

**Call for Papers for a Special Issue of  
*Journal of Family Business Strategy***

2018 Impact Factor: 3.225  
2019 ABDC Journal Quality List: B

**Replication and Validation in Family Business Research**

Submission Deadline: January 31, 2021

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**Overview**

Over the first two decades of the twenty-first century, recognition of family business as a field of both academic and practical significance has spread widely among scholars in related fields and practitioners alike. This is demonstrated by the exponential growth of the body of high-quality publications (López-Fernández, Serrano-Bedia, & Pérez-Pérez, 2016), the increasing impact of dedicated family business journals (e.g., *FBR*, *JFBS*), and the wider acceptance of family business contributions in top-tier entrepreneurship, strategy, and general management journals (e.g., König, Kammerlander, & Enders, 2013; Kotlar et al., 2018; Neckebrouck, Schulze, & Zellweger, 2018). At the same time though, the academic world at large faces a deep credibility crisis, where our discipline is no exception (Bergh et al., 2017; Harley, 2018; Honig et al., 2018). In that light we address two related profound and systemic problems that characterize the business and management sciences in general, and the family business literature in particular: a lack of published efforts at replicating prior empirical findings (Bettis et al., 2016a; Mezas & Regnier, 2007), and a lack of studies empirically validating highly-cited conceptual or theory-building work (Hambrick, 2007; Whitfield, 2000).

First, the family business literature is characterized by a general lack of replications and reproductions of influential previous empirical findings. Reproduction and replication of prior work is crucial to ascertain the reliability of the cumulative knowledge stock future work will build on (Bergh et al., 2017; Bettis, et al., 2016a, 2016b; Buman, Reed, & Alm, 2010). Certainly compared to the natural sciences, where replication and reproduction of scientific work is much more common, but also to our close neighbors in economics, the replication culture in business and management is underdeveloped (Easley et al., 2013; Hubbard & De Vetter, 1996; Mezas & Regnier, 2007, Wennberg et al., 2019), and the family business field is no exception. To testify to the extent of this problem, to our best knowledge only one published replication of an impactful empirical family business study exists to date – Weismeier-Sammer's (2011) replication of Kellermanns and Eddleston (2006), published in this journal. In effect, in the family business field we have a particularly strong tendency to build on empirical findings in a few seminal studies, without further scrutinizing these findings with respect to, for instance, their generalizability across temporal, industrial and geographical contexts, different populations of firms, or with different and perhaps superior measurements and analytical techniques. While more implicitly obvious in theory-building and qualitative research, also – and perhaps

especially – the probabilistic logic underlying studies testing theory by estimating statistical significance of predicted relationships requires the replication of findings to further reduce the chances of pushing forward false positives and to increase the chances of detecting false negatives (Buman et al., 2010; Ethiraj et al., 2016).

Second, an equally problematic tendency visible in the vast majority of business and management disciplines pertains to the lack of efforts at validating published conceptual arguments, which “means our field has an absurdly high ratio of ideas to tests of ideas ...[and that we subsequently]... suppose much more than we know” (Hambrick, 2007; p. 1350). As an illustration, Whitfield (2000) found that only a meager 9 percent of propositions developed in *AMR* – arguably the most influential venue for new conceptual ideas in the broader management discipline – ever gets empirically tested. We observe a similar tendency in the family business literature, where both purely conceptual works and inductively derived theoretical frameworks often remain largely untested, yet do end up slipping in the assumptions and suppositions underlying subsequent research. Whereas we do not deny in any way the importance of conceptual developments, as a field we need to do a better job at putting theoretical ideas to rigorous empirical scrutiny before incorporating them in our common understanding of the nature and behavior of family firms and their incumbents.

The lack of replication and validation efforts in family business studies is however not surprising, because high-impact strategy, management, entrepreneurship and family business journals generally do not publish replication or validation studies and emphasize theoretical novelty instead. Since the careers of (family) business scholars are increasingly dependent on their publication record in such high-impact journals, these scholars are lacking incentives, or worse, face disincentives to carry out replications or validations, as doing so may be perceived as a waste of valuable time and resources (cf. Assendorpf et al., 2013; Harley, 2018; Mezas & Regnier, 2007). In order to break this vicious circle, systemic changes are needed, as scholars thus need to be incentivized to allocate their time and resources to the replication of prior empirical findings, and the validation of published yet untested conceptual propositions. As such, we follow recent examples set in neighboring fields (e.g., Bettis et al, 2016b; Block and Kuckertz, 2018; Easley and Madden, 2013) and call upon the family business research community to systematically consider the replication and validation of ‘taken-for-granted’ prior outcomes and propositions as part of their research agenda. We aim to provide an initial incentive with the organization of this special issue, which will be completely devoted to rigorous replications of influential prior findings, and validations of often-cited conceptual and inductive theory-building work in family business research.

