

**A QUALITATIVE INVESTIGATION OF FEMALE  
FAMILY BUSINESS SUCCESSION  
IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA**

---

A Dissertation  
Submitted to  
the Temple University Graduate Board

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
DOCTOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

---

by  
Leila Bouamatou  
May 2017

Examining Committee Members:

Lynne Anderson, Advisory Chair, Human Resources Management  
Susan M. Mudambi, Marketing and Supply Chain Management  
T.L. Hill, Strategic Management  
Ram Mudambi, External Member, Strategic Management

## **ABSTRACT**

Family businesses are a critical part of the African economy, yet many fail within one generation and most within two generations. Moreover, women are generally not part of leadership succession in family businesses due largely to institutional logics that serve as impediments to women in business leadership. The intent of this dissertation is to fill a gap in the research literature and knowledge on the experiences of female successors in African family businesses by investigating the influence of institutional logics (cultural, ownership, management and family factors) on the leadership succession of women in African family business. A qualitative study consisting of semi-structured interviews was conducted with eight female leadership successors in African family business representing different industries. Participants were asked about their perceptions about being a woman in business, the nature of female succession in family-owned businesses, and impediments they perceive to the success of women in business. Ultimately, the findings uncovered various institutional, familial and individual impediments to women taking on leadership roles, such as institutional attitudes towards women, gender stereotypes, masculine attitudes of entrepreneurship, a lack of access to resources, and access to education and training amongst girls and women. Overall, this research contributes to theory and knowledge on how women's succession in a family firm is affected by institutionalized African legal and sociocultural norms' and the impact of management, ownership and family elements in family businesses.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my late mother, Khadijetou, for all she did for me and especially for teaching me at a very early age how important education and doing well at school is, and how it can be a life-changing experience for young African ladies. You departed this life many years ago, but your teaching and advice have contributed to making my life what it is now.

It is also dedicated to my grandmother Aghlana for raising me and for never giving up even in the most difficult times.

I dedicate this work to my husband Tah for sharing this doctoral experience with me and to my sons, Mohamed and Meouloud, both born during the preparation of this doctoral program making the time spent preparing this thesis the most fulfilling and memorable experience in my life.

Last but not least I dedicate this work to the most important and influential person in my life, my father, Mohamed Bouamatou: no dedication can be sufficiently eloquent to express what you deserve for the great things you have done for me since my birth, during my childhood and adulthood. You have done more than a father can do to make his children follow the right path in their life and in their education. Your own hard work and achievement set the example and made us aware of the importance of honesty and diligence. You are the example of devotion and perseverance that encourages me to always go forward.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

On presenting this dissertation, which is meant to be a modest contribution to the edification of a better world based on research and a scientific approach to worldwide questions, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and appreciation to all those who made this possible thanks to their help, their advice and contribution.

My gratitude goes first to my mentor Pr. Lynne Anderson for the tremendous help, guidance, and support she generously offered throughout the whole dissertation process. I am fully aware of the privilege I have enjoyed in having her as mentor and professor.

My appreciation goes also to the members of my dissertation committee, Pr. Susan Mudambi, Pr. T. L Hill and Pr. Ram Mudambi for their ideas and insightful feedbacks. Without their invaluable contributions, this dissertation would never have assumed its present content and form.

I am also indebted and owe sincere thanks to all my volunteer informants, to all the African women who participated in this research. They are all courageous and brave women, they have set examples and are role models for women in family business and for women entrepreneurs in Africa. Without their help and contribution, this dissertation would never have been possible.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all the faculty members and staff of the DBA program whose excellence has been a stimulating example.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	4
Family Business Succession.....	4
Women in African Family Business Succession .....	9
3. METHODOLOGY .....	19
Sample .....	21
Data Collection and Analysis .....	22
4. RESULTS.....	26
Succession Pathway.....	28
Family Barriers to Succession .....	30
Institutional and Gender Barriers to the Success of Women .....	33
Personal Challenges of Career, Leadership and Family Relationships to the Success of Women.....	36
Addressing Barriers to Women in Business .....	39

Evaluating Success of Women .....	42
Novel Insights.....	44
5. DISCUSSION.....	48
6. LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION .....	56
REFERENCES .....	60
APPENDIX.....	65

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
Table 1: Background information on respondents.....	27
Table 2: Responses and quotes reflecting succession pathway .....	29
Table 3: Responses and quotes reflecting family barriers to succession .....	32
Table 4: Responses and quotes reflecting institutional and gender barriers.....	35
Table 5: Responses and quotes that reflect personal challenges of career, leadership and family relationships.....	38
Table 6: Responses and quotes that reflect addressing barriers to women in business ....	40
Table 7: Responses and quotes that reflect evaluating success of women .....	43

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
Figure 1: The developmental model of family businesses.....	5



# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

I am a testament that it is possible for women to own business, to create employment, and to build businesses that are successful. And there are many women like me on the continent whose stories must now begin to be told and shared. (Muraya, 2014)

Family businesses have been an important feature of the African business landscape for centuries, and still play a vital role in the African economic development process regardless of their size (Acquaah, 2011). Yet, the majority of family businesses in the African economy fail when the founder/manager retires or dies (Barbot, Bayad, Bourguiba, & Schmitt, 2005). In some African countries, such as South Africa, less than one third of family businesses survive the transition from the first generation of ownership to the second (Manson, 2007) and the long-term success rate of family businesses in many African countries is less than the global average (Ward, 1997), with only 3% surviving the third generation (The Ivory Coast Family Business Association, 2011).

One significant characteristic of African family business is that they rarely involve female succession to a leadership role, reflecting low levels of gender egalitarianism (Gupta, Levenburg, Moore, Motwani, & Schwartz, 2010). In South Africa, Venter, Boshoff and Maas (2005) found that only 4.3% of women leaders in their study of 2,428 are owner-managers in family businesses. In the African family business context, there are several distinct social challenges and impediments to successful business ownership by women due to institutional factors and family business dynamics. African businesses are interwoven with local and national politics as well as ethical issues, making the challenge for women of running a business relatively difficult. However, in

spite of these challenges, some women have been able to survive in leadership roles and, in some instances, they fare very well.

Whereas the challenges faced by women in family business in Western cultures have been studied in some detail (e.g., Barrett & Moores, 2009; Cole, 1997; Lerner & Malach-Pines, 2011), there is little extant research in African cultures. The research that does exist supports the idea that women face a range of impediments and prejudices that more generally reflect socio/cultural and family factors. These can be understood from the perspective of institutional logics (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Thornton & Ocasio, 2012) and the developmental model of family business (DMFB) by Gersick, Hampton, Lansberg, and Davis (1997). These frameworks suggest that female succession in family businesses are influenced both by the network of interrelated institutions that exist in a society and the management, ownership and family elements of a family business. The aim of this dissertation is to investigate and understand the influence of these factors on the process and outcomes of leadership succession amongst women leaders of family businesses in Africa.

This aim was addressed by investigating, via interviews with women leaders of family businesses in Francophone Africa, the issue of inter-generational succession to address the following research question: How do institutional logics affect female family business succession in Francophone Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa?

Underlying this question is the proposition that fewer institutional impediments are associated with a higher rate and success of African women business leaders.

Apart from contributing to the small pool of research on female succession in African family businesses thus far, this investigation will hopefully contribute to

encouraging African women in family businesses to take on more responsibilities and to successfully face the issue of succession-related impediments, such as gender stereotyping prevalent in Africa (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). The research is also expected to more generally contribute to identifying and changing institutional rules and norms that have thus far acted as impediments to women's leadership succession in family businesses.

The following chapters review theory and research related to the research question before outlining a methodology for investigating the influence of institutional logics on the leadership succession of women in African family business. The results of a qualitative study consisting of semi-structured interviews conducted with eight female leadership successors in African family business from different countries, representing different industries, are presented, as well as a discussion of the research findings.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section of the dissertation reviews theory and research related to the issue of female succession in African family owned businesses. The first part introduces the perspective of the developmental model of family business, which suggests how family, business and owner elements of a family business may affect the succession process. The second part focusses on research on female succession in African family businesses to conclude that a range of institutional impediments impact on the succession of women in African family businesses. The framework of institutional logics theory is then introduced to provide a basis to investigating and understanding the experiences of women successors in Francophone African family businesses.

#### **Family Business Succession**

Knowledge about the processes and factors that influence family business succession has been informed by frameworks that conceptualize family businesses as an intersection between family, owner and business goals and objectives. The developmental model of family business (DMFB) by Gersick and colleagues (1997) derived an important framework to conceptualize the life-cycle of a family business and how this may impact on leadership succession. The developmental model of family business (DMFB) posits three overlapping dimensions of influence to understand the life cycle of a family business: family, business or management, and ownership spheres of influence.

Each dimension has distinct goals: family is focused on reproduction of family control and values, management is focused on efficiency, and ownership is focused on

asset building and preservation. As illustrated in Figure 1 below, family businesses are assumed to follow a three-stage developmental path where there are specific characteristics of the family, business and ownership domains. At the first stage, the family is first-generation with a controlling owner and a start-up business. The second stage involves sibling partnership owners; its business may be characterized as expanding and formalizing, and the family is second generation. The mature stage of a family business is characterized by involving a wider arc of family members in ownership and by being the third or more generations of family (cousin consortium) and a mature business.

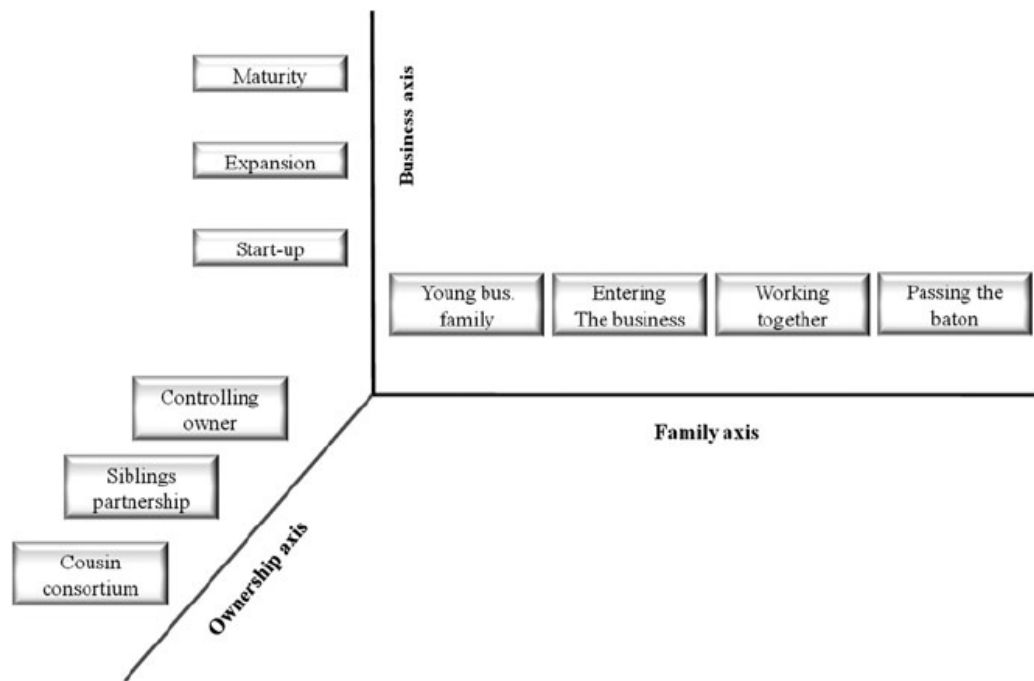


Figure 1. The developmental model of family businesses. (Gersick, K. F., Hampton, M. H., Lansberg, I., & Davis, J. A. 1997)

Whereas the developmental model of family business (DMFB) has received general support in the literature (e.g., Hoy, 2012), Rutherford and colleagues (2006) elaborated and tested the influence of some relevant characteristics of the ownership, business, and family spheres of influence. Surveys from 933 family business in the US were employed to test the relationship between several ownership, family and business characteristics and revenue, number of employees, and growth rate of family businesses. Consistent with the developmental model of family business (DMFB), the findings conveyed that later generations of family businesses were positively correlated with revenue; however, a controlling owner was associated with fewer employees regardless of family business generation. It suggests that controlling ownership into successive generations did not translate into greater success. The findings also showed that owners with higher education and growth orientation was associated with higher business growth. In terms of firm characteristics, those family businesses with higher levels of strategic planning and debt to equity ratios had higher sales and growth. Moreover, families with a higher net worth invested in the business and lower divorce rates showed higher sales and growth. Notably, and despite a prediction from previous findings, family businesses headed by women were equally successful as those headed by men.

