



The Ownership Project

at Oxford Saïd



Foreword

Ownership is a fundamental building block of our economic system. It has the potential to impact every area of a business, from finance to governance to company culture and beyond. In many industries and geographies, ownership is becoming more concentrated, meaning that a smaller set of owners have a proportionately larger impact on companies. In short, ownership matters immensely to firms, economies, and to our world.

The Ownership Project takes the role of owners seriously. Through large-scale data analysis and hundreds of conversations with owners, we have developed powerful insights into the responsibilities and opportunities of ownership, as well as lessons owners might learn from each other.

Thanks to a talented team and visionary, supportive partners, we are proud to present our impact in this report. The report outlines our activities to date, and shares a bit of the community that brought The Ownership Project to life: networks and individuals dedicated to the evolving topic of ownership and why it matters. We are grateful for everyone who makes this project a reality, and look forward to sharing with you.

Dr. Mary Johnstone-Louis
Programme Director, The Ownership Project
Senior Fellow in Management Practice,
Saïd Business School



**Colin Mayer CBE FBA**

Principal Investigator, The Ownership Project
Visiting Professor, Blavatnik School of Government
Emeritus Professor, Saïd Business School

"The changing nature of business is raising profound questions about the legitimacy of ownership and the obligations of owners. These questions are at the heart of this project."

Peter Tufano

Principal Investigator, The Ownership Project
Baker Foundation Professor, Harvard Business School
Emeritus Professor, Saïd Business School

"The Ownership Project's approach of using quantitative and qualitative research methods allows us to better understand the impact of ownership on firm behaviours. Our results show that ownership matters."

**Bridget Kustin**

Research Fellow and Qualitative Lead, The Ownership Project
Saïd Business School

"On the largest end of the ownership spectrum, private family ownership exists in productive tension with public goods, given the impact of these businesses on sectors, nations, workers, and consumers. Research into large family businesses is thus as much about quantitative data as it is about human dynamics, kinship, and the unique culture of each owning family. The Ownership Project has demonstrated the importance of a multi-disciplinary, mixed-methods approach."



Table of Contents

1. Foreword	2
2. Our Theory of Change	6
3. Our Research	8
4. Our Team	12
5. Community Engagement	14
6. Family Advisory Council	22



