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## Family Businesses for Sustainable Communities

PROF. MAURA POZZI, PROF. ADRIANO MAURO ELLENA

<b>Term</b>	Summer 2026
<b>Area of study</b>	Social and Community Psychology
<b>Credits</b>	6 ECTS
<b>Dates</b>	22 June - 2 July 2026 (2 weeks)
<b>Method of instruction</b>	In person

### Course description

The primary objective of this course is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the core theories and emerging trends in Social and Community Psychology, particularly as they apply to the context of family businesses.

The first part of the course focuses on the study of family businesses, namely enterprises owned, managed, and/or governed by family members. Family Businesses (FBs) represent the vast majority of firms both in Italy and worldwide, and constitute unique organizational settings in which economic, interpersonal, and social dynamics are deeply intertwined. The module is designed to strengthen students' analytical skills in understanding the distinctive features of FBs, as well as in assessing their main challenges and opportunities, with particular attention to sustainability-related issues. It is especially intended for students interested in providing consulting and professional services to family-owned enterprises. Adopting a highly interactive teaching approach, the course combines different learning methods, including role-playing activities, multimedia materials, guest lectures, and guided discussions. This multifaceted methodology allows students not only to engage with theoretical concepts, but also to experience practical situations, thereby developing the knowledge and competencies required to navigate the complex environment of family business consultancy.

The second part of the course meticulously explores the intricate interplay between individuals and their environments, delving into the dynamic processes by which communities influence and are influenced by interpersonal and social relationships over time. The programme is meticulously structured to integrate both theory and practice within each lesson, ensuring a balanced and comprehensive learning experience. Each session begins with an in-depth exploration of theoretical concepts foundational to community psychology, providing students with profound insights into this captivating field. This theoretical portion is not merely preparatory but forms the bedrock upon which practical understanding is built. Following the theoretical exploration in the same session, the course dynamically transitions into practical application. This shift is not sequential but symbiotic, blending theory with practice within the same instructional period. Students actively engage in hands-on activities, directly applying the theoretical knowledge they have just acquired. This approach allows for immediate implementation of concepts, using essential tools relevant to real-world community work. By interweaving theoretical learning with practical exercises, the course not only solidifies students' understanding but also equips them with practical, valuable skills that are immediately applicable.

In sum, the course aims to impart an in-depth understanding of Social and Community Psychology's core principles and its evolving trends, with a focus on their application in family business contexts.



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## Course Objectives

- To analyze the unique dynamics of family businesses, focusing on their challenges and opportunities.
- To explore the interaction between individuals and their environments, emphasizing the influence of communities on interpersonal and social relationships over time.
- To integrate theoretical knowledge and practical application, enhancing understanding of community psychology.
- To apply theoretical concepts in practical scenarios, using hands-on activities to develop skills relevant to community work.

## Course Contents

- Study of family businesses, their characteristics, challenges, and opportunities.
- Development of analytical skills for consulting in family-run enterprises.
- Interactive pedagogical methods including role-playing, multimedia presentations, guest lectures, and facilitated discussions.
- Theoretical foundations of community psychology.
- Practical applications in community settings.
- Analysis of the interplay between individual and environmental factors in communities.

## Special Focus

- Development of practical skills for consultancy in family-run enterprises.
- Application of community psychology in the context of family businesses.
- Interactive learning experiences blending theory with real-world application.

## Prerequisites

The course is introductory social and community psychology and family businesses and does not require any previous knowledge of those concepts. A basic knowledge of social psychology is a facilitating factor.

## Method of teaching

Together with the traditional lectures, the learning process is supported by stimulating teaching methods such as case discussions, guest speakers and participatory methods. During the course there will be also some field trips.



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## Course requirements

Students have to comply with the following requirements:

- students are expected to regularly attend class sessions and actively contribute to in-class debate;
- students have to take a mid-term written exam at the end of the first teaching module;
- students have to take a final written exam at the end of the second teaching module.