There are several other research findings on family businesses succession that reflect the DFMB framework and its capacity for elucidating the factors that are likely to be associated with the succession of women in African family business. At a more general level, a cross-cultural comparative research investigation by Gupta and Levenburg (2013) revealed distinct factors that characterize the nature of African family businesses. The investigation entailed evaluating a large number of findings on family

businesses across ten global regions and with respect to several themes. Compared to western regions, the findings showed sub-Saharan African family businesses to be weak on regulating the family business boundary and in defining family resources, family roles and family power in the businesses. They were also weaker on business reputation, organizational professionalism and, consistent with Kennedy (1988), low on social capital.

The findings by Gupta and colleagues (2013) further showed that sub-Saharan family businesses were comparatively low on the theme of competitive succession. As such, these businesses were more likely to appoint family successors who did not demonstrate relevant competence to earn leadership. Finally, sub-Saharan African firms were moderate on gender-centered leadership or the degree to which women family members play important strategic roles in business. Although the findings show that daughters have independent and equal rights to capital, they are limited by a lack of education and by the general assumption that they are less serious about business than men and more focused on home life and child care obligations.

Whereas the findings by Gupta and colleagues (2013) indicate several challenges to the sustained success of sub-Saharan family businesses, Davis and colleagues (2000) specify the challenges faced in another emerging economic region of the Gulf States. Their research investigation was conducted with 53 leaders of family businesses and identified four main challenges facing family businesses in the Gulf States. The first is the challenge of being competitive in a rapidly changing and competitive global business environment. Despite the advantage of a long-term vision, commitment and relationships, family businesses in the Gulf States were found to be slow decision makers, overly

concerned about family conflict, and they also resist outside investment and hires which undermined their competitiveness. A second challenge identified in the findings was how to manage complexity because family businesses were more diversified in terms of geographical locations and personnel. Family businesses in sub-Saharan Africa are involving more women in positions of responsibility. A final challenge faced by African business families is continuity. The findings revealed that family businesses do not typically develop a clear succession plan with leaders' resistant to "letting go". Moreover, Leadership succession is often gender and age biased towards the oldest male who may not have the talent or interest in leading the next generation of the family business (Gupta et al., 2013).

Based on a review of the research literature, Le Breton-Miller and colleagues (2004) proposed an integrative model of effective family owned business succession. The main factors include the incumbent and successor characteristics, the family business context and dynamics, and the industry and social context. Research has shown effective succession is related to the quality of the relationship between the incumbent and successor and their willingness to engage in the process. Moreover, preparation and nurturing of the successor for transition and whether he or she has management competence have been found to be critical to an effective succession process. At the family level of analysis, effective succession is related to family dynamics wherein there is strong family collaboration and a team approach to the business with high levels of trust, openness, shared values and mutual respect. They a board with clear responsibilities and authority as well as outside members to provide an unbiased perspective were also important to effective succession.



Le Breton-Miller and colleagues (2004) also identify the industry context as an important factor to succession; the level of industry competitiveness and how quickly an industry grows and evolves would impact on the succession process. Finally, the wider social context of cultural norms, such as patriarchy, are assumed to underscore the succession process. Despite the centrality of industry and social context to this integrative model, there is little research to determine their specific effect on family owned business succession.

Consistent with the developmental model of family business (DMFB) framework, research on family businesses succession shows that the process is affected by a range of ownership, business and family challenges as they develop beyond the first generation. Moreover, effective transitions are related to the incumbent and successor characteristics, the family business context and dynamics, and the industry and social context leadership succession is a critical challenge for the developing family businesses and an issue that is made more complex in certain social contexts due to the propensity to favor male over female successors. Research on issues surrounding female succession in African family businesses is considered in the following section.

### **Women in African Family Business Succession**

The research literature on female succession in family businesses is sparse (Cesaroni & Sentuti, 2014), especially in African countries where women are underrepresented in management. For example, only 7% of women hold general management roles (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). In Nigeria, the situation is only slightly better, with men still holding most senior management positions. Ramguttty-Wong

(2000) reported on the striking situation in Mauritius, with only 3.4% of the working force in the emerging financial sector being female and only 3% of employees being professionally qualified women. It is also worth acknowledging that in an International Labor Office (2008) study, most regions in the world experienced a growth in the level of women's employment, but sub-Saharan Africa experienced a decline. Moreover, women are still limited to small scale food processing, bakery, sewing, knitting, and milling; substantial economic activities with much better income generating potential are still the preserve of men (Akpata-Ohehe, 1995).

According to research by Nkomo and Ngambi (2009), there are three general categories of impediment to the uptake of women in management of family businesses. First, at the societal level, political, institutional, cultural, and economic contexts appear to be critical to women's progress. Second, at the organizational (or, in fact, family) level, it is key to examine the influence of family business policies, structures, and systems regarding the experiences of African female managers and leaders. Third, at the individual level, women's personal characteristics, including their attitudes, abilities and behaviors, their cultural and gender identity, and access to education and training must be considered.

A telling factor with African women in business is that a variety of institutions and value systems have discriminated against women in the past and have changed little in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the one hand, women are thought to be generally less competent, soft, emotional, and subject to inappropriate behavior (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). On the other hand, high levels of masculinity cultural values or assertiveness values are associated with higher levels of entrepreneurship (e.g., Mueller & Thomas, 2000). Yet,

femininity, or interest in relationships, cooperation, and atmosphere, has been shown to facilitate effective leadership amongst business women (Adler, 1997). Nevertheless, the view that women are less capable in business pervades social institutions in Africa, such as the state, religion and the market. One net effect of these impediments is that women are thought of as invisible; indeed, Karatas-Özkan and colleagues (2011) found 62.5% of Turkish women in business felt like invisible women (also see Cole, 1997).

Similarly, research by Curimbaba (2002) showed that certain women in family business management could be classified as an invisible heir. The research was conducted with 12 women who were in managerial positions in Brazilian family businesses. Analysis of semi-structured interviews from the perspective of the developmental model of family business (DMFB) revealed three groups of women with respect to their experiences in management of family businesses: invisible, professional and anchors. An invisible manager was one who was not required to make a significant contribution to the business (older brothers acted as the owner/manager) and were usually included to contribute feminine traits to the organization; nevertheless, they had significant ownership in the business. In contrast, professional managers were career oriented and able to separate the family from the business and treat them independently. Finally, anchors were more or less essential to the business having a close relationship with the founder/father, being well educated and taking significant responsibilities in the family business (there were also fewer men in their generation).

For example, traditional law in many African cultures, prevents daughters from obtaining an equal share of the inheritance (Kevane, 2004). Indeed, Joseph (1994) outlines the importance of the family in the Arab world and its resultant patriarchal

structure, which is a definite barrier for father-daughter transfer. Family obligations also often restrict women's opportunities (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Women can be viewed as having too many of these responsibilities to be able to undertake a business opportunity, although women have clearly demonstrated their abilities to manage multiple responsibilities, with "multi-tasking" (Barbot et al., 2005) or the capacity to balance different responsibilities and maintain control.

In one important study, Barbot and colleagues (2005) examined the situation of family business transfer in both France and Tunisia. Despite being part of the Arab-Moslem world, Tunisian women have 'seized' power at work since 1956 with many supporting the formal recognition of a daughter's ability to manage and lead businesses (Barbot et al., 2005). In fact, in many African nations such as in South Africa, Nigeria, Botswana, among others, there is a strong history and predisposition for women in family leadership positions (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). The research by Barbot and colleagues (2005) built on previous literature about business succession in France and Tunisia and examined five case studies in detail using qualitative tools. They found that successful transfer is based on "the quality of the interpersonal relationship between the predecessor, the successor, and the members of the family" (Barbot et al., 2005, p.2). Problems of transfer arose when mutual adjustment between the predecessor and the successor was poor.

In the relationships studied by Barbot and colleagues (2005), the founders in all five cases were strongly attached to their companies, making their withdrawal from power more difficult. They also found that in the Tunisian firms, confidence and complicity are common characteristics of the father-daughter relationship and seem to

propel the transfer forward. Tunisia, while in the Arab world, is located in Africa and these results seem to be, generalizable to other African countries, including those in sub-Saharan Africa. Consistent with the developmental model of family business (DMFB), these businesses also appear to view the transfer as maintaining family relationships and ownership control (Barbot et al., 2005). Moreover, the view to continuity is seen as a demonstration of love and respect for the father's work efforts, and daughters play the role of mediator in insuring family business continuity.

In a further study of family business succession, Karatas-Özkan and colleagues (2011) found that family business succession is particularly challenging, even though the intention of a family business is to be sustainable across generations. The authors identify family business as "fertile grounds for conflict". Yet other some scholars (e.g. Galiano & Vinturella, 1995, in Karatas-Özkan, et al., 2011) have observed that women, in some senses, are preferable for succession from a management perspective. In contrast, other scholars argue that women are only taken to be successors when no men are available (Dumas, 1988; Upton and Sexton, 1987, in Karatas-Özkan, et al., 2011). Regardless, it is important to focus on leadership characteristics and business competencies of women as the qualifying criteria as a successor (Chrisman et al., 2003, cited in Karatas-Özkan, et al., 2011).

In a ten-nation study of both Western and non-Western countries, Lerner and Malach-Pines (2011) reviewed the influence of gender and cultural factors in family businesses. Their research investigated to what extent are family businesses different across cultures, to what extent are family businesses owned by women different from family businesses owned by men and is there a culture by gender interaction. The

findings showed stronger evidence to support the social perspective, indicating consistently high cross-cultural differences and lower gender differences. These cross-cultural differences were the result of social structures that affect women's access to entrepreneurial activities.

Although the research on succession planning in family businesses has largely neglected gender and gender issues (Harveston, Davis, & Lyden, 1997), the studies described above provide a general picture of the factors that are likely associated with the succession of African women in family-owned business. This small body of research reveals various socio-cultural, institutional, and familial impediments to women taking on leadership roles. Indeed, family businesses are influenced by the network of interrelated institutions that exist in a society.

The institutional logics perspective (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Thornton & Ocasio, 2009; 2012) can provide a strong theoretical framework for capturing all of these factors. Institutional logics (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Thornton & Ocasio, 2012) can be conceptualized as the ways in which societal institutions shape organizational structures via cultural and cognitive structures. Thornton and Ocasio (1999) defined institutional logics as “the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality” (p. 804). According to Friedland and Alford (1991), the central institutions of society include the capitalist market, the bureaucratic state, families, democracy, and religion. Each of these institutions has a central logic that facilitates the meaning and behavior of individuals, organizations, and society. It is also important to acknowledge

that institutions not only shapes thinking and behavior but individuals and organizations can alter institutional logics; rather than being isomorphic, the relationship between institutions, organizations and individuals is complementary with each shaping each other to a certain degree (Thornton & Ocasio, 2012).

