

## *Organization Studies*



### **Call for Papers Special Issue on**

## **Advancing Organization Studies in Family Business Research: Exploring the Multilevel Complexity of Family Organizations**

#### **Guest Editors for the Special Issue**

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#### **Advisory Editor**

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#### **Deadline for Submissions: September 30, 2016**

It is well documented that the family organization plays a crucial role in the global economy. Studies suggest that 65 percent to 90 percent of all companies in the world are family-owned, including more than one-third of the *S&P 500* companies, with the expectation of additional growth in the future. Compared to this global extension, there is surprisingly little research on family firms in organization studies. Despite their relevance to the economy and society, family firms have been predominantly studied through the lens of a few well-established management and economic theories, such as agency theory and the resource based view. Furthermore, despite its remarkable growth in recent years, family firm research is still largely considered as a narrow scholarly field with its own specialized journals and academic audience. This has resulted in a disconnect between the narrow approach in family business research, and the lack of interest – within organization studies – in the unique features of this prevailing organizational form. The conclusion is that family firm research would greatly benefit from the advancements in organization studies. In particular, by drawing attention to the special attributes of family firms, scholars may also challenge existing organization theories which are often implicitly based on knowledge of non-family firms.

The aim of this Special Issue is to advance organization studies in family business research. This means both tapping into the repertoire of theoretical perspectives in organization studies to study family business phenomena, and exploring how addressing family businesses may accelerate organization theories.

The family business is commonly characterized by visible and active owners, long-term orientation, collective identity, family values, commitment, emotional ownership and a desire for the firm to endure across generations (e.g. Berrone, Cruz & Gomez-Mejia, 2012; Brundin, Samuelsson & Melin 2014; Chirico & Salvato, 2014; Miller & Le Breton-Miller, 2005). The predominant view has depicted the family and the business as two complex and conflicting social systems suggesting that

they represent the emotional and business arenas, respectively. This view has been questioned and replaced by a unified systems model of family organization that underlines the enduring interaction among its individual members, the family, and the business, where the combination of integrated sub-systems is the source of competitive advantage or disadvantage for a family organization (Habbershon, Williams & MacMillan, 2003). In this Special Issue we are particularly interested in studies that explore the family business as a multilevel, complex phenomenon, which has variously been called for by family business researchers (Chrisman, Sharma, & Taggar, 2007; Hitt, Beamish, Jackson & Mathieu, 2007). Adopting a multilevel lens draws attention to the context in which social action occurs and illuminate the consequences of crossing levels of social organization. With its focus on either macro or micro levels of analysis, extant research has tended to produce incomplete views of the family organization. On the one hand, an exclusive focus on a macro perspective neglects actions, cognitions and emotions of different actors and how they give rise to higher-level phenomena. On the other hand, an isolated focus on a micro perspective neglects the important contextual and institutional factors that can significantly constrain the effects of individual-level differences that lead to collective responses (Seidl & Whittington, 2014).

For this Special Issue we encourage papers that use theories and approaches established in organization studies that may enhance the knowledge of family firms and their complex interrelationships across levels, such as organization identity, organizational culture, institutional theory, sensemaking theory, practice theory, as well as theories from family sociology, family psychology, family therapy, and psychoanalytical theories. We also welcome papers using more critical theories, including Marxism, questioning and deconstructing current knowledge of family firms. Adopting these theories and perspectives offers exciting possibilities for exploring the family organization.

The following are examples of potential research questions that we are interested in, but this list is not at all exhaustive:

- How is family ownership embedded in society? How do institutions shape family ownership, and how are institutions influenced by it?
- How can we understand the social and environmental commitment in family firms, for example by applying a practice perspective and connecting micro-level elements to higher-level ones, where family- and firm-level attention to these issues may result from the diffusion of practice from society and industry (Bansal, Gao & Qureshi, 2014).
- How do more general institutionalized management practices (e.g. regarding governance processes) influence the organizational level routines of family organizations?
- How do individual family members and the family group cope with tough situations (e.g. turbulent environment, financial distress) in relation to the often taken-for-granted aim of ensuring the endurance of the business over time?
- How can legitimacy of next-generation successors be understood as a result of identity work within and outside the family, for example using an identity construction perspective (Brown & Toyoki, 2013)?
- How do different family values, embedded in country specific cultures (e.g., collectivism/individualism) or in specific religions (e.g., the moral code of sharia), shape the business cultures?
- How do deep-seated family values and ethical convictions emerge and spread throughout the family organization, for example using a sensemaking perspective (Brown, Colville & Pye, 2014)?
- How do emotions shape different family organizational processes (Ashkanasy, Zerbe & Härtel, 2014)?
- From a gender perspective, how does the gendered structure of the family influence the business organization and its roles and relationships?
- How do power relationships within the family shape conflict (or harmony) and failure (or success) in the family and the business?
- What are the organizational implications of specific family organization dualities, such as independence/dependence; historical heritage/future paths?

- What is the role of family resources at the individual (family member), family and family firm levels? What are the interrelationships between the family's social capital and the social capital of the family firm? And how do these interrelationships affect family and firm outcomes (such as firm performance or rate of innovation)?
- What role do age and ageing have for business, governance and succession processes in family businesses? So far there has been limited attention to the individual level and how the age of family members affects their identities and forms of organizing (Thomas et al., 2014).
- How can the family be treated as a separate, yet interconnected level of analysis and thus as a fertile ground for multilevel family business research? Organizational data are inherently embedded, for example, individuals within a group, groups within an organization, organizations within an environment, etc., and the influence of the family can be found at each of these levels in the family organization (McKenny, Payne, Zachary & Short, 2014).
- Exploring negative features of the family business, what does the "dark side" of family business mean, and how can we understand mistakes and misconducts occurring in family firms as a result of their unique nature (Takacs, Haynes, Hitt & Tochman Campbell, 2015)? Here critical approaches to organizing that have never been explored in the field of family firms might be useful (Linstead, Maréchal & Griffin, 2014).

To conclude, we welcome work on family organizations that reflects its tradition and acknowledges its academic sediments, but first and foremost contributions that put family business into organization studies and explore the family and the business organization relationally. We encourage a wide range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, including policy capturing, organizational ethnographies, narrative approaches, historical methods, and other novel ways of organizing fieldwork that can open up for new insights into the phenomenon of family business organization.

### **Submissions**

Please submit papers through the journal's online submission system, SAGE track at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/orgstudies>, create your user account (if you have not done so already), and for "Manuscript Type" please choose the corresponding Special Issue. All papers that enter the reviewing process will be double-blind reviewed following the journal's normal review process and criteria. You will be able to submit your paper for this Special Issue **between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2016**.

### **Administrative support and general queries**

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### **Manuscript Development Workshop**

The guest editors of this special issue are planning to hold a manuscript development workshop in early Spring 2017, in Jönköping, Sweden. Those authors who receive an invitation for an R&R will be invited to attend this workshop. Please note that the participation at the workshop does not guarantee final acceptance of the paper in the special issue. Furthermore, attendance is also not a prerequisite for publication.

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The present call is linked to events that celebrate the *10 Year Anniversary of the Center for Family Enterprise and Ownership (CeFEO)* at Jönköping International Business School.

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