Robert G. Eccles

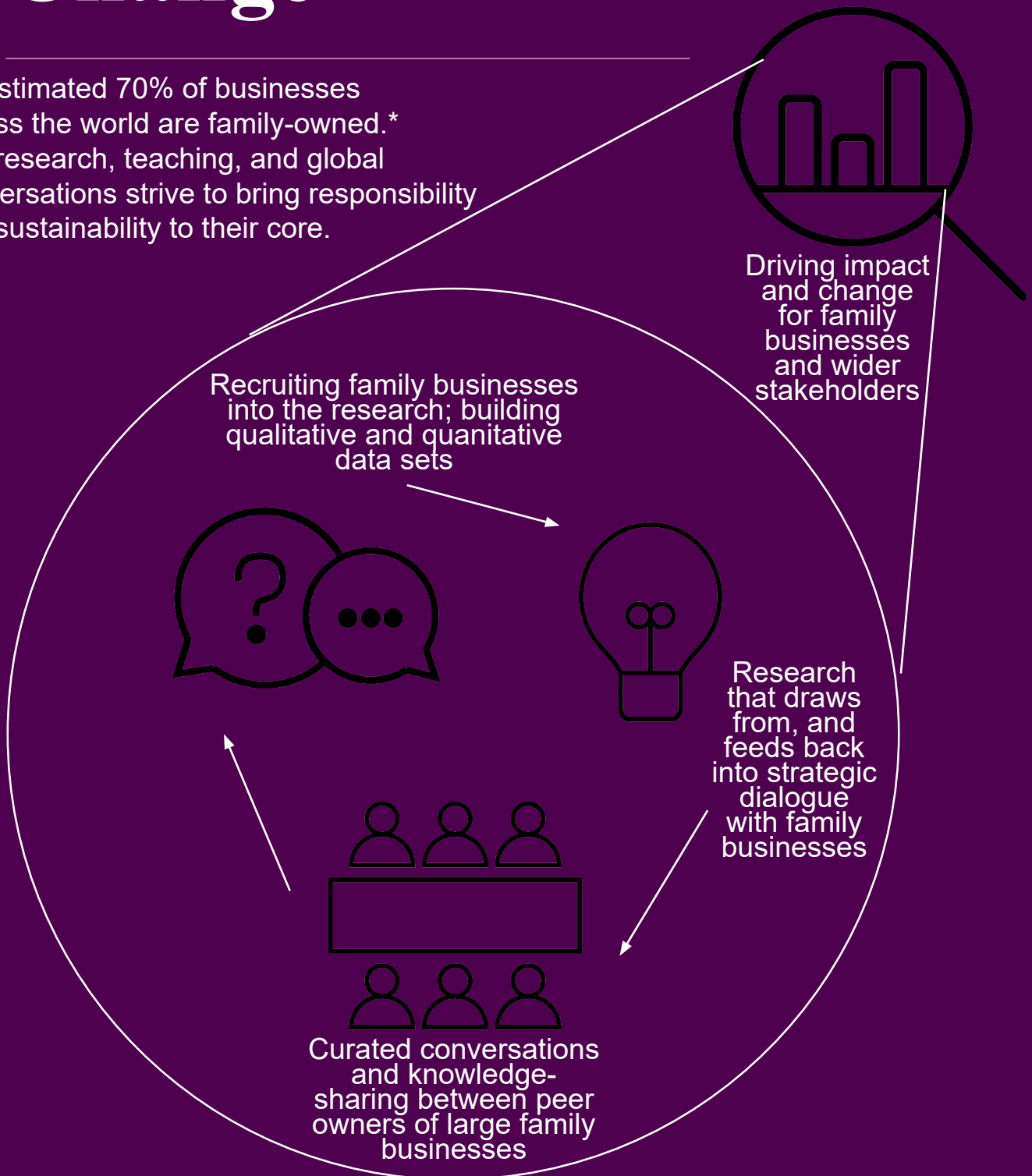
Visiting Professor of Management Practice,
Saïd Business School

“Companies can have complex family dynamics and it is not always the case that they have governance processes in place to meet the sustainability challenge. That is why The Ownership Project is so important. It can help raise the bar and give these companies the tools they need to rise to the occasion. Failure for them to do so will be to their detriment and society as a whole.”



Our Theory of Change

An estimated 70% of businesses across the world are family-owned.* Our research, teaching, and global conversations strive to bring responsibility and sustainability to their core.



* Villalonga, B; and Amit, R (2020) 'Family Ownership.' *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, Volume 36, Issue 2, Pages 241–257.

Conversations

We engage in in-depth discussions, interviews, and ethnographic research among large family businesses, most with revenues above USD 1 billion. These one-on-one conversations enable us to gather insights directly from family members and to share research findings with business decision-makers across the globe.

Reflections

Our conversations with family members are often just the beginning of long-term knowledge-sharing. The more we engage with family business owners, the more we see the transformative power of asking the right questions, connecting the right change agents, connecting families to each other and supporting family business leaders - and often their next generation, as well - to observe themselves from outside the box.

Coming Together

Our Family Advisory Council makes us unique. The Council is a source of timely knowledge as well as a platform to disseminate our research to family principals with the power to act. For families, the Council is a peer group consisting of owners of large family enterprises who come together to share their best practices, lessons learned, and open questions. Council members participate in 2-3 conversations with the research team annually and convene in person and virtually 4-5 times a year.



Panel during Family Advisory Council meeting, London, May 2022

L-R Bridget Kustin, The Ownership Project; Mathew Masters, Caledonia Investments; Sonia Barry, The Cayzer Trust Company; Mollie Cayzer-Colvin, Cayzer-Colvin Family; Jamie Cayzer-Colvin; Caledonia Investments

Our Research

A fair, strong, and innovative economy calls for new frameworks for large asset owners - including family businesses. Families steer some of the biggest companies in the world and have the ability to implement reforms that benefit people and the planet, be it through their concentrated ownership, investment vehicles, or philanthropic platforms. Owners have the potential to be powerful and agile catalysts for change by setting their values as the guiding principles for their businesses.