From the perspective of institutional logics, individual and organizational behaviors are located in an institutional context wherein institutions regulate and normalize behavior and provide the potential for agency and change. As Thornton and Ocasio (2012) note, “while individual and organizational actors may seek power, status, and economic advantage, the means and ends of their interests and agency are both enabled and constrained by prevailing institutional logics” (p. 103). Moreover, the central institutions of markets, corporations, professions, states, families, and religions are interrelated and complimentary, such that each may be influenced by each other. For example, Bhappu (2000) showed how the relationship between the institutions of the Japanese family and corporations is mutually constructed, where one affects change in the other. Inter-institutional relationships also change over time and place; whereas family and religion were once historically quite dominant institutions, the market and the state have a relatively strong influence in the modern era. In contrast, the influence of certain institutions like the family may be comparatively stronger in non-Western cultures such as those on sub-Saharan Africa.

The institutional logics perspective assumes that strategic directions of a business can be facilitated or obstructed by a range of institutional forces. It is generally held that emerging markets exhibit relatively weak institutional frameworks which are associated with prohibitive transaction costs for establishing and maintaining outward or even

inward FDI and thereby discourage internationalization (Meyer, 2001). According to Carney (2007), successful family businesses operating in an emerging market overcome a weak institutional environment by developing trust-based and informal contracts to facilitate transactions via the process of bonding and bridging social capital. Such family businesses are high on bonding social capital relationships which have been inherited or built through individual effort. At the same time, they are also high on social bridging capital through relationships with groups of people who share the same identity such as kinship, religion or political affiliation. In contrast, research by Kennedy (1988) suggests that African family businesses are low on bonding and bridging social capital due to low levels of trust of relationships beyond the immediate family and in the low levels of institutional support reflected in weak property rights and legal frameworks provided by the state. By implication, family businesses in weak social capital and institutional environments are susceptible to closure or take-over during significant periods of transition such as leadership succession (Carney, 2007).

The nature of institutions as a source of societal and organizational stability and order implies that they are comparatively resistant to change. As Greenwood and Suddaby (2006) maintain, however, a central problem to institutional logics theory is how and why agents operating in and shaped by a system are motivated to enact institutional change in that same system. In their study of elite accountancy and consultancy firms, they found that these organizations have a sharper awareness of alternatives, providing the potential impetus for institutional entrepreneurship (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). The research of Lounsbury (2007) also addresses the issue of institutional change by showing that mutual funds were subjected to significant change to their external



contracting because of technical mechanisms, such as performance and efficiency logics. Further work on institutional change conducted by Thornton, Jones and Kury (2015) revealed that organizational governance in the accounting, architecture and publishing industries changed as a result of institutional entrepreneurs exposing the discontinuities in meaning and opportunities of their respective institutional logics. Taken together, these findings suggest that institutional change is moderated by factors such as the recognition of contradictions in logics and awareness of alternative logics by institutional entrepreneurs and agents as well as more proximal issues of performance and efficiency logics.

The ideas from the institutions logics perspective are informative when it comes to understanding the succession of African women in family business. From this perspective, one cannot view family businesses in isolation from broader institutional contexts. Family businesses are embedded in the interrelationships between the institutions of the family, state and the market as well as religion in Africa. As stated by Thornton and Ocasio (2012), “institutional logics shape and create the rules of the game, the means-ends relationships by which power and status are gained, maintained, and lost in organizations” (p. 112). By implication, the means by which women in Africa gain and maintain leadership within family businesses may be seen to reflect the interplay of institutional logics of the family, the state, the market, and religion. At the same time, change in such logics is likely to be an important factor in the succession of women in family businesses due to the seemingly prevailing institutionalized views about women and business leadership.

While there is some research to support these possibilities, there is little extant data to understand the institutional impediments to women's succession in family businesses in Africa. The research aims to address this gap in the literature by investigating the influence of institutional logics on the process and outcomes of leadership succession amongst women leaders of family businesses in Africa. The focus of the study is on family businesses from Francophone African countries, as they make up a large majority of African nations and may share some institutional similarities due to their colonial connections with France. Nevertheless, this group of African nations may be distinguished by those that are classified as part of Northern Africa (e.g., Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco) or those that are part of Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g., Mauritania, Ivory coast, and Senegal). Whereas economic markets are stronger in Northern Africa due to their proximity to Europe, the predominant religion in each African region (Islam in the North and both Islam and Christianity elsewhere) is likely to be a significant institutional difference to impact on the succession of women in family businesses. From the perspective of institutional logics, one might expect differences in religion, market and gender equality to differentially impact on the experiences of women leaders in Francophone Northern and Sub-Saharan African family business.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The study utilizes an interpretive, qualitative research design to investigate the succession experience of women leaders in Francophone African family business via semi-structured interviews. The frameworks of Institutional logics (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Thornton & Ocasio, 2012) and the developmental model of family business (Gersick, and colleagues 1997) imply that female succession in family businesses is influenced by the network of interrelated institutional factors that exist in a society comprising the management, ownership and family elements of a family business. As stated previously, the aim of this dissertation is to investigate and understand the influence of these factors on the process and outcomes of leadership succession amongst women leaders of family businesses in Africa.

The adoption of a qualitative methodology to investigate the experience of women business leaders provides several advantages (Howitt, 2010; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). For one thing, an open-ended approach to data collection generates findings that are rich in content, more detailed in their focus, and not limited by previous expectations or by the constraints of hypothesis testing. Qualitative methodologies also give voice to the individual perspective and to subjects' unique understanding of their world and the phenomenon under examination. Moreover, qualitative research can provide a broad cultural and social viewpoint to data collection, in contrast to the quantitative approach, which can offer a limited and condensed viewpoint to complex phenomenon. As such, qualitative methodologies allow a researcher to understand events, thoughts and behaviors as they occur in real situations and social contexts. Finally, qualitative methods

allow a researcher to engage with respondents and to adjust their line of questioning and inquiry to take into account the development and emergence of a group or individual viewpoint. Given these advantages, an interpretivist research paradigm, represented by a qualitative methodological approach, guided this study.

In contrast to the positivist approach to scientific inquiry, the interpretivist approach focuses on understanding the meaning of experiences, events, motivations and states relevant to a research question from the perspective of each participant. In this way, the interpretivist approach assumes a certain level of relativity in research; although individual perspectives on the same topic may differ, each provides a point of valuable and potentially rich data (Treagust, Won & Duit, 2014). Moreover, the interpretivist approach acknowledges that background factors to a research question, such as the institutional contexts, are important aspects of empirical inquiry. In this research study, institutional logics are certainly important aspects for framing and understanding the experience of African women leaders of family businesses. The interpretivist approach of inquiry enables such issues to be fully explored with participants.

The interpretivist approach taken in this study involved conducting semi-structured interviews to understand the experiences of women successors in Northern and Sub-Saharan Francophone African family businesses and to explore the expectation that fewer institutional impediments are associated with a higher rate and success of African women business leaders. Semi-structured interviews offered a pragmatic means of eliciting participant responses directly related to the research focus while at the same time allowing them to provide the researcher with unexpected insights.

## Sample

A cross-section of women leaders in African family businesses from different countries and cultures were sampled to participate in semi-structured qualitative interviews using a purposive (non-probabilistic) sampling technique. Such an approach is generally taken in qualitative research, where respondents are sourced on the basis of certain and fixed pre-determined criteria (e.g., Kurland & McCaffrey, 2014). In this study, the predetermined criteria were quite specific, as the focus was on women leaders in family business in Francophone Africa who have personal experience of family succession.

There were several predetermined selection criteria (or inclusion criteria) for respondents in the study:

- women leaders of a family business in Francophone Africa,
- part of a succession plan where leadership of the business was handed over by the previous family head of the business (i.e., family predecessor such as their father),
- managing African family businesses in Francophone countries such as Morocco, Ivory Coast, Tunisia, Algeria, Senegal, or Mauritania (together representing Northern and Sub-Saharan Francophone Africa),
- led the family business for at least two years (to insure the participants have experienced a wide range of issues with family succession and dealt with the challenges and obstacles of succession).

Participants were recruited through direct email or phone contact with women leaders in family businesses who met the inclusion criteria. Contact was made through

the researcher's networks and by a search of relevant family company registries. A snowball recruitment technique was also employed to further generate participants.

Participants were sampled until the data generated from interviews reached saturation point, where collection of more data did not provide any new information, or had little or no impact on the quality and quantity of data already collected (Guest, Bunce & Johnson, 2006). Each interview was reviewed in succession with regard to the data that was generated to address the main research question, expectations and related themes. As a sample size reference point, Guest and colleagues (2006) found that saturation point occurred after 12 interviews with a non-probabilistic sample. Moreover, the selection criteria were quite narrow and thus limited the potential for a larger sample size.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

Respondents who agreed to participate in the study were engaged in tape-recorded, semi-structured interviews with questions focusing on their perceptions about being a woman in business and the nature of female succession in family-owned businesses. Prior to commencing the interview, participants were taken through an informed consent process. During this process, participants were given a description of the study, an explanation of the procedures to protect the confidentiality of the data and their anonymity, and provided with an opportunity to willingly consent to be interviewed for the study. Each interview was conducted by telephone, with interview durations of approximately 60 minutes.

To enhance the internal consistency of the research, participants were asked the same set of questions that were informed by the institutional logics perspective and the

developmental model of family business (DMFB) (see Appendix A). Participants were first asked to describe their succession in the family business and explain the circumstances under which it occurred. Participants were also asked about institutional, management, family and ownership impediments they perceive to the success of women in business. More specifically, participants were asked to share their thoughts and feelings about cultural attitudes towards women, gender stereotypes, and the how the ownership, management and family goals account for their leadership succession. Moreover, the interview questions were intended to uncover a range of factors concerning participants' succession in the business, such as the reasons for succession, any conflict over their succession, the stages of succession, and the nature of their relationship with the founder of the business. Finally, the general background details of the business were also gathered from the interviews (e.g., the founding date, industry type, payroll and number of employees, and the family background and dynamics to ownership).

Overall, the questions in the interview guide were developed specifically for this study to extract information that might aid in the understanding what may institutional factors facilitate or impede the succession of female leaders in business. As recommended by Spradley (1979), the range of focus questions conformed to four different types: descriptive (e.g., "Could you give me a brief history of your business career?"); structural (e.g., "Tell me how you have specifically impacted on the business"); contrast (e.g., "How do different institutional impediments to women's business success affect you and other women in business?"), and evaluative (e.g., "What effect do cultural and gender attitudes towards women have on their success in

business?"). The set of questions were first pilot-tested with a female business manager to ensure their clarity of expression and that they adequately address the research focus.

Consistent with the intent of interpretive qualitative research (Smith, 2004), interpretation of the interview data was based on the interviewees' own words. Moreover, the researcher developed an environment to insure rapport-building to enable empathic sharing of participants' cognitions and emotions. An interpretative stance on the meanings underlying participants' thoughts and a conceptual understanding of participants' perspectives were adopted. The focus was on developing knowledge of the various institutional impediments to women taking on leadership roles, such as institutional attitudes towards women, gender stereotypes, a masculine attitude of entrepreneurship, and a lack of access to resources and access to education and training amongst girls and women.