## Grading

In class participation	20% of final grade
Mid-term written exam	40% of final grade
Final written exam	40% of final grade

**Mid-term exam:** The written exam consists of an essay related to topics covered in the program. The written exam is passed if the grade is sufficient (above 18/30).

**Final written exam:** The final written exam consists of a set of open ended questions related to topics covered in the program. The written exam is passed if the grade is sufficient (above 18/30).

## Course readings and materials

Readings and slides: all mandatory readings and lecturers' slides will be available on Blackboard.

### Suggested book and articles:

- Alvarado-Alvarez, C., & Euwema, M. C. (2024). Are family businesses more gender inclusive in leadership succession today? A perspective article. *Journal of Family Business Management*, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). <https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-10-2023-0263>
- <https://theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf>
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research: Introducing focus groups. *BMJ*, 311(7000), 299–302. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299>
- Pieper, T. M. (2010). Non solus: Toward a psychology of family business. *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 1(1), 26-39. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2010.02.003>
- Pozzi, M., Pistoni, C., Ripamonti, S., & De Leo, A. (2022). Generation and Gender Differences in Family Businesses: A New Psychological Perspective. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-022-09881-w>
- Pozzi, M., Poli Martinelli, D., Greiner, A., Pistoni, C. (2024). Comparing Psychosocial Well-being in Italian Family Businesses: Seniors vs. Juniors. *European Journal of Family Business*, 14 (2), 188-197. <https://doi.org/10.24310/ejfb.14.2.2024.19614>
- Vaughn, L. M., & Lohmueller, M. (2014). Calling all stakeholders: Group-level assessment (GLA)—A qualitative and participatory method for large groups. *Evaluation Review*, 38(4), 336–355. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841X14544903>



- Waldkirch, M. (2015). "Social identity theory and the family business". In *Theoretical Perspectives on Family Businesses*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. Retrieved May 6, 2024, from <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783479665.00015>
- Wang, C. C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health Education & Behavior*, 24(3), 369–387. <https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309>

## Schedule

Lesson	Title	Readings
1	Course presentation and introduction. Family vs Business family. Description and presence of family businesses in Italy and worldwide (4h)	Slides
2	Psychological processes characterizing family businesses – (4h)	<p>Slides</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pozzi, M., Pistoni, C., Ripamonti, S., &amp; De Leo, A. (2022). Generation and Gender Differences in Family Businesses: A New Psychological Perspective. <i>Journal of Family and Economic Issues</i>. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-022-09881-w">https://doi.org/10.1007/s10834-022-09881-w</a></li> <li>• Pieper, T. M. (2010). Non solus: Toward a psychology of family business. <i>Journal of Family Business Strategy</i>, 1(1), 26-39. <a href="https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2010.02.003">https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2010.02.003</a></li> </ul>
3	Tools for analysing the family, the family business, and its relations - Gender issues (4h)	<p>Slides</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alvarado-Alvarez, C., &amp; Euwema, M. C. (2024). Are family businesses more gender inclusive in leadership succession today? A perspective article. <i>Journal of Family Business Management</i>, ahead-of-print(ahead-of-print). <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-10-2023-0263">https://doi.org/10.1108/JFBM-10-2023-0263</a></li> <li>• Waldkirch, M. (2015). "Social identity theory and the family business". In <i>Theoretical Perspectives on Family Businesses</i>. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing. Retrieved May 6, 2024, from <a href="https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783479665.00015">https://doi.org/10.4337/9781783479665.00015</a></li> </ul>