All our interactions with the family business community feed into our qualitative and quantitative research. We examine the ways owners influence their businesses and how these businesses impact society. Key research questions guiding our work include:

- How do family businesses govern long-term corporate commitments effectively?
- How can family businesses lock in commitments to fulfil corporate purpose, beyond profit maximisation?
- What role can owners play in responding to longer-term and emerging systemic risks?
- How do owners secure support from board members, senior management, family members, and other shareholders to make responsible ownership a priority?



Mary Johnstone-Louis at the Sustainable Development Goals Tent, World Economic Forum, Davos, 2020

Qualitative Research

80+

interviews with family business principals with enterprises with a total of USD **750+** billion, employing **17.5+** billion people across **30+** countries.

Interview topics covered:

Business purpose, ethics, impact, performance, family ecosystem structure, succession, alignment, ownership, shareholding, governance, and management

- Most businesses are 2nd, 3rd and 4th generation
- Sectors include retail, manufacturing, financial services, food and beverage, hospitality, science and technology

- **Anthropological participant observation:** Over 30 private family business events in 13 countries on 4 continents, between 2017 and 2020
- **Open-ended, anonymous interviews** with 64 family principals from 25 countries, with an average annual revenue of USD 11.6 billion each, and minimal annual revenue above USD 1 billion. We focused on principals of large businesses to gain rare insight into how the presumptive leader of multigenerational family shareholders (numbering from less than five into the thousands) understand and discuss the family's business ethics.

Interviewees' companies are domiciled in 25 countries with significant geographic spread: 39% Europe/United Kingdom, 38% Americas, 20% Asia and 3% Oceania. 55% of firms in our sample are in the 2nd or 3rd family generation. 41% are between the 4th and 7th generations. 5% are in the 8th generation or beyond.

- 70% of interviewees completed a '**Family Engagement Chart**,' listing family members' roles (and their gender and family generation) on corporate boards, corporate leadership teams, and the family council. This provides an unprecedented look into internal family governance and engagement, for publicly listed and private businesses alike.

Quantitative Research

A global sample of



3,000+ firms in



62 countries over



18 years

to answer the question: *How does the structure and identity of firms' material owners influence firms' environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance?*

- We found that firms with founding families or other individual investors as owners substantially *underperform* on ESG and its components, *unless* family members serve as CEOs.
- Non-family management and government entities also perform significantly better in gaining high ESG scores.
- These results are robust, even after multiple data and methodological stress tests.

What does this mean?

- **Ownership and management both matter for ESG performance.**
- **Family businesses with a family CEO have a better chance at ESG success.**

“The Ownership Project identifies how ownership impacts the performance of companies. Not just their financial performance but wider performance in relation to promoting well-being.”

Colin Mayer CBE FBA

Principal Investigator, The Ownership Project
Visiting Professor, Blavatnik School of Government
Emeritus Professor, Saïd Business School

“Ownership matters, even after controlling for industry, country, and other explanatory measures. The most striking finding reveals a gap between the narrative around family firms and the actual behaviour of family-controlled public firms. Our results provide a meaningful challenge to the simple notion that families naturally have long horizons that translate automatically into greater adoption of environmental and social goals.”

Peter Tufano

Principal Investigator, The Ownership Project
Baker Foundation Professor, Harvard Business School
Emeritus Professor, Saïd Business School

Our Team

Our research draws from fields including finance, economics, anthropology, law, management, and impact.