Data analysis was initiated by first transcribing each interview. Consistent with interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) technique described by Willig (2008), the text of participants' words was analyzed in five stages. The first stage entailed reading and rereading the text of each interview to record initial thoughts and observations, including associations, language use and summary statements. Other approaches to coding and analyzing interview data (e.g., Butterfield, Trevino & Ball, 1996) similarly label the process in this stage as breaking the transcript down into thought units. Thought units could include a phrase, a complete sentence or a number of sentences.

The second stage of analysis involved identifying recurrent themes and patterns in the text with a particular focus on the main concepts of interest to this study: factors that promote or impede the succession of women in family-owned businesses. In the third



stage, the themes uncovered were related to one another to develop natural clusters of concepts that share meanings or references. The fourth stage entailed production of a summary table of the structured themes for each interviewee, together with quotations to illustrate the theme or meaning. The final stage involved integrating the summaries from each interview to produce an overall perspective on the succession of women in family businesses and how female leaders of family businesses achieve their successes and overcome impediments to their leadership.

To increase the internal validity of the themes and meanings generated from the data, participant interviews were also subjected to a second, albeit similar, qualitative data coding method. In the second coding, the interviews were coded with the aid of the qualitative data analysis software package Nvivo11, following the procedures described by Thorgren and Omorede (2015) in four main steps. This method entails the first step of open coding wherein interview content is coded for associated words (e.g., barriers, roles, stereotypes). The next step involves axial coding, where data from open coding reflects similarities that form more abstract or second-order constructs (e.g. cultural barriers to female succession). Axial coding is used to generate dimensions that underlie second-order constructs, with the final step entailing a combination of dimensions and constructs to produce a conceptual framework. The findings generated from this software coding were then compared with the initial coding to insure internal consistency in the interpretation of interview data. This dual approach to analyzing the data ensured that the findings could contribute to a valid framework for understanding the experience of succession of women in family businesses from Francophone Africa.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

To begin, a summary of the firm characteristics (e.g., industry) and respondent's background (e.g., succession status, current role) is provided in Table 1. Four respondents were from North Africa (Tunisia, Morocco, and Algeria) and four were from Sub-Saharan Africa (Senegal, Mauritania and Ivory Coast). Each respondent was very well educated, with higher degrees from international colleges and universities. Five of the eight respondents were the oldest child in the family, and all respondents succeeded their father as the head of the family business. In four cases, succession was deemed complete, with the respondent currently in the role of CEO for the business. In further two of the cases, succession was almost complete: respondent 2 is already the CEO, although her father is still performing the role of Chairman and head of the Board; and respondent 8 is the deputy CEO and General Manager while her father still performing the role of CEO. Succession is in progress the two other cases (respondents 5 & 7). However, both of these respondents are currently in general management roles with the expectation that full succession will occur soon. Overall, the succession amongst the research sample was on a continuum from fully to partially complete. Moreover, respondent's tenure as a full or an in-progress successor in the family business varied from 2 years to more than 20 years. The family businesses surveyed represented a variety of industries with the number of employees varying between 465 (respondent 8) and 2,800 employees (respondent 5). Each respondent also reported that their business was currently successful and growing based on criteria such as staff numbers and international expansion.

Respondents	Country	Industry/ Founded/ Succession	Family Position	Education
Respondent 1 (Complete; CEO)	Tunisia	Automobile Early 1990s 2012	3rd oldest of 4 boys & 3 girls	Bachelor degree (Tunisia); MBA (US)
Respondent 2 (In Progress; CEO)	Morocco	Cosmetics & Perfumes 1976 Early 1990s	Oldest of 3 boys & 2 girls	Master degree in organic chemistry (France); masters in management and finance.
Respondent 3 (Complete; CEO)	Morocco	Energy 1990 2001	Oldest of 2 boys & 2 girls	Business school in France and earned a master degree in finance.
Respondent 4 (Complete; CEO)	Mauritania	IT 2007 2013	Oldest of 1 girl & 2 boys	Dual degree in engineering and architecture (UK); Business administration associate degree (Spain)
Respondent 5 (In Progress; GM)	Ivory Coast	Finance/Insur ance 1996 2006	Oldest of 3 boys & 2 girls	Master's degree in finance and banking audit (London)
Respondent 6 (Complete; CEO)	Senegal	Distribution & Packaging 1990s 2015	Older brother & younger sister	Bachelor Degree in Commerce (Canada)
Respondent 7 (In Progress; GM)	Algeria	Automotive 1988 2012	Oldest with a younger brother	Master's degree in marketing and communication (France)
Respondent 8 (In Progress; Deputy CEO)	Senegal	Agribusiness 1988 2015	Two older & one younger brother & one younger sister	Bachelor in Economics (Canada), MBA (France)

The results from the analysis of the interviews provided rich insights from the interviews about the succession of women in Francophone African family businesses. Six major themes of relevance to the research question emerged, including the succession pathway, family barriers to succession, institutional and gender barriers to success of women, personal challenges of balancing leadership and family relationships, addressing barriers to women in business, and evaluating success of women. In the paragraphs below, each of the themes is considered and discussed, with illustrating responses and quotes from participants.

### **Succession Pathway**

There were some similarities and differences in responses of interviewees to the question of mechanisms and processes involved in the succession path, as shown in Table 2. In each case, the respondent had a very strong and trusting relationship with their father (the founder of the family business), which gave significant legitimacy to their succession. As stated by respondent 7, “I am someone who has always been close to her father from a very young age, which has influenced my choice to work with him”. Each respondent appeared to also take some pleasure in the similarities they have with their father/founder, with respondent 6 proclaiming “I am a mini-him!” Moreover, five of the eight respondents were the eldest child. At the same time, respondents embraced their position within the family company, and there was a general feeling that succession should be earned, as stated by respondent 5. Even though the path to succession was quite different amongst respondents, with some still in progress and some occurring by default

or naturally (other family members were not interested), it was clear that their father “anointed” each as his successor.

Table 2	
<i>Responses and Quotes Reflecting Succession Pathway</i>	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses & Quotes
Respondent 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Succession took place after the founder passed away</li> <li>▪ I was the one who claimed that the father wanted one of girls to run the business because during his life he did not prepare a boy to the succession which is a tradition in African family business culture.</li> <li>▪ We were lucky because our father did not choose the eldest brother for the succession while alive, which is very common in family business where males (generally eldest) are given leadership positions and women are given shares and dividends.</li> <li>▪ The father and founder had always expressed his trust and confidence in her as the successor and even talked about some resemblance and similarity in their personality especially when it comes to how to do business.</li> </ul>
Respondent 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ She is the CEO and she is the second person in the firm.</li> <li>▪ The father (founder) is still performing the role of chairman and the head of the board, and makes the strategic decisions.</li> <li>▪ As chemistry technician, she started being responsible and the manager of the laboratory of the family business and later integrated progressively the management of the family business and ended up a CEO and second rank after her father.</li> </ul>
Respondent 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Her family business was in very difficult situation and she was asked by her father to acquire the business and keep it alive.</li> <li>▪ She decided to rescue her family business by merging her company with the family companies and creating a new family group where she will be its CEO.</li> </ul>
Respondent 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I would also say by circumstance; she is the only over 18 years (I was 23 years old when I succeeded my father)</li> <li>▪ Following her father’s death after long years of illnesses.</li> <li>▪ Her father prepared all the legal documents during his last month and started introducing her to partnerships, banking advisors, lawyers etc.</li> </ul>
Respondent 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ He is still the CEO, but he is delegating her to make most decisions.</li> <li>▪ She is having legitimacy from her father choice (he chose her) and no-one wanted to make the sacrifice and bear all that huge amount of work and responsibility for the good of the family business.</li> <li>▪ “Succession should be earned and deserved”</li> </ul>

Table 2, continued	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses & Quotes
Respondent 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I think it was naturally from the moment I started to accompany the CEO to the meetings</li> <li>▪ The control was handed gradually and this process started from the end of 2013 when Dad decided to delegate to me some files and missions, and gradually made me his binomial before gradually fading.</li> <li>▪ In the eyes of the collaborators, I am a "mini him".</li> <li>▪ Relationship between the founder and the successor: very strong, quasi-fusional; Much confidence and resemblance.</li> </ul>
Respondent 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I think the choice was made naturally (by default to some extent). I am the eldest and for the moment the only one who is interested in the company.</li> <li>▪ There is a strong resemblance, a great confidence which has never ceased to grow between us, and indeed a certain complicity. He is someone who asks my opinion before making a decision, whether professional, family or personal.</li> </ul>
Respondent 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The choice of the succession was made gradually and naturally. It is not by chance or by default as some people think based on some false rumors in Senegal</li> <li>▪ My dad and I have always been very close in everyday life. That's why I carry his name (I still have his name after being married).</li> </ul>

### **Family Barriers to Succession**

Whereas all participants described a strong and trusting relationship with the founder (their father), they reported a mix of family barriers to their succession in their family business (see Table 3). Respondents 1 and 4 experienced resistances to their succession from their mothers and siblings, with mothers believing that leadership of the family business should fall to the male. In both cases, respondents reported their mother's lack of education was an important reason for her resistance. In contrast, respondents 6 and 8 reported some problems with their older brothers over their succession with brothers feeling put out or being less cooperative. Nevertheless, both respondents

reported that differences with their brothers has been managed through open and honest communication. Overall, respondents who did experience some family resistance appear to have professionally managed this challenge to their succession from family members.

An important observation from respondents who experienced barriers to their succession from family members was the impact of family codes and traditions about gender roles. As stated by respondent 6, “in the African tradition, and though societal institutions, we know that very often the son is the heir”. In contrast, respondent 2 indicated that her father did not adhere to traditional roles reporting that she experienced little resistance to her succession as her father is very modern and makes no distinctions based on gender. As such, respondents expressed the contrasting effects of traditional and modern family gender roles on family succession priorities.

The findings also showed that the experience of respondent 2, 3, 5, and 7 was quite different to other respondents, as each had little resistance to their succession from other family members. In each of these cases, the respondent was the oldest sibling and appeared to be the natural choice for successor. Moreover, these respondents reported a strong level of support from their father and mother to be the successor, and showed the interest and willingness to take a leadership role in the family business. Compared to respondents who did report succession-related conflict and resistance in the family, these participants appeared to find an easier path to succession due to the support of their father and being the eldest amongst the siblings. The latter condition appeared to be a very important moderator of resistance to succession; it appears that being the eldest sibling nullified a tradition of father to son succession in family business.

