim to further advance the family business research agenda through collaborative efforts. Currently, IFERA accepts full papers, work in progress, research dissemination papers and case studies which go through a double-blind review process. The accepted papers and work-in-progress projects are presented in parallel sessions. The conference also includes plenary sessions with renowned keynote speakers with at least one coming from a mainstream research field. Notable are also the various initiatives to support doctoral students and (junior) faculty members focusing on family business through dedicated Doctoral and Faculty Development Consortia.

### 1.2. The family enterprise research conference (FERC)

The Family Enterprise Research Conference<sup>3</sup> (FERC) is dedicated to developing a community of scholars interested in conducting research into understanding family firms and creating usable knowledge in the field. Co-founded by Mark Green and Pramodita Sharma, the goal of this conference is to enable scholars to design and develop research projects that are theoretically sound, empirically accurate, and of practical significance to family firms. Since its first annual conference in 2005, FERC has been pursuing the aim to build a global community of scholars interested in family business research; the conferences are rigorous in their standards and developmental in their tone and culture. FERC's annual conference which is usually held in early June welcomes on average one hundred family business scholars from all over the world. In addition to the annual conference, FERC sometimes offers also a regional conference. Next to keynote speakers, the presentations at this conference are all based on a poster format.

### 1.3. The ELIASM workshop on family firm management research

The European Institute for Advanced Studies in Management (ELIASM), an international network for management research and teaching that includes more than 50,000 management scientists from all over the world, has an annual workshop dedicated to family firm management research<sup>4</sup> which is promoted by representatives of the Center for Family Enterprise and Ownership (CeFEO), Jönköping International Business School in Sweden. The workshop was founded in 2005 by Leif Melin and Mattias Nordqvist and invites the submission of proposals focusing on family business through an abstract and, if accepted for presentation, with a full paper to follow. The workshop, which is usually held mid-May, consists of plenary sessions and research paper presentations, welcomes on average one hundred family business scholars, and provides great opportunities for researchers to share their experiences and receive high-quality feedback. Moreover, it aims to stimulate the development of new research collaborations.

### 1.4. The theories of family enterprise conference (ToFE)

Founded in 2001 at the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Family Enterprise of the University of Alberta in Canada, the Theories of Family Enterprise<sup>5</sup> academic conference brings together leading

scholars from various disciplines to build knowledge on family business. The purpose is to fill the gap in the understanding and applications of theories of the firm to the family firm context. Toward this aim, a select number of prominent scholars from mainstream disciplines such as strategic management, economics, sociology, organization theory, finance, and entrepreneurship, to mention but a few, are invited together with a small number of leading scholars in family business, totaling on average 30 participants on an annual basis. A particularity of this conference, in addition to its by-invitation-only format, consists in its approach to supplement the full research papers with commentaries that extend, enhance, complement, or supplement the contributions made by the associated research paper. Conference participants are then invited to submit their papers and commentaries for consideration for publication in a special issue on family business in *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*. To date, more than ten special issues have been published in both *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* and *Journal of Business Venturing*. All of these special issues are comprised of papers and commentaries presented at past Theories of Family Enterprise conferences.

### 1.5. The family business research strategic interest group at EURAM (FABR SIG)

After acting as organizational coordinator for several activities at the European Academy of Management (EURAM), in 2010 the vision of Andrea Calabrò (IPAG Business School, France) and Donata Mussolino (University of Naples Federico II, Italy) was to promote the family business research field within the larger community of European scholars. They designed and promoted the creation of the Family Business Research Strategic Interest Group<sup>6</sup> (FABR SIG) within EURAM with the main aim to promote transnational European research in the family business domain. The FABR SIG has grown from 15 scholars, in the first place, to up to one hundred scholars who every year submit their full papers in early January and, if accepted, attend the EURAM annual conference in June. The FABR SIG offers parallel paper presentation sessions, plenary sessions with keynote speakers and several publication opportunities. The FABR SIG aims to be the forum in which to assess the conceptual development, empirical research, and future directions of the family business field within a broader community of European scholars. It is envisioned as an international arena to attract contributions of scholars approaching the field for the first time, who are usually at the EURAM annual meetings, and scholars who are already established within the field and hence can provide insights on topics that have received significant attention in the past, as well as topics that deserve greater attention to further advance the field.

### 1.6. The successful transgenerational entrepreneurship practices (STEP) project

Founded in 2005, the Successful Transgenerational Entrepreneurship Practices (STEP) Project<sup>7</sup> is a global applied research initiative that explores the entrepreneurial process within business families and generates solutions that have immediate application for family leaders. Its affiliate member institutions conduct cutting edge research, generating applied entrepreneurship findings and providing a shared learning environment. The STEP project also examines how families generate new economic activity through venturing, renewal, and generational involvement, thus its focus is on Transgenerational Entrepreneurship. The visionary institutions that founded the project include ESADE (Spain), HEC (France), Jönköping International Business School (Sweden), Bocconi University (Italy), University of St. Gallen

<sup>3</sup> Please check the main website for further details: [https://www.uvm.edu/business/family\\_enterprise\\_research\\_conference](https://www.uvm.edu/business/family_enterprise_research_conference).

<sup>4</sup> Please check the main website for further details: [http://www.eiasm.org/frontoffice/event\\_announcement.asp?event\\_id=1299%20](http://www.eiasm.org/frontoffice/event_announcement.asp?event_id=1299%20).

<sup>5</sup> Please check the main website for further details: <https://www.ualberta.ca/business/centres/family-entrepreneurship/research/academicconference>.

<sup>6</sup> Please check the main website for further details: <http://euramonline.org/programme2018/strategic-interest-groups/sig-04-family-business-research-fabr-2.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Please check the main website for further details: <http://www.stepresearch.org/>.

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