Madeline Asta
Research Assistant
Senior Analyst, Social Finance



Jonathan Chan
Research Assistant
Lecturer in Law, University College London



Nicole Gao
Research Assistant



Mary Johnstone-Louis
Programme Director
*Senior Fellow in Management Practice,
Saïd Business School*



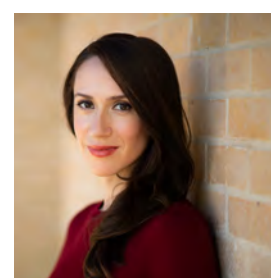
Alessandra Buonfino
International Research Fellow
Senior Advisor, Climate at Global Innovation Fund



Andrienne d'Arenberg
Executive in Residence
Board Member & Trustee, Family Business Advisor



Clarissa Hauptmann
Research Fellow
Senior Consultant, McKinsey & Co.



Bridget Kustin
Qualitative Lead
Research Fellow, Saïd Business School



Colin Mayer CBE FBA

Principal Investigator

*Visiting Professor, Blavatnik School of Government
Emeritus Professor, Saïd Business School*



Kimberley Payne

Project Administrator

Saïd Business School



Cole Scanlon

Research Assistant

Co-Founder/Director, Fair Opportunity Project



Helen Stringer

Project Administrator

Research Group Assistant, Mathematical Institute



Anna Tervahartiala

Communications Consultant

Associate Director, Human Rights Watch



Peter Tufano

Principal Investigator

*Baker Foundation Professor,
Harvard Business School*



Belén Villalonga

Visiting Scholar

*Professor of Management and Organisations,
NYU*



Boya Wang

Quantitative Lead

ESG Analyst EMEA, Morningstar



Yuezhou Yang

Research Assistant

PhD Candidate, International Development, LSE

Community Engagement

Writing for public impact

Where theory meets practice

The Conduit



WORLD
ECONOMIC
FORUM

The
British
Academy

FORTUNE



Harvard Business Review

The Board’s Role in Sustainability

A new framework for getting directors behind ESG efforts by Robert G. Eccles, Mary Johnstone-Louis, Colin Mayer, and Judith C. Strohle

From the Magazine (September-October 2020)



Oxford Answers



Bridget Kustin — 29 September
2021

When anthropology
meets billion-dollar
family business

FT FINANCIAL
TIMES

Driving Impact and Change

As part of our theory of change, our team has brought insights on the importance of owners and ownership to external leadership and governance roles, including:

Board/Advisory Roles

B Lab UK

Chair of the Board, Mary Johnstone-Louis

IDEA - Increasing Diversity in Enterprising Activities

Member of the Advisory Board, Bridget Kustin

Millionaires for Humanity

Member of the Advisory Board, Bridget Kustin

Oxford Character Project

Member of the Advisory Board, Mary Johnstone-Louis

External Projects

British Academy Future of the Corporation Programme

Academic Lead, Colin Mayer CBE FBA; Contributing Authors, Jonathan Chan, Mary Johnstone-Louis, Bridget Kustin, Belén Villalonga

World Economic Forum and Global Agenda Councils,

Contributors, Colin Mayer, Peter Tufano

World Economic Forum Global Futures Councils

Fellows, Mary Johnstone-Louis, Bridget Kustin

Juries

EY Family Business of the Year - UK

Member of the Jury, Bridget Kustin

Family Business Council Gulf - Family Business Awards

Member of the Jury, Bridget Kustin

IMD-Pictet Sustainability in Family Business Award

Member of the Jury, Mary Johnstone-Louis

Teaching at Saïd Business School

400+ students taught, via:

- The Family Business MBA course
- Custom Executive Education courses for senior family business members and next generation family members from across the world
- Guest lecturing on family business and ownership across the MBA and Executive MBA curricula, and in Open and Custom Executive Education courses



Bridget Kustin lecturing to family business next gens visiting the Saïd Business School, 2022



A Toolkit for Responsible Ownership:

An anthropological view on the narratives family businesses tell themselves about themselves

"Starting in 2017, I immersed myself in fieldwork among large family businesses observing, interviewing, and interacting with families across 13 countries. Per anthropological method, the goal was first understanding what issues matter to families, and then examining those issues critically, including their relationship to the big-picture Ownership Project question: what is responsible large family business ownership?

I wondered if families would be suspicious about the Toolkit. I discuss taboos around wealth inequality, taxes, child-rearing, and fortunes that grew from colonialism and war. But the response to the toolkit has been excitement: private issues are brought into the light. These topics impact business, from strategy, to planning, to succession."