### **Type of replication or validation studies we are looking for**

Mezas & Regnier discuss the different forms of replication studies (2007, p. 288-9), ranging from ‘narrow’ replications using the same research design and involving the same sample (i.e., to check for errors and/or falsification) or a different sample from the same population (to check for reliability of the findings), to ‘quasi’-replications using the same or a different research design in a different population (to generalize across populations and/or assess robustness of prior work). While we acknowledge the value of the very ‘narrowest’ form of replication (i.e., reproductions), we are particularly interested in receiving replications that extend the focal prior family business study of interest, in terms of, for instance:

1. The data used and its properties, e.g.:
  - a. Papers using the same sample in a different time frame or with repeated measures (i.e., in case the replicated study used cross-sectional data)
  - b. Papers using the same sample with significantly (and demonstrably) better measures
  - c. Papers using a different sample from the same population
  - d. Papers using a sample from a different population (e.g., original studies using public firm samples replicated in a private firm sample or vice versa)
2. The research design, specification and analytical procedures, e.g.:
  - a. Papers with demonstrably improved model specifications
  - b. Papers using more appropriate methods (quantitative or qualitative) compared to the replicated study
  - c. Papers showing how prior results may have been contingent on important moderator constructs omitted or ignored in the replicated study

In regards to replication studies, we strongly advise potential contributors to consult and follow the core guiding principles brought forward by Block and Kuckertz (2018) in identifying the study to be replicated and in designing their replication strategy.

As for the validation of prior under- or un-tested theoretical propositions on the other hand, authors may for instance seek to:

1. Fully or partially validate the model developed in a previously published conceptual or theoretical study in family business, using a qualitative or statistical methodological approach that best fits the nature of the proposed model
2. Test the theory developed in an inductive and/or qualitative theory-building family business study using robust quantitative methodology
3. Identify an influential theoretical or conceptual study published outside – yet often built upon in – the family business field, and assess its validity in the context of family enterprises

Of course, this list of ideas is not exhaustive and we encourage potential contributors with ideas for replication or validation formats not included above to contact the guest editors in advance to discuss the fit of their ideas with the special issue.

## **Requirements**

We welcome replications of both quantitative and qualitative influential empirical work, as well as validations of inductively or conceptually derived propositions in family business, published in peer-reviewed business, management or economics journals. Here we define ‘influential’ as follows: papers older than 5 years (i.e., published in 2014 or earlier) with a minimum of 100 Google Scholar-citations, or, alternatively, papers published within the past 5 years that have received at least 10 Google Scholar-citations per year published (i.e., 10 for papers published in 2019, 20 for papers published in 2018, ..., 50 for papers published in 2015). We expect authors

to include an up-to-date review of literature relevant to the topic of the replication study, in which authors may depart from a brief description of the replicated or validated study (including its purpose, theoretical foundations, as well as methodology and research findings in case of replications), and succinctly outline the influence that the replicated or validated study has achieved and maintained since its publication. Papers should furthermore clearly discuss what the aim and nature of their replication or validation is. Replications and validations may either confirm or disconfirm the results obtained in the replicated study, or the propositions brought forward in the validated study. Given that we are not looking for strict reproductions, disconfirmation however will not mean that the replicated or validated work should be portrayed as ‘wrong’. Rather, we expect authors whose work generates substantially different insights compared to the replicated or validated prior study to discuss potential reasons for the found deviations, as well as any implications for theory and future work, thereby not neglecting the notion that also their study likely has drawbacks. Finally, authors should be very transparent in describing the research procedure taken, such that also their work can be replicated with relative ease (Aguinis, Ramani, & Alabduljader, 2018). In that regard, we strongly encourage authors of manuscripts to guarantee open access to all materials used in conducting the replication or validation study (e.g., data, syntax, software, coding schemes) upon potential publication – see for suggestions <https://www.elsevier.com/authors/author-resources/research-data>.

### **Procedure**

The deadline for all submissions is **January 31, 2021**. All submitted manuscripts will follow the standard *JFBS* double-blind peer review process, in which reviewers will however be informed about the purpose of the special issue – i.e., replication or validation rather than theory development – and instructed to adjust their review approach in accordance. All articles for this Special Issue must be submitted online via the EVISE system at <https://www.evise.com/evise/jrnl/JFBS>. Submissions should follow the manuscript guidelines of *JFBS* available from this same link (see the ‘Guide for Authors’ link at the top of the page). Authors should clearly indicate in their cover letter that the manuscript is for the Special Issue “REPLICATION” and choose “SI-REPLICATION” as article type upon submission.

### **Important Dates**

Submission window opens: **August 1, 2020**

Manuscripts due by: **January 31, 2021**

Tentative publication of the Special Issue: **January 2022**

### **Contact**

For questions on this special issue, please contact the managing guest editor, Jasper Brinkerink, at [Jasper.Brinkerink@unibz.it](mailto:Jasper.Brinkerink@unibz.it)

### **About the Journal**

*Journal of Family Business Strategy (JFBS)* publishes research that contributes new knowledge and understanding to the field of family business. The Journal is interdisciplinary and

international in scope and welcomes submissions that address all aspects of how family influences business and business influences family. *JFBS* publishes quantitative research as well as qualitative work and purely theoretical or conceptual papers. Further details on *JFBS* can be obtained from <http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jfbs> or by contacting the Editor-in-Chief, Torsten Pieper, via [tpieper@uncc.edu](mailto:tpieper@uncc.edu).

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