Table 3	
<i>Responses and Quotes Reflecting Family Barriers to Succession</i>	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
Respondent 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Women (even sisters) are not helping each other to overcome the obstacles to leadership position.</li> <li>▪ My own mother was in the side of my brothers (she believes that leadership is only for men) she never went to a school.</li> <li>▪ Boys believe that the successor should be one of them especially that the eldest child is a boy and the sisters are married and no longer have the family name.</li> </ul>
Respondent 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not really because the father is still alive</li> <li>▪ The father is a very modern Moroccan and does not make difference between his kids based on gender factor</li> <li>▪ She hopes her father will complete the succession while he is alive and not do the mistake of postponing it to after his death. Tensions may appear.</li> <li>▪ She believes to have the advantage over her brothers and sister because she has education and experience.</li> </ul>
Respondent 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The reason why she decided to leave the family business and go on its own was to avoid tensions and succession problems later and to prove that women can be successful when they are given the opportunity.</li> <li>▪ The reason to go back and join the family business again was to save her father's whole life hard work and maybe (deep down) she was emotionally attached to her family business and always dreamt silently to be the successor of her father.</li> <li>▪ As a result, there are no real barriers to succession.</li> </ul>
Respondent 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Two uncles were working for her father but not partners, just employees. They started to have ambitions of taking over the management of the family business.</li> <li>▪ At the beginning my mother was against my succession, she wanted to hire someone to manage the business until my brother was able to run the business. I think, uneducated she is and because she heard so much that leadership is a territory of manhood, she was not sure that I will be able to run successfully the business.</li> </ul>
Respondent 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ She is the eldest among all children, so natural and a lack of interest from siblings.</li> <li>▪ Her sister and two of the brothers are occupying important positions within the group, and one brother chose to be a photographer (artist), they are all well-educated.</li> </ul>



Table 3, continued	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
Respondent 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No conflict, not really except sometimes my big brother feels put out, but this was settled by good communication and a frank exchange.</li> <li>▪ I think that he got that feeling because of his Senegalese friends and the African environment gives some super power and authority to men over women.</li> </ul>
Respondent 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ No, no conflict between brother and sister since I have only one brother who is still in high school. But my mother tried to persuade father not to retire now until my brother goes to university.</li> <li>▪ I am the eldest and for the moment the only one who is interested in the company.</li> </ul>
Respondent 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ My brother is older than me, we are in a society of men, and I am nevertheless his Boss. So, it takes a lot of humility on my part, and it's not easy for him to accept, but I think he plays the game. There has never been a clash or a direct confrontation, but this is an uncomfortable situation. For example, he will not come to the committee meetings or things like that.</li> <li>▪ My father and mother have been very supportive.</li> </ul>

### **Institutional and Gender Barriers to the Success of Women**

Respondents identified a range of institutional and gender barriers to the success of women in business (see Table 4). In general, respondents were clearly aware of the “unfair” cultural view in their society that women should not occupy leadership positions, and many women accept this view such that they accept lower positions in the workplace. As stated by respondent 6, “in the African tradition, and societal institutions we know that very often the son is the heir”. Similarly, respondents 1 and 7 pointed out the general level of discrimination and stereotyping of business and public institutions.

One important effect of such institutional values and discrimination identified by women leaders is the issue of name-taking conventions. As pointed out by respondent 1

(from Tunisia), “you cannot be leader of a family business X and have the name of a family business Y”. Respondent 7 (from Algeria) also stated “one of the obstacles is that, in the Arab world, as soon as the woman marries, she tends to let go and many problems will surface; for instance, should I keep my father’s name or not? Tensions with the family of prospective husband will then occur”. This type of institutional obstacle appears to be more prevalent in North Africa (Maghreb) as respondents from Sub-Saharan countries did not mention that a woman should not head a family business if she takes the name of her husband.

Even though respondents acknowledged the effect of institutionalized discrimination on their work and life (with respondent 8 saying she feels like cracking sometimes!), each seemed to have found of a way to overcome this obstacle. In general, most respondents believed that women have to work harder and better than men to overcome discrimination and receive fair and equal treatment. Moreover, respondent 6 has even mandated equality in her workplace: “I am very sensitive to the evolution of women in different sectors and it is in this sense that I have imposed in factories to have a workforce 50% female and 50% male... parity!”

Respondents also spoke to the stereotype that women are perceived as inferior to and dominated by men, despite the facts that women and men are equal under the law and women are likely to be more educated than men. As stated by respondent 1, “women are seen to be inferior and incompetent or women are better when working behind the scenes but not making decision.” There is an institutionalized expectation that women should be supporting the children and the husband rather than taking on business roles. As stated by respondent 8, “many men do not place women on positions of responsibility. Why?

Because they say that they will get pregnant, then ask for maternity leave, and then leave to take the children to the pediatrician once a month.” Due in part to this expectation, it is rare to see women in leadership positions in family businesses, specifically, unless they are prepared to make sacrifices that have implications for their own family, as noted by several respondents.

Table 4	
<i>Responses and Quotes Reflecting Institutional and Gender Barriers</i>	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
Respondent 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cultural factors discriminating girls cannot be denied in our society, for instance women are seen to be inferior and incompetent or women are better when working behind the scenes, but not making decisions despite the fact that women are more and more educated and are by the law equal to men.</li> <li>▪ In addition to discrimination and stereotypes that women are facing in business organizations (or even public institutions), when it comes to leadership positions, women in family business are facing more challenges and obstacles that are sometimes hard to detect (for instance, you cannot be leader of a family business X and have the name of family husband Y)</li> <li>▪ We have cultural obstacles (beliefs, stereotypes, values) that generate unfair perceptions about women’s ability to lead and take important decisions.</li> </ul>
Respondent 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Despite the fact that we consider our self as belonging to a relatively modern society when compared to other African and Arab countries, and being protected by law, as women we still suffer men’s domination.</li> <li>▪ I do not think men believe that they are superior or better at work or even want to dominate. I think it is all about traditional society norms and standards where member of society pay much attention about how others perceive them, and men used to be everything.</li> </ul>
Respondent 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ There is another problem which is the social and cultural perception that women should only occupy less demanding positions because of their family commitment and responsibilities toward kids and husband.</li> <li>▪ Women are still suffering stereotypes, prejudice and because they have suffered these challenges unfortunately many women tend to accept it and are content with a second or third positions at the work place or even in the lower ranks.</li> </ul>

Table 4, continued	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
Respondent 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The main difficulty and challenge she encountered in this industry was that she was really young: “I changed from 23-year-old to 33 in a matter of 3 hours.”</li> </ul>
Respondent 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Women do not have the same chance as men have.</li> <li>▪ In my country, and culture it is normal to see a woman leading a micro – project (less than 1000 Euros), supporting her kids and husband, but it is not normal to see a woman leading a big company or group.</li> <li>▪ It is very, very rare to see a woman succeeding her father in family business.</li> </ul>
Respondent 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is certain that in front of government players, it is more difficult for them to deal with a woman than with a man</li> <li>▪ I do not necessarily suffer it in my Group because I refuse to undergo it and to let myself be affected by certain behaviors</li> </ul>
Respondent 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ As bizarre as it might seem, once trust was there, I found that the agreement with the employees was better and easier with me as a woman than if it were a man who led them, with whom may appear rivalries.</li> <li>▪ Some clients sometimes show dissatisfaction when they see that they are dealing with a woman. I get insults. When they see a man, they calm down right away.</li> </ul>
Respondent 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sometimes I crack, like every woman in Senegal. At the same time, it boosts me. My case is a rare case in Senegal. There are not many women of my age at this level of responsibility. So, all that, I think I have a role to play in society, for me it is a motivation.</li> <li>▪ But when you are in Senegal, in Africa more generally, it is much more difficult. I said earlier that we had to do more than men and better.</li> </ul>

### **Personal Challenges of Career, Leadership and Family Relationships to the Success of Women**

Respondents identified a range of personal challenges of career, leadership and family relationships that impede the progress of women in business and lead to a lot of wasted talent amongst women, as shown in Table 5. The range of obstacles include the reluctance of women to enter into business, and that many women underestimate their

potential and are not prepared to change their communication and appearance styles to suit the business world. As described by respondent 5, it is necessary for her to adopt two different communication and appearance styles: a tough male style for leading and a more feminine style for negotiating. Moreover, some women accept the division between men and women in business because they are incompetent or unmotivated, and are not prepared to make the necessary sacrifice to be a leader in business. Respondents also stated that there is lack of female entrepreneurs to encourage other women in business.

A further personal impediment to succession identified by respondents was the perception that being too young is a barrier to successful business management. Moreover, the stigma of being the daughter of the boss was also identified as an impediment to effective succession. For example, respondent 4 also identified her age as challenge to succession by stating “I changed from 23 years old to 33 in a matter of 3 hours”. Nevertheless, she also experienced some advantages: “Because I am young, a woman and new to the firm, I was offered help by all of my father’s all employees, and I learned from them very quickly.” And, in terms of client perceptions, she explained that “being a woman, young and educated inspired confidence in my clients, as they are expecting new and fresh ideas.” Thus, although age can be seen as a barrier to succession, it provides other potential benefits.

Respondents also identified the challenges of maintaining equilibrium in family and business responsibilities and problems to succession without a supportive husband; Respondents 5 and 8 reported that their first marriages failed because their husbands had expectations that did not fit with the needs of the business. Furthermore, respondents stated that the responsibilities of having children have a large impact on their leadership

role. Nevertheless, respondent 8 stated that “making children is not a handicap, it is a gift. I organized myself differently to have a family life as well as to manage my family business.” Importantly, respondents identified that one of the most critical ways to overcome personal barriers such as maintaining harmony within their own immediate family was through education. As exemplified by the words of respondent 8, “we must give them the weapons (access to education, training) to enable them to evolve.”

Table 5	
<i>Responses and Quotes That Reflect Personal Challenges of Career, Leadership and Family Relationships</i>	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
Respondent 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We have the reluctance of women to enter into a game of strategic survival and aggressive personal ambitions (or they feel incompetent due to cultural stereotype, or lack ambition).</li> <li>▪ Women in family business are facing more challenges and obstacles that are sometimes hard to detect (for instance, you cannot be a leader of a family business X and have the name of family business X).</li> </ul>
Respondent 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Another factor might be because most of women underestimate themselves and give up earlier. Because men are by birth leader in our society and because they exhibit some leadership traits, women are often not willing to change their behavior and embrace a male leadership style.</li> <li>▪ Lack of women entrepreneurs showing that women can lead effectively</li> <li>▪ They are judged on appearance and communication style.</li> <li>▪ Keep an equilibrium between family obligations ( as wife with kids) and business and work challenges. On the other hand, keep an equilibrium pertaining to two families: father family and husband family.</li> <li>▪ I am very lucky to have a modern and an open minded husband, otherwise it would have been either a divorce or troubles and bad reputation of my father and brothers.</li> </ul>
Respondent 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We have a lot of wasted talents among women.</li> <li>▪ Some women accept this segregation because they are not competent or lazy.</li> </ul>

Table 5, continued	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
Respondent 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I sacrificed my marriage because the family business is taking my whole time; I have two boys that I almost never see because I'm always in office or traveling (that is really breaking my heart).</li> <li>▪ To survive in a business environment dominated by men, I use two different leadership styles: I am tough as much as my father was (to be taken seriously) and I use my feminist leadership style only when negotiating deals (it helps a lot)</li> <li>▪ Men dominate business in the financial field; I am the only woman that is occupying such important position in West Africa.</li> </ul>
Respondent 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ We must give them the weapons (access to education, training) to enable them to evolve, and we work for it internally.</li> </ul>
Respondent 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Internally, I had a lot of trouble getting accepted because I was always seen by others as the "daughter of the dad", "the daughter of the Boss"</li> <li>▪ At first, they did not accept me, not only because I was a woman, but because I was too young.</li> </ul>
Respondent 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It was also important to choose carefully the husband. The first one failed because he did not accept me to have my father's name and wanted someone who will give time and take care of his future kids.</li> </ul>

### **Addressing Barriers to Women in Business**

Respondents were quite willing and able to identify a range of ways to address barriers to women in business (see Table 6). As found in the respondents' backgrounds, a high level of education appeared to be important to their succession and the strong support of a modern thinking father. Respondents also mentioned a range of individual traits that facilitate the success of women in business, such as strong determination, ambition, emotional strength and adaptability. In terms of cultural obstacles, respondents stated that it is important for women to be strategic and develop more solidarity between women and for women, especially entrepreneurs, to support the success of women in business.