Bridget Kustin
Research Fellow & Qualitative Lead
Author, A Toolkit for Responsible Ownership



A Toolkit for Responsible Ownership

An Anthropological View on the Narratives
Family Businesses Tell Themselves

The Seven Narratives



- 1 Family business as a force for good.
- 2 We have a long-term orientation. We think in generations, not financial quarters.
- 3 Family owners are uniquely agile.
- 4 Employees prefer working in a family-owned business. Our employees are like family.
- 5 I don't consider the business as something that belongs to me. I consider myself a steward of it for the next generation.
- 6 We care about our community.
- 7 Shirtsleeves to shirtsleeves in three generations.

Stakeholder Engagement



90+

Talks, Webinars, Keynotes, Podcasts, and Panel Discussions from our team, on topics ranging from family business purpose, to the future of capitalism, to sustainability, including:

Family Business Network Annual Meeting, Gran Canaria 2017; Colin Mayer

Family Business Network Annual Meeting, Venice 2018; Peter Tufano and Belén Villalonga

Family Business Session, EY Entrepreneur of the Year, Monaco 2019; Bridget Kustin

EY and Eurobank Family Business Forum, Athens 2019; Bridget Kustin

The 23rd European Family Office Forum; Campden Wealth, London 2021; Bridget Kustin

World Economic Forum, Davos 2020; Peter Tufano and Colin Mayer (delegates and speakers); Mary Johnstone-Louis (In:Tent)

Family Firm Institute Global Conference, London 2021; Bridget Kustin

Institute for Family Business, Annual Conference, London 2021; Mary Johnstone-Louis

7th Annual Conference for the Principles for Responsible Management Education, virtual 2021, Mary Johnstone-Louis



L-R Konstantinos Vassiliou, Deputy CEO, Eurobank; Bridget Kustin, The Ownership Project; Marnix van Rij, Family Business lead, EY; Alexandra Papalexopoulou-Benopoulou, family owner, TITAN Group; Panagiotis Papazoglou, CEO, EY Greece

Conversations on Ownership & Leadership

Conversations on ownership and leadership with our family business network



Family Advisory Council

Our Family Advisory Council brings senior owners from family enterprises from across the globe together to establish pathways towards responsible ownership.

The Council meets as a group and holds regular one-to-one sessions with our researchers. The role of the Council is to test our ideas and ensure that our insights are disseminated to the people holding the levers enabling change.



29

Members



17

Countries
represented



+686,000

Number of
employees



+224

\$BN USD in
revenue/AUM



Family Advisory Council meeting, March 2021

According to a 2020 survey of our Family Advisory Council:

88%

say that involvement in The Ownership Project has influenced their thinking

65%

made at least one change in their family, business, or family office as result of their involvement in The Ownership Project



“It’s not how we spend money but how we make it that matters most. Business can be a force for good, as long as its purpose is not merely to make money but to serve the community and satisfy societal needs sustainably.”

André Hoffman
Vice Chairman, Roche

“This is possibly the only place where I have found the topic of long-term purpose of ownership to be regularly tackled. To be a part of this discussion at a time when companies are so challenged is very positive.”



Luca Garavoglia
Chairman, Davide Campari-Milano NV

Regarding Esquel’s COVID-19 pandemic response: “We had an opportunity to come in and be a part of the solution... we stepped up, because we thought this was what needed to be done.”



Dee Poon
Managing Director, Esquel Group



“Responsible ownership can also mean taking very short-term decisive action. Responsible ownership is taking a stand and taking action in a situation where we need to act fast.”

Marc Fielmann
CEO, Fielmann AG

“We are not asking commercial people to think about impact. We are not asking the philanthropic side to think about returns. We are asking the two sides to work together.”



Carol & Alan Schwartz
Founders, Trawalla Group





To stay updated:

[Subscribe to our newsletter](#)

[Follow us on LinkedIn](#)

Contact

The Ownership Project at Oxford Said
ownership@sbs.ox.ac.uk