
Foreword

The *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Family Business* edited by Alfredo De Massis and Nadine Kammerlander is a timely and much needed contribution to the field of family business research. It provides both a consolidation and advancement of state-of-the-art information about qualitative research methods and approaches that are exquisitely tailored for an audience interested in family business. And really – who shouldn't be interested in family business? It is the oldest and most common organizational form of business throughout the world. Family businesses are a significant local, national and global economic driver. And yet, our collective knowledge about family business remains overshadowed by ongoing attention to corporations.

This book holds real potential to help researchers develop skills to overcome this lack of understanding about family business. It will also help to educate audiences who want to (and need to) learn more about the internal, organizational and societal dynamics associated with family firms. The breadth of topics covered in the book means that it can serve as an important resource for multiple audiences who need to know more about how qualitative research should be conducted. There is practical information that researchers can use to improve their understanding and ability to engage in a wide variety of qualitative research approaches, such as ethnography, case studies, historical investigations and narrative analysis. In addition to the highly qualified editors of the book, the authors of the chapters are all strong academics who hold leadership positions in the field of family business research. This book is written by an august group of researchers with excellent experience in qualitative methods; they draw on their own experiences to explain various facets of the research process. Reading and using the information they provide will help to advance our collective skills about how to conduct and evaluate qualitative research in family business.

One of the key audiences for this book is researchers, especially PhD students and early career scholars. It is a steep learning curve for all beginning researchers. The authors of this book have provided a wealth of great practical information about all the components of qualitative research, always with a key focus on family business. Although qualitative research principles certainly apply across different research settings, it is a significant step forward to have a collection that is clearly focused on family business research. The volume helps to show the family business community that rigorous qualitative research methods can stand proudly and strongly beside quantitative methods as appropriate research tools for investigating important topics. This is a quest that I have personally been engaged in for most of my research career, starting especially with my appointment as associate editor at the *Family Business Review*. With the publication of this *Handbook*, I see that a significant milestone has been reached. We now have a compendium of excellent practical information about how to publish qualitative research related to family business that will be widely accessible.

A second key audience for this book is those who are asked to evaluate qualitative research: editors and reviewers. Until recently there has been a dearth of reviewers (and

even editors) with relevant qualifications and experience to provide fair and appropriate evaluations of family business research articles submitted to journals for review. With the steadily increasing reputation of qualitative research, the pool of qualified reviewers and editors has also increased. Most journals publishing family business qualitative research have now appointed dedicated editors and maintain a reviewer pool of experienced scholars who can provide supportive and helpful feedback on manuscripts in progress. And yet, there is still more work to do. I hope that family business reviewers and editors will take the opportunity to read the excellent chapters in this book, and use the information and insights to continuously improve their own reviewing and editing skills. There is both an art and a science to reviewing and editing. This *Handbook* provides important information that can help willing learners to advance in both respects.

Third, I believe that potential users of family business research would also benefit from reading this book. Family business owners and government policy-makers, for example, could become much more sophisticated consumers of qualitative research by engaging with the information provided here. Qualitative research holds excellent potential to reveal otherwise invisible dynamics among family members, or between family members and others inside or outside the firm. An enhanced understanding of these interactions can provide critical information for family business owners who want to improve firm performance. In addition, policy-makers should use the information in this book to better appreciate and evaluate qualitative research findings as a tool for advancing government initiatives that facilitate economic development strategies.

Overall, I strongly encourage everyone interested in family business research – researchers, editors, reviewers, family business owners, and policy-makers – to take some time and engage with the material contained in this *Handbook*. Family businesses are an important part of business and society. Qualitative research holds the potential to reveal critical information about dynamics of change that unfold over time at multiple levels of analysis. The *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods for Family Business* serves as a stellar resource for researchers who want to design, conduct and publish high-quality research, for editors and reviewers who want to improve their ability to evaluate and guide the journal review process, and for stakeholders who can benefit from an improved ability to understand and take action based on rigorous research findings. This book will be one that I know I will continue to refer to over the next years, and I enthusiastically encourage others to do the same.

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