Respondents further underscored the importance of working harder than anyone else as an important means to overcome barriers to their leadership; as stated by respondent 8 “the challenge we have to go into the heart of the subject is to work doubly, triply, to be accepted, to be recognized.” Other respondents deployed subtle yet effective strategies to overcome barriers and establish their personal authority; the thoughts of respondent 6 were especially notable,

I have to work with some local Senegalese men with no or little education, and it is very challenging because of how they perceive women authority; to overcome such situation I play often when necessary the card of the stranger women (my French and Lebanon origins) to say that local traditions do not apply on me and talk with that kind of person only in French even though I speak local languages to remind them of my colonial roots.

Overall, the respondents generally thought that barriers will be overcome with more successful women in business. As stated by respondent 1, “cultural discriminations toward women have roots in our history and can be defeated only progressively and by having more and more successful women in leadership positions giving a good example.”

Table 6	
<i>Responses and Quotes That Reflect Addressing Barriers to Women in Business</i>	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
Respondent 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The best way to overcome the cultural/gender is to deal with it strategically for the best of the family business and our children and grandchildren.</li> <li>▪ For women to overcome the cultural and societal obstacles held by men against women and get to leadership positions they need to recognize the importance of having more solidarity between them.</li> </ul>
Respondent 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strong determination.</li> </ul>



Table 6, continued	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Good education (to have better education when compared to brothers).</li> <li>▪ Ambitions (they will not call you and beg you to succeed).</li> <li>▪ Excellent relationship with the father (he will test and retest you).</li> <li>▪ Seize and grab the few opportunities (advantages) that you have (in my case I have a modern father, I was the eldest, I am involved more than anybody in the family business, I was indispensable)</li> <li>▪ Be prepared to accept some trade-off and pay a price for the succession.</li> </ul>
Respondent 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gender impediments are deeply rooted in our culture and there is no magic formula to overcome them. You have to be smart courageous and do not accept to be treated as daughter of the boss (pampered girl), go out and show who you are and make yourself a key player (leader).</li> <li>▪ Being a woman may help in business especially in our culture, in my case with a firm with insolvency problems: as a woman, I inspired trust and confidence. Customers, employees and providers were all more confident working with women rather than men. Women in our society are considered trustworthy in business.</li> <li>▪ To break the cultural barriers preventing women from getting to decision making positions, women need double the effort (when compared to men) to have more effective and super skills, be more entrepreneur, gain personal credibility, recognizing the importance of networking among themselves.</li> <li>▪ I believe with more and more women entrepreneurs in our society the cultural perception will disappear with the obstacles and impediments that women now are facing in business.</li> </ul>
Respondent 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Being a woman, young and educated inspired confidence in my clients, they are expecting new and fresh ideas (coming from UK helped a lot).</li> </ul>
Respondent 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Education, access to resources, determination, and a father that supports and trusts you.</li> <li>▪ You have to impose yourself in a world dominated by men and build a shield. You never know when and where you are going to be stabbed.</li> <li>▪ You have to have double (dual) personality to protect yourself especially not to be seen as a weak woman.</li> </ul>

Table 6, continued	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ You have to be strong emotionally (I believe that women are stronger emotionally than men, and can give more to business especially in family business).</li> <li>▪ Women that have succeeded in business should help other women to succeed. In our group, I have decided to give more opportunities to talented women and offer them a chance to prove how they can be more productive than men.</li> </ul>
Respondent 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It is necessary to impose oneself as a woman by permeating its mark, to go beyond the dogmas concerning the women, to play its natural empathy while being hard.</li> </ul>
Respondent 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sometimes I went to see him (her father) in tears, with doubts. He said to me: "You must impose yourself by your work. You have to prove that you deserve your place."</li> </ul>
Respondent 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ I am obliged to know their work better than them and teach them totally new things every day about their work, so that they accept my position and my authority.</li> </ul>

### **Evaluating Success of Women**

Respondents were also asked to explain how they would evaluate their success in the family business. In each case, they believed that success will be determined by the continuation of the family business into the next generation, after they have retired. As stated by respondent 4, “a successful business career means to make sure that my father’s legacy will strive and more importantly keep my family unified.” Respondents also stated that important markers for success were to improve the financial situation of the business, grow the business, keep the family unified, and to find equilibrium and balance between their family business and their husband’s family. At a more general level, respondents were concerned that their efforts insured future family successions do not discriminate against girls.

Similar to other themes identified in the study, the respondents also identified the challenges to their success. For example, respondent 7 stated that, “internally, a successful career for me is to create an atmosphere based on professionalism and trust between staff and me. This was extremely difficult at first. Being able to create trust with our customers is also a sign of success in what I do.” Respondent 2 also identified an alternative way to evaluate success, stating that “generally in the business world, we tend to give importance to financial performances. But I believe that we should look at the moral side of giving women their rights of success and leadership positions and then evaluate their leadership and financial performance.” Similarly, other respondents believed that their success should be evaluated independently and on the basis of the distinct characteristics and style of management that women bring to family businesses.

Table 7	
<i>Responses and Quotes That Reflect Evaluating Success of Women</i>	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
Respondent 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Retire after ensuring the continuity and longevity of this successful family business and ensure the succession to next generation.</li> <li>▪ Find out a mechanism that permits future succession that does not discriminate girls.</li> <li>▪ Improve the firm financial performance.</li> </ul>
Respondent 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Keep equilibrium between family obligations (as wife with kids) and business and work challenges. On the other hand, keep the equilibrium between pertaining to two families: father’s and husband’s family.</li> <li>▪ Retire after ensuring the continuity and longevity of this successful family business and ensure the succession to next generation.</li> <li>▪ Find out a mechanism that will permit future succession that does not discriminate girls.</li> <li>▪ Improve the firm financial performance</li> </ul>

Table 7, continued	
Respondents	Illustrative Responses and Quotes
Respondent 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Secure the longevity of this business and take it to the next level.</li> <li>▪ Retire after securing and ensuring the continuity and longevity of this family business and ensure the succession to next generation</li> <li>▪ Find out a mechanism that will permits future succession that does not discriminate girls</li> <li>▪ Improve the firm financial performance</li> </ul>
Respondent 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To make sure that my father legacy will strive and more importantly keep my family unified.</li> </ul>
Respondent 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To make sure this group will remain and stay a family business for many generations.</li> <li>▪ Hope to not lose control.</li> </ul>
Respondent 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A successful career in business requires a good collaboration with his team, sharing, team spirit, a common vision, a perpetuation of the gains before embarking on the expansion</li> </ul>
Respondent 7 Respondent 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Internally: a successful career, for me, is to create an atmosphere based on professionalism and trust between staff and me. This was extremely difficult at first.</li> <li>▪ From CFAF 22 billion, four years ago, it has grown to 33 billion FCFA. I have completed the development on the chain: we are now present throughout the value chain and production. And I created a new business, the production of flour. This is at the local level.</li> <li>▪ I also worked on the sub regional development. The company was only present in Senegal. My goal is really to make it multinational. So I targeted three countries, Mali, Equatorial Guinea and Congo. So I started with Mali. Today we are receiving our containers in Bamako.</li> </ul>

### **Novel Insights**

Overall, the results of the study provide a range of important insights about issues affecting the process of succession among women in African family business that had not been extensively identified in previous empirical literature. One of these insights is the impact of name-taking conventions in African societies that have the potential to affect family business succession. Such a convention is tied to the institutionalized view that women should give up their family name when they marry. Simply put, one respondent

explained that “You cannot be a leader of family business X and have the name of family husband Y.” Although, this is a potential impediment to the succession of women in family business, respondents generally felt that retaining the family name was an important aspect to their succession and their father’s legacy. As stated by respondent 8, “My dad and I have always been very close in everyday life. That’s why I carry his name. I still have his name after being married.”

Another insight gleaned from this research is the potential impact that succession has on relationships with the successor’s husband and children. In some cases, respondents have had to sacrifice their marriages to assume leadership of their family business. Respondents 5 and 8, reported that their marriages failed because their husbands had expectations that did not fit with the needs of the business. The sacrifice was further compounded by the presence of children. As stated by respondent 8, “Being married, with two children, and taking on a position at this level of responsibility, it takes a lot of sacrifice. When my son was born, I stayed three weeks with him then I returned to work.” As such, these findings, provide new insights into the sacrifices that African women have to manage when they become successors of family businesses.

A further novel insight from this research is associated with the level of sacrifice and compromise that respondents had to make to with their siblings. This was especially the case when women successors had older brothers who were reported to have been resentful about the succession process. Respondent 1, for example, had to give up shares and dividends to appease her brothers: “I am paying shares and dividends to have control over the business, and my sisters are also giving up shares to protect our interests by having a female successor and to have important positions within the firm.”. In contrast,

there was little resistance from siblings when brothers were not interested in the business or took different paths (respondents 5) or where brothers were too young to be considered for the role of successor to the family business (respondents 4 & 7).

Another important insight from this research concerns the challenges that can emerge from the successor's mother meddling in the succession decision. In some cases, the mother attempted to influence the daughter about the succession decision by arguing that the succession should be granted to the son even if they had to wait until he was old enough to take on the responsibility. Such a view is consistent with the institutional view of African business leadership that a male should take over the family business. In contrast, respondent 8 reported that her mother took the unusual step of ensuring the oldest son from a previous marriage was excluded from succession: "In her efforts to exclude the eldest brother (from different mother), she also sacrificed and excluded her first son (my eldest brother) and chose me." As such, the findings highlight the fact that the mother of the successor can have quite significant role in the succession outcome, varying from resistant to little or no involvement to quite influential decision making.

Finally, the findings from this research highlight the distinctive experiences of women successors to family businesses. Even though there are similarities between the experiences of the respondents in terms of the challenges they faced, such as institutional-gender based barriers to their succession and the support from the founder/father, each had a comparatively unique pathway to their eventual leadership of the family business. In some cases, there was resistance to their succession within the family, whereas other respondents experienced supportive attitudes from their family. Some respondents had to deal with institutional impediments to their succession, such as name-taking conventions

and resistance from their husbands. Whereas respondents came from different countries and institutional environments, there did not appear to be a clear pattern of findings that suggest regional (Northern versus Sub-Saharan African) differences to barriers to the succession of women in family businesses. These findings and their theoretical, empirical and practical implications are discussed in the following chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

Family businesses are a significant part of Francophone African economies, and yet their high failure rate after the first generation suggests family succession is an important organizational issue. The low rate of female participation in family business succession in Africa is perhaps an important reason these types of businesses fail. Even though there are substantial barriers to women leaders both in the West and in Africa, these seem for the most part to be culturally bound and tied to the institutions of a society. Framed by the developmental model of family business (DMFB) perspective and institutional logics, the aim of this research was to a) conduct an examination into the role of women within family businesses in Francophone Africa and b) investigate the particular case of female succession in family businesses. The central research question was, how do institutional logics affect female family business succession in Francophone Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa? Moreover, it was implicitly assumed that fewer institutional impediments would be associated with higher success rates of African women business leaders. The findings help address the gap in knowledge about the succession of women in Francophone African family businesses and provide a range of theoretical and practical implications.

