

International Small Business Journal
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SPECIAL ISSUE

Special Issue on the Navigation of the Paradoxical Landscape of the Family Business

Guest Editors:

Professor Maura McAdam – Dublin City University, Ireland.

Professor Clay Dibrell – The University of Mississippi, USA.

Dr Eric Clinton – Dublin City University, Ireland.

Within the family business domain, there is increasing acknowledgment that family businesses are environments driven by paradoxes. Negotiating complex paradoxes or “two desirable (and seemingly opposing) options” (Shuman et al., 2010: 1) is imperative to successfully managing a family business. Thus, the paradoxical tensions in family businesses originate from the juxtaposition of competing yet complementary systems of family and business (Basco & Perez-Rodriguez, 2009). Indeed, such entities represent a unique context, whereby familial ties (Eddleston, Kellermanns, & Zellweger, 2010), family goals and values (Kotlar and De Massis, 2013), differing family business governance approaches (Neubaum et al. 2017; Schulze et al., 2001), family dynamics influencing the business succession (Helin & Jabri, 2016; Hytti et al., 2016; Lam, 2011) and non-rational decision making (Davis & Tagiuri, 1989) intersect. Moores and Barrett (2002: 32) argue “having to deal with an additional layer of complexity created by the family means that the tasks and priorities involved in learning to manage a family business lead to specific and enduring paradoxes”. As such, family businesses are inherently paradoxical, and that tensions, such as tradition versus change, family liquidity versus business growth, and founder control versus successor autonomy, can both inhibit and foster sustainability, performance and entrepreneurial behaviour (Ingram et al., 2014). Accordingly, gaining a more nuanced understanding of how paradoxes work in family businesses, a context rich in tensions and competing forces is of paramount importance (Covin & Slevin, 1989).

While all businesses must learn to cope with conflicting situations, family-owned businesses face unique paradoxes that must be managed carefully so that business success is not jeopardised (Moores and Barrett, 2006). In fact, the management and navigation of such paradoxes is critical for the long-term survival and longevity of family businesses. Accordingly, this Special Issue will be instrumental in creating awareness of the importance of navigating and managing these paradoxes for the family businesses themselves but also those involved in advising them. It is well recognised that one of the key driving ethos amongst family businesses is the transfer of transgenerational value to future generations (Chua et al., 1999). Indeed, the management of inherent paradoxical tensions is at the crux of the successful transfer of such value; however, the process of managing these paradoxes remains a black box within the family business research domain (Nordqvist et al., 2015, Zellweger, 2013).

The aim of this special issue therefore is to publish leading edge original multi-disciplinary research that will contribute significantly to our knowledge and understanding of the distinctive, paradoxical landscape of the family business. In particular, we are interested in the strategies used by family businesses in order to navigate this landscape and management of such tensions where numerous paradoxes relating to family businesses have been identified. Chrisman et al. (2015) noted the presence of the ability and willingness paradox in

regard to family firm innovation. Zellweger (2013) has theorized about the importance of the controlling family collective mindfulness (i.e., the ability to use paradoxical thinking in order to find synergies between the business and the family) in understanding the consequences of family involvement. In another study, it was indicated that professionalization in small-medium family firms can increase risk-taking activity that fosters greater financial performance results, yet these structures may hinder the entrepreneurial efforts that lead to such risky opportunities (Naldi et al., 2007). In addition, as suggested by Gómez-Mejía et al. (2007), family firms are committed to preserving their socioemotional wealth even if their preservation efforts threaten poor performance. Marshall et al., (2006) found a number of paradoxes with reference to family firm CEOs and succession planning. There also exists learning paradoxes that are characterised by “a struggle between the comfort of the past and the uncertainty of the future” (Lewis, 2000). Unlearning is a paradox in itself when “out of such unlearning, real knowledge does develop and grow” (Brew, 1993: 88). Indeed, many strategies for change fail because members of the organisation are unable to manage the paradoxical tensions that exist between exploring novel ways of business and exploiting long held assurances (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2011). Although recognising that the family business domain is a well-rehearsed research area, this Special issue will advance current analyses by encouraging novel theoretical applications, methodologies and perspectives, through its consideration of paradoxical tensions within a family business, their antecedents, consequences, and dynamic processes.

Possible topics include, though not limited to:

- The pervasive influence of the past and generational legacy; tradition versus change
- Managing for the long term; family liquidity versus business growth
- Founder control versus successor autonomy
- The simultaneity of construction and destruction of learning and/or learning versus unlearning paradox
- The ability and willingness paradox of family driven innovation
- Family versus business values – the preservation of Socioemotional Emotional Wealth (SEW)
- The conflict between the exercise of agency versus stewardship (e.g., family altruism versus family involvement)
- Conservative and risk-adverse behaviours versus strategic renewal and innovative practices
- How family businesses deal with competing forces related to the family (e.g., need for cohesiveness, stability, long-term orientation) versus those related to the business (e.g., need for constructive conflict, flexibility, and short term-orientation)
- The negative and the positive consequences of resolving paradoxes in family business (e.g., reduction of creative tensions, increase of consistency etc.).

In addressing these issues, we seek novel contributions, using a variety of methods including for example, case studies, surveys, action research, secondary data, and other methods with due rigour. We also welcome conceptual papers that make a strong theoretical contribution to advancing understanding of the paradoxical tensions inherent in the family business domain.

The paper submission deadline is **21st September 2018** and the journal submission site will be open for submissions from 10th August 2018. The Special Issue is scheduled to be published in March 2020. Papers must be original and comply with ISBJ submission guidelines. Please refer <http://isb.sagepub.com/> for submission guidelines and a link to the

on-line submission system. In the online system please ensure you submit your paper within
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Questions and informal enquiries should be directed to:
Professor Maura McAdam (maura.mcadam@dcu.ie)
Professor Clay Dibrell (cdibrell@bus.olemiss.edu)
Dr Eric Clinton (eric.clinton@dcu.ie)