4	<p>Family business, well-being and sustainability (4h)</p> <p><b>Mid- term exam (2h)</b></p>	<p>Slides</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pozzi, M., Poli Martinelli, D., Greiner, A., Pistoni, C. (2024). Comparing Psychosocial Well-being in Italian Family Businesses: Seniors vs. Juniors. <i>European Journal of Family Business</i>, 14 (2), 188-197. <a href="https://doi.org/10.24310/ejfb.14.2.2024.19614">https://doi.org/10.24310/ejfb.14.2.2024.19614</a></li> </ul>
5	External visit expected (8h)	
6	<p>Community Psychology, Brofenbrenner's Bio-ecological model and Participatory Action Research + Focus Group (4h)</p>	<p>Slides</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research: Introducing focus groups. <i>BMJ</i>, 311(7000), 299–302. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299">https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.311.7000.299</a></li> </ul>
7	<p>Sense of community + Photovoice (4h)</p>	<p>Slides</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wang, C. C., &amp; Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. <i>Health Education &amp; Behavior</i>, 24(3), 369–387. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309">https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309</a></li> </ul>
8	<p>Participation + Group Level Assessment (4h)</p>	<p>Slides</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vaughn, L. M., &amp; Lohmueller, M. (2014). Calling all stakeholders: Group-level assessment (GLA)—A qualitative and participatory method for large groups. <i>Evaluation Review</i>, 38(4), 336–355. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841X14544903">https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841X14544903</a></li> </ul>
9	<p>Individual, group, organizational and community empowerment + The World Café (4h)</p> <p><b>Final exam (2h)</b></p>	<p>Slides</p> <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="https://theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf">https://theworldcafe.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Cafe-To-Go-Revised.pdf</a></li> </ul>



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## Rules of conduct

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and no absence/s will be excused. Please consider that Field Trips are considered equal to regular classes and indeed you are expected to attend the visits. Unexcused absences will not be accepted. An excused absence will only be granted if you are seriously ill and can support your claim with a local doctor's certificate dated the day you missed class (therefore you must go to the doctor that same day) that has to be delivered to the Professor or to Cattolica International Office. Any other absence will not be excused and will result in not being admitted to the final exam, which corresponds to a 0 (zero) in the final exam.

**Exam Date:** The exam date cannot be re-scheduled. Should the dates of the final exams be moved for force major reasons, Cattolica International Office and the Professor will promptly inform you in class and/or via e-mail on the new date agreed. Unexcused absences to the exams will result in a failing grade in the course. In cases of unforeseeable circumstances such as illness or injury on the day of the exams, you must submit a medical certificate and communicate your absence to the Professor and Cattolica International Office via email prior to the exam. If the student does not justify his/her absence through sufficient documentation and with adequate notice before the final test, you will receive an automatic Failed. Absences for other unforeseeable circumstances will not be accepted and will result in a failing grade.

## Bio of instructors

### Maura Pozzi

Maura Pozzi is an Associate Professor of Social Psychology at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan and Brescia. She earned her degree in Work and Organizational Psychology from the Libera Università di Urbino. For years, she has been dedicated to the study of family businesses, with a particular focus on relational aspects. As a member of the University Center for Family Studies and Research, and the Research Center for Community Development and Organizational Quality of Life (CERISVICO), she publishes on this subject both nationally and internationally. The guiding principle of her approach to studying family SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) is the belief that they represent a complex and unique reality, being a result of an interweaving between typical family dynamics and, at the same time, business operations. In her recent work, she underscores the importance of studying family SMEs using a dialogic and co-constructed methodological approach, especially during the phase of leadership transition. She has developed a tool that highlights discrepancies between the perceptions of family generations, thus providing more precise intervention guidelines for professionals who collaborate with family SMEs that are about to face, or are already in, the phase of generational transition.

### Adriano Mauro Ellena

Adriano Mauro Ellena is a Research Fellow in Social and Community Psychology at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan. He received a Master's degree in Clinical Psychology from Sigmund Freud University in Milan and Vienna, and a doctorate in Psychology from the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. His work focuses on topics such as social identity, participation, youth, and NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training), approached from a community psychology perspective. Additionally, he has experience as a business consultant where he has applied an empowerment approach to organizations. Currently, he teaches Social Psychology at the Faculty of Psychology at the Università Cattolica of Milan and is involved in national and international projects. He is also a member of the Youth Observatory of the Toniolo Institute and the European Rural Youth Observatory (ERYO).