Most importantly, the findings help to fill a void in the fairly scant literature on business research in Africa by providing rich examples of the experience of eight women leaders in Francophone African family businesses. In terms of background, each respondent spoke about a very strong and trusting relationship with her father (the founder of the family business), which gave significant legitimacy to their succession. As



found by Barbot and colleagues (2005), a successful transfer of leadership between fathers and daughters is based on the quality of the interpersonal relationship between the predecessor and the successor. Similarly, Le Breton-Miller and colleagues (2004) identified the successor-incumbent relationship was a critical aspect to effective succession in a family business and is consistent with the developmental model of family business (DMFB) perspective (Gersick et al., 1997) that the process of succession is affected by a range of ownership, business and family challenges as they develop beyond the first generation. It also appeared from the findings that being the eldest child facilitated succession, as five of the eight participants were the oldest amongst their siblings.

Despite significant succession support from their fathers, some participants still reported impediments to succession from other family members that are consistent with the institutional logics perspectives (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Thornton & Ocasio 2012). Four respondents, in particular, experienced resistance to their succession from their mothers and siblings who had thought they were incapable of taking a leadership role and that the succession should be to a male member of the family. Such a view is consistent with the strong impact of patriarchy and institutions in African society decisions that affect the family business. In contrast, the other four respondents reported no impediments to their succession from other family members. Whereas having an accommodating father and being the eldest amongst the siblings appears to have been the most important factors in lack of resistance to succession, supportive relationships with other family members cannot be underestimated in the succession of women in family business (Barbot et al., 2005).

The findings also showed that each respondent was very aware of the institutional, cultural and gender barriers to the success of women in family business and in business more broadly. Respondents were clearly aware of the perceived unfair and institutionalized view in their society that women should not occupy leadership positions, and many women accept this view such that they accept lower positions in the workplace. As found in other research in the African context (e.g., Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009), respondents acknowledged that women are generally perceived to be less competent and inferior to men, and are usually given higher standards for performance.

Respondents also highlighted the issue that women in business have to negate the expectation that they should be supporting the children and their husbands rather than taking on business roles. Indeed, family obligations were reported by participants to often restrict women's opportunities (Nkomo & Ngambi (2009)). Women can be viewed as having too many of these responsibilities to be able to undertake a business opportunity. But, having a supportive husband and finding an equilibrium between family and business responsibilities can help to alleviate these challenges. Thus, along with the institutional and gender factors the challenge of balancing roles in family and business relationships were seen by respondents as among the reasons why it is rare to see women in leadership positions in general, and in family businesses specifically.

Apart from institutional, gender and family impediments, respondents also identified a number of other factors that inhibit the progress of women in business. As one respondent stated, these factors "lead to a lot of wasted talent amongst women." For example, two respondents mentioned the reluctance of women to enter into business and that many women underestimate their potential. Moreover, women were perceived as not

being prepared to change their communication and appearance styles to suit the business world. Such findings are consistent with the claims by Johnson and Powell (2005), that the lower prevalence and influence of women in business may have to do with their lack of self-confidence, less aggression, and more caution.

Given that the respondents had each overcome a range of impediments to their succession and business achievements, their perspectives on ways to address barriers to women in business were quite insightful. On the individual level, each respondent noted that a high level of education is critical to their succession as well as the strong support of a modern-thinking father. Respondents also mentioned a range of individual traits that facilitate the success of women in business, such as strong determination, ambition, and emotional strength and adaptability. In terms of cultural obstacles, respondents stated that it is important for women to be strategic and develop more solidarity between women and for women. As found in previous research (e.g., Lerner & Malach-Pines, 2011), the visibility of successful female entrepreneurs was cited as important in supporting and encouraging the success of women in business and removing barriers to their progress. As stated by one participant “I think that in Africa we need more women entrepreneurs to be models for success that inspire more women to succeed in business and also to change the false perception that men have on women in business.” Indeed, most respondents were relatively optimistic and felt strongly that institutional barriers will be overcome with more successful women in business.

In a range of ways, these findings echo and extend upon the limited previous research on the succession of African women in family business. Whereas Venter and colleagues (2005) found continued firm success in South African family businesses was

predicted by the relationship between the owner-manager and successor, their study was survey-based, with respondents 97% European and 10% female. Similarly, the findings of this study showed the owner-father and successor-daughter relationship was critical to continued success of family businesses, but also extends to the case of African female successors. The findings of this study also echo the qualitative research of Karatas-Özkan (2011), who found that eight female Turkish family business leaders reported challenges to their success such as dual responsibilities business and family and the perception of women's invisibility. The interviewees in this study extend these findings, as they also reported ways they had overcome challenges and barriers by being emotionally strong and courageous, and through acting strategically to accept some trade-offs to succession. As noted by a few respondents, women have to work harder and better than men to overcome barriers and, at the same time, be prepared to make sacrifices such as compromises in family life.

The findings of this study also contrast with some of the broader research on women in business. For example, Boohene's (2009) study of Ghanaian small business owner-managers showed that women were less successful than men because they have unequal access to education and training. In contrast, the women family business leaders in this study were successful to a large degree due to their access to education and training support from their owners/fathers. Together, both sets of findings underscore the importance of equal access and support to the success of women in business. Finally, these findings were similar to those of Barbot and colleagues (2005), who conducted interviews with Tunisian female successor of family businesses. In both sets of findings, women showed a strong desire to maintain family relationships and to insure continuity

as a proof of love and respect for the father/owner's work efforts. Nevertheless, the findings of this study go further by identifying obstacles, impediments and challenges faced by women successors in family business and how these may be overcome.

On the surface, and with admittedly small comparison samples, there did not appear to be much difference between the succession experiences of women leaders of Northern and Sub-Saharan Francophone African family businesses. The respondents from both regions of African reported similar factors that facilitate and impede succession, such as a strong successor-incumbent relationship, family and institutional barriers to their succession, and the fact that a strong education, desire and work ethic were ways to manage an effective transition of family business leadership. Interestingly, respondents from Northern Africa did not mention Islam or religious beliefs as a strong impediment to their succession. However, the two respondents from Senegal were particularly forthright in their views about institutional barriers to succession, with one respondent saying she actively supports gender equality in her family business.

The findings raise several theoretical implications concerning the developmental model of family business (DMFB) and the institutional logics perspectives. Consistent with developmental model of family business (DMFB) framework, the findings showed the process of succession is affected by a range of ownership, business and family challenges as they develop beyond the first generation. Nevertheless, it appears that, compared to the ownership and the business dimensions, the impact of the family dimension was quite marked in the case of African family business succession where there is strong family tradition of male succession. Effective transitions were found in the study to be significantly related to the incumbent and successor characteristics, and the

amount of support from the other members of the family (mother and other siblings). Indeed, some respondents had to make significant sacrifices at the family level in order from them to assume the family business leadership role. The findings also reflect the institutional logics perspective (e.g., Thornton and Occasion, 2012) in that attaining power through succession is both unlabeled and constrained by prevailing institutional logics. As reported by the participants in this study, their succession was tied to the prevailing norms, attitudes and values of the central institutions of African society such as the markets, corporations, professions, states, and families. Notably, none of the respondents mentioned the impact of religion as an institutional impediment to succession. The findings are also consistent with the view that trust-based relationships become comparatively more important in weak institutional environments such as Africa. Each respondent reported a strong trust-based relationship with the founder of the family business.

Importantly, the findings also speak to the issue of how institutional logics may change. Although change to institutional logics appears to contradict the stabilizing nature of logics (Greenwoods & Suddaby, 2006), research has shown that institutional change is moderated by factors such as recognition of contradictions in logics and awareness of alternative logics by institutional entrepreneurs and agents (e.g.; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006; Lounsbury, 2007; Thornton & Colleagues, 2015). Illustrating this perspective, the findings presented here suggest that support from the family patriarch, a strong personality, and education can be powerful in terms of countering institutional logics about the role of women in business. As highlighted previously, respondents speculated that an increasing number of women entrepreneurs in Africa would help to

change the false and institutionalized perception that men are more suited to business leadership roles. The women who undertook the interviews in this research could be considered to be agents of change to the prevailing institutional logics.

Overall, these findings are consistent with the idea put forward by Nkomo and Ngambi's (2009) that there are three types of impediments to the uptake of women in management. First, attitudes at the societal level, political, institutional, and cultural level appear to be critical to women's progress. Second, at the organizational (or, in fact, family) level, the influence of family policies, structures, and systems may impede or facilitate the success of African female managers and leaders. Thirdly, at the individual level, women's personal characteristics, including their attitudes, abilities and behaviors, their cultural and gender identity, and access to education and training are important factors to their business success.

The women in family business leadership positions who were interviewed in this study were able to overcome these barriers to their succession, as they possessed important resources. These included a strong and supportive relationship with their father, low family resistance to their succession, a high level of education and strong personal attributes of individual determination and ability as well as the capacity to manage the role of being a woman, wife, mother and business leader. The respondents were also quite clear about how these resources as well as supportive networks amongst business women are central to encouraging more women into business leadership roles and breaking down institutional barriers to women's succession in family businesses. As nicely put by one respondent, "I think we girls should start to be involved in the family business at an early age."

## CHAPTER 6

### LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

There are several limitations to the methods of this research that weaken the impact of the findings. Although the qualitative semi-structured interview approach adopted in this research provides a rich set of observations, it is important to take account of its weaknesses. As noted by Willig (2008), qualitative research does not provide the researcher with certainty; researchers may be prone to subjective interpretation of meanings through their own biases and preconceptions. Indeed, purely interpretive approaches to investigations of a specific phenomenon have been criticized for their lack of scientific rigor and susceptibility to methodological error (e.g., Hussein, Hurst, Salyers & Osuji, 2014). Whereas interpretive research is well suited exploratory for investigating social processes that have attracted little prior research attention, it can neglect to acknowledge the embeddedness of the researcher and thus obscure the researcher's considerable agency in data construction and interpretation (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Despite these potential limitations, the interview data was carefully coded and interpreted without reference to preconceived ideas about the succession of women in African family business.

A further limitation of the findings is that the qualitative semi-structured interview approach does not provide cause-effect laws that are generalizable or have significant predictive capacity. The findings indicated that there are various institutional factors that impact on the succession of women in African family businesses, such as the attitudes and values that are imbedded in the institutions of the state, the market and the family. However, it is not possible to conclude with confidence that these factors have a direct



causal relationship with the succession of women in African family businesses. What is clear is that the succession of women in African family businesses entails a complex set of issues and challenges. Whereas a purely interpretive approach is an appropriate method to uncover these issues, a mixed method approach entailing quantitative methods may provide more solid evidence of the causal links between institutional factors and the succession of African women in family businesses

Another limit to the generalizability of the findings was the sample size and sample characteristics, as the study was conducted with a comparatively small and specialized sample with specific focus and questions. Given the sample size, it was not possible to make meaningful comparisons between Francophone North African and Sub-Saharan female leaders, and there may indeed be differences. Moreover, the study focused solely on Francophone African women; women business successors in other African countries may have markedly different experiences because of different institutional factors. Although women leaders of family businesses in Africa are few and far between (as noted by one respondent), a larger and more representative sample would likely reveal distinct factors in the succession experience of women in African family businesses and provide greater generalizability about the institutional factors that impede or facilitate the family business succession process.

Despite these limitations, the research approach and focus of this study was based on a careful and objective reading of previous research findings. Moreover, the respondents represented different Francophone African nations and different industries, which could arguably contribute to the generalizability of the findings. Thus, the findings are likely to integrate with other research and current knowledge on the broader question

of female succession in African family business. Overall, the interpretive, qualitative approach provided the advantage of rich and distinct data that, in the case of this research, contributed to theory and knowledge about impediments and barriers to female success in family-owned businesses.

