

BY BARBARA SPECTOR

# When daughters succeed their dads

**B**ACK IN 2004, *Family Business* published an article on cross-gender succession by family business advisers Dennis Jaffe and Fredda Herz Brown. Daughters who succeed their fathers as head of the family firm, Jaffe and Brown wrote, “understand that there are issues, emotions and complex roles to negotiate, so their instinct is to slowly develop trust with their father and other employees.”

In a new book, lead editor Daphne Halkias, aided by a team of three co-editors and about 60 contributing authors, addresses father-to-daughter succession around the globe from an academic perspective. In the book’s epilogue, Halkias notes that the emotional connection between father and daughter appears to play a role in generational transitions worldwide: “No matter which cultural prism we gazed through to tell the daughter’s story,” she writes, “the understanding of emotional ties between father and daughter were paramount to studying the succession process.”

In her acknowledgments, Halkias—a psychologist and business consultant who is affiliated with the University of Bergamo in Italy, Cornell University, the University of California, San Diego and Harvard Medical School’s McLean Hospital—explains that the book grew out of her experience as a visiting professor at the American College of Greece, where she surveyed female students from family business backgrounds on their intentions to succeed their fathers.

*Father-Daughter Succession in Family Business* includes 28 research articles, organized geographically. Most feature a case study based on interviews with a female

family business member. (One article includes two case studies.) Some of the companies and principals are named; others are pseudonymous or anonymous.

In most cases, the primary interviewee is already serving as CEO or expects to be named to succeed her father as leader of the business. There are exceptions, however.

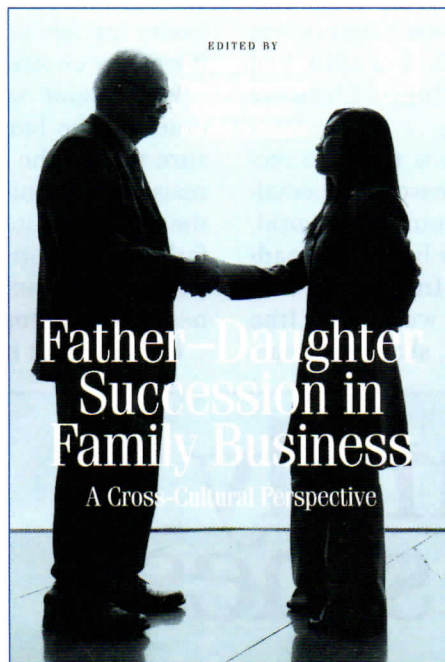
An article focusing on Nigeria does not include a case study; instead, it offers a section on “Why fathers do not hand over businesses to daughters.” Although the article from India features a case study, the authors note they had difficulty finding a daughter-successor to profile. Women they approached insisted “they were only managing the business and that they were not the successor in the family business,” the researchers report.

In a case from the United Arab Emirates, the daughter who is profiled serves as the company’s chief operating officer; her brother is the CEO. And the woman featured in the profile from Egypt founded her own business, crediting the values and work ethic she absorbed from her father’s example.

The case studies cover six continents: Asia (China, India, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines and United Arab Emirates), Africa (Egypt and Nigeria), Europe (France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Russia, Spain, Scotland, Sweden and Switzerland), North America (Canada and U.S. cases from South Carolina, Washington state and West Virginia), South America (two cases from Brazil, Columbia and Peru) and Oceania (Australia and New Zealand).

There are drawbacks to this approach. As many of the articles point out in a section headed “Limitations,” one cannot draw conclusions about a nation’s family business owners based on one case study. Two of the U.S. articles, for example, profile women who lead very small businesses, both with all-female work forces, and the third features a business in Appalachia; one can hardly make generalizations about father-daughter succession in the U.S. based on these cases.

Another caveat: In many of the case studies, the daughter was the only family member interviewed, so



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