Although the findings address gaps in the research literature, they raise a range of other questions that might be suitably investigated in future research. The family business women in this study reflected on the importance of encouraging younger women and girls to consider a business career. It would be worthwhile to understand the perceptions of the current generation of young African women and girls about business and how they understand the barriers to female leadership in business. This would especially be important as the institutionalized gender barriers faced by the respondents in this study are slowly changing (World Economic Forum, 2014). Understanding how the current generation perceives impediments to female succession in family business – and to their business success more generally – could provide directions for appropriate interventions to make it possible for women to own family businesses, effectively engage in the succession process, and build businesses that are successful (Muraya, 2014).

In closing, the results from this research contribute to encouraging African women in family businesses to be given and take on more responsibilities, to actively participate in the development of their family businesses, and to successfully face the issue of succession-related impediments such as the institutionalized gender stereotyping that is prevalent in Africa. Consistent with the developmental model of family business (DMFB) and institutional logic perspectives, the research findings identified institutional impediments to the success of women in family business and some of the strategies or

opportunities women may take to effectively overcome them. The findings have broader societal implications for addressing institutionalized gender discrimination in business and other societal institutions through social policy initiatives. Although there are significant institutional, family and societal barriers to women leaders, both in the West and in Africa, social engineering, through gender mainstreaming (Ndhlovu & Spring, 2009), may be needed to develop women's stronger participation in African business leadership roles with the expectation that this would make a key difference to the longevity of family businesses and, more generally, contribute to overall economic growth.

## REFERENCES

- Acquaah, M. (2011). Business strategy and competitive advantage in family business in Ghana: The role of social networking relationships. *Journal of Developmental Entrepreneurship*, 16(1), 103-126.
- Adler, N. J. (1997). Global leadership: Women leaders. *Management International Review*, 37(1), 171-196.
- Akpata-Ohehe, B. (1995). Women the backbone of African business. *African Business*, 35.
- Barbot, M. C., Bayad, M., Bourguiba, M., & Schmitt, C. (2005). Comparative entrepreneurship: the case of father-to daughter family business transmission in France and Tunisia. *International Council for Small Business, juin, Washington*.
- Barrett, M., & Moores, K. (2009). Spotlights and shadows: Preliminary findings about the experiences of women in family business leadership roles. *Journal of Management and Organization*, 15, 363-377.
- Bhappu, A. D. (2000). The Japanese family: An institutional logic for Japanese corporate networks and Japanese management. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(2), 409-515.
- Boohene, R. (2009). The relationships among gender, strategic capabilities, and performance of small retail firms in Ghana. *Journal of African Business*, 10, 121-138.
- Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K. (2007). *The Sage Handbook of Grounded Theory*. London, England: Sage Publications.
- Butterfield, K. D., Trevino, L. K., & Ball, G. A. (1996). Punishment from manager's perspective: A grounded investigation and inductive model. *Academy of Management Journal*, 36(6), 1479-1512.
- Carney, M. (2007). Minority family business in emerging markets: Organization forms and competitive advantage. *Family Business Review*, 20(4), 289-300.
- Cesaroni, F. M., & Sentuti, A. (2014). Women and family business. When women are left only minor roles. *The History of the Family*, 19(3), 358-379.
- Chrisman, J. J., Chua, J. H., & Steier, L. P. (2003) An introduction to theories of family business. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 18(4), 441-448.
- Cole, P. M. (1997). Women in family business. *Family Business Review*, 10(4), 353-371.

- Curimbaba, F. (2002). The Dynamics of women's roles as family business managers. *Family Business Review*, 15(3), 239-252.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). The Sage *handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Davis, J. A., Pitts, E. L., & Cormier, K. (2000). Challenges facing family companies in the Gulf Region. *Family Business Review*, 13(3), 217-237.
- DiMaggio, P. J., & Powell, W. W. (1983). The Iron cage revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organizational fields. *American Sociological Review*, 48, 147-160.
- Dumas, C. (1998) Women's pathways to participation and leadership in the family-owned firm. *Family Business Review*, 11(3), 219-27.
- Friedland, R., & Alford, R. R. (1991). *Bringing society back in: Symbols, practices, and institutional contradictions*. In W. W. Powell & P. J. DiMaggio (Eds.) *The new institutionalism in organizational analysis* (pp. 232-263). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Galiano, A., & Vinturella, J. (1995) Implications of gender bias in the family business. *Family Business Review*, 8(3), 177-88
- Gersick, K. F., Hampton, M. H., Lansberg, I., & Davis, J. A. (1997). *Generation to generation: Life cycles of the family business*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Greenwood, R., & Suddaby, R. (2006). Institutional entrepreneurship in mature fields: The big 5 accounting firms. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(1), 27-48.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18, 59-82.
- Gupta, V., Levenburg, N., Moore, L., Motwani, J., & Schwartz, T. V. (2010). Family business in sub-Saharan Africa. *Journal of African Business*, 11, 146-162.
- Gupta, V., & Levenburg, M. (2013). *Women in family business: The Generations of research*. In K. X. Smyrnios, P. Z. Poutziouris, & S. Goel (Eds.) *Handbook of research on family business* (2nd ed; pp. 346-367). UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Harveston, P. D., Davis, P. S., & Lyden, J. A. (1997). Succession planning in family business: The impact of owner gender. *Family Business Review*, 10(4), 373-396.
- Howitt, D. (2010). *Introduction to qualitative methods in psychology*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.

- Hoy, F. (2006). Book review: Gersick et al. and the 1990's. *Family Business Review*, 25(1), 118-119.
- Hussein, M. E., Hirst, S., Salyers, V., & Osuji, J. (2014). Using grounded theory as method of inquiry: Advantages and disadvantages. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(27), 1-15.
- ILO. (2008, March 06). *Global Employment Trends for Women 2008: More women enter the workforce, but more than half of all working women are in vulnerable jobs* [Press release]. Retrieved from [http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_091102/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_091102/lang--en/index.htm)
- Johnson, J. E. V., & Powell, P. L. (2005). Decision making, risk and gender: Are managers different? *British Journal of Management*, 5(2), 123-138.
- Joseph, S. (1994). *Gender and family in the Arab world* (pp. 194-201). Merip.
- Karatas-Özkan, M., Erdogan, A., & Nicolopoulou, K. (2011). Women in Turkish family businesses: Drivers, contributions, and challenges. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 11(2), 203-219.
- Kennedy, B. (1988). *African capitalism: The struggle for ascendancy*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kevane, M. (2004). *Women and development in Africa: How gender works*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Kurland, N. B., & McCaffrey, S. J. (2014). Social movement organization leaders and the creation of markets for “local” goods. *Business & Society*, 1- 42.
- Le Breton-Miller, I., Miller, D., & Steier, L. P. (2004). Toward an integrative model of effective FOB transition. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 3, 305-328.
- Lerner, M. & Malach-Pines, A. (2011). Gender and culture in family business: Ten-nation study. *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management*, 11(2), 113-131.
- Lounsbury, M. (2007). A tale of two cites: Competing logics and practice variation on the professionalization of mutual funds. *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(2), 289-307.
- Manson, T. (2007). Planning for the future is the key for family businesses. *NH Business Review*, 2(15), 27.
- Meyer, K. E. (2001). Institutions, transaction costs, and entry mode choice in Eastern Europe. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 32(2), 357-367.

- Mueller, S. L., & Thomas, A. S. (2000). Culture and entrepreneurial potential: A nine country study of locus of control and innovativeness. *Journal of Business Venturing, 16*, 51-71.
- Thought leaders: African women in business [Video file]. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWjWqx6poyE&feature=youtu.be>
- Ndhlovu, T. P., & Spring, A. (2009). South African women in business and management: Transformation in progress. *Journal of African Business, 10*, 31-49.
- Nkomo, S., & Ngambi, H. (2009). African women in leadership: Current knowledge and a framework for future studies. *International Journal of African Renaissance studies- Multi-, Inter-, and Trans-disciplinary, 4*(1), 49-68.
- Ramgooty-Wong, A. (2000). CEO attitudes towards women managers in corporate Mauritius. *Women in Management Review, 15*(4), 184-196.
- Rutherford, M. W., Muse, L. A., & Oswald, S. L. (2006). A new perspective on the developmental model for family business. *Family Business Review, 19*(4), 317-333.
- Smith, J. A. (2004). Reflecting on the development of interpretative phenomenological analysis and its contribution to qualitative research in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 1*(1), 39-54.
- Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Wilson.
- Thorgren, S., & Omorede, A. (2015). Passionate leaders in social entrepreneurship. *Business & Society, 1*-44.
- Thornton, P. H., Jones, C., & Kury, K. (2015). Institutional logics and institutional change in organizations: Transformation in accounting, architecture and publishing. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations, 23*, 125-170.
- Thornton, P., & Ocasio, W. (1999). Institutional logics and the historical contingency of power in organizations: Executive succession in the higher education publishing industry, 1958-1990. *American Journal of Sociology, 105*(3), 801-843.
- Thornton, P. H., & Ocasio, W. (2012). *Institutional logics*. In P. H. Thornton, W. Ocasio & M. Lounsbury, M. (Eds), *The institutional logics perspective* (pp.99-129). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Treagust, D. F., M. Won, & Duit, R. (2014). *Paradigms in science education research*. In N. Lederman & S. Abell (Eds.), *Handbook of research on science education* (Vol. II, 2nd ed., pp. 3-17). New York: Routledge.

- Upton, N. B., & Sexton, D. L. (1987). Family business succession: the female perspective. Paper presented at the 32nd Annual Conference of the International Center of Small Business.
- Venter, E., Boshoff, C., & Maas, G., (2005). The influence of successor-related factors on the succession process in small and medium-sized family businesses. *Family Business Review*, 28(6), 283-303.
- Ward, J. L. (1997). Growing the family business: Special challenges and best practices. *Family Business Review*, 10(4), 323-337.
- Willig, C. (2008). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: Adventures in theory and method* (2nd ed). Maidenhead, England: McGraw Hill/Open University Press.
- World Economic Forum (n.d.). The global gender gap report 2014. Retrieved from <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>



## **APPENDIX**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE**

1. Case Number
2. Country: What is your country of origin? Where is the Family business based?
3. Education and experience of successor: can you give me a brief history of your educational background and your business career?
4. Succession circumstances: Under what circumstances did the succession process occur?
5. Stage of process: In which succession stages of process are you in (completed/initiated/in progress)?
6. Succession Date: When is/was the date of Succession?
7. Characteristics of the firm: What is the Activity of the company? In which industry are you in?
8. Founding date: When the company was founded?
9. Payroll: What is the number of employees?
10. Performance: Any expansion (s) or/ and development(s) since succession?
11. Company's performance since succession: What is the Company's financial performance since succession?
12. Number of children: any siblings? How many brothers and sisters?
13. Reasons for succession: what is the main reason for succession (retirements/health/death of founder)?
14. Conflict between children: were there any conflicts or tensions between the siblings over who was to take over: yes/no?

15. Entry of successor: How and when the entry phase of the successor took place  
(progressive/partial/total)?
16. Choice of Successor: In which circumstances the choice of Successor was it made  
(progressive / natural / circumstantial / lack of other interest / by default)?
17. Manager-firm link/ Father-daughter link: How could you define the nature of the  
relationships (strong/weak autonomy/ confidence/ resemblance)?
18. Successor-firm link and motivations: How strong are they?
19. Successor's perspective: what does a successful business career looks like?
20. Company's vision: What are you bringing to the business?
21. How to overcome cultural/gender/other challenges?
22. What effect do institutional factors such as (cultural and gender) attitudes towards  
women have on your success in business?
23. How do different institutional impediments to women's business success affect  
you and other women in business?
24. Other Responses?