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GENDER AND ORGANIZATION

**On the underrepresentation of Acadian and Francophone women of New
Brunswick in decision-makings positions and the strive for change**

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3 Abstract

While it is of common thought in New Brunswick (Canada) that gender equality has been achieved, Acadian and French-speaking women living in this province are systematically underrepresented in leadership roles within their community. Indeed, women are left behind in terms of professional advancement in every social spheres, such as the political, judicial and private enterprises' spheres, in spite of numerous organized fights and different governmental and private initiatives for gender change.

The present research investigates the causes of underrepresentation of Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick in decision-making positions from the perspective of Acadian people's strive for autonomy and gendered organizational processes. It is argued that in order to tackle the issue, it is fundamental to take into consideration formal and informal, individual and systemic, and most importantly the deep structures of a given society that result in women's inequality in power structures.

Grounded on extensive background research in matters of gender organizational studies and Acadian studies, nine Acadian or French-speaking women that hold leadership positions within their community were also interviewed in order to extract and illustrate the different causes for the problem at stake and to help identify potential change agents. It is intended mainly to women's organizations that aim at providing support to gender change agents enrolled in organizational structures.

Keywords: women and decision-making positions; leadership; organizational studies; gender change; New Brunswick; Acadian women; Francophonie

4 List of Accronyms

AFFC	<i>Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne</i>
NB	New Brunswick
RDÉE Canada	<i>Réseau de développement économique et de l'emploi du Canada</i>
REFAM	Réseau échange Femmes en affaires du Madawaska
RFNB	Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick

5 Glossary

Acadian and French-speaking people of New Brunswick

The Acadian and French-speaking people of New Brunswick is a historical ethnic and linguistic minority community located on Canada's East Coast.

Change agent

Any individual, who identifies or not as feminist, but aims at gender equality and at change in their specific circumstances, be they women or men or any other person along the gender spectrum.

Decision-making positions

In the present study, decision-making positions is understood as any formal leadership or influence roles that implies a determined hierarchy of roles and responsibilities within an organizational structure, remunerated or not. I also refer to it as **leadership roles** or **managerial positions/jobs**.

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7 Chapter 1: Introduction

“Our members point out that, as of today, they still face the same challenges to which their predecessors were confronted, 25 or 30 years ago: pay equity, work-related child care centres, modernization of certain social programs, implementation by employers of flexible workplace policies for parents, etc.”

Jo-Ann Volpé, president of the Madawaska Business Women Exchange Network (REFAM)

March 2017

[my translation]

This research investigates the underrepresentation of Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick² in decision-making positions³ from the perspective of Acadian people's strive for autonomy and gendered organizational processes. Indeed, while it is of common thought in Canada and in Acadia of New Brunswick that gender equality has been achieved, Acadian and French-speaking women have been left behind and are systematically underrepresented in positions of influence in the development of their community.

In this thesis, I will use the *Gender at Work* analytical framework (see Chapter 2) (RAO & al 2015) to develop a portrait of the aforementioned situation. I will argue that while the deep structures that sustain this situation of gender equality have to be deconstructed and effectively dismantled, changes must occur simultaneously at both individual and systemic, informal and formal levels. That is to say, individual conscientization or the adoption of new laws and strategies by political or economical leaders, while positive and necessary, are not sufficient to bring effective societal changes if they happen separately. Most importantly and to that end, change agents must be identified, gathered and supported in their fights for greater gender equality within their organizations.

An extensive literary review has been conducted in both gender organizational studies from a number of actors (academic and non-academic) and Acadian women

² The Acadian and French-speaking people of New Brunswick is an historical ethnic and linguistic minority community located on Canada's East Coast.

³ In the present study, decision-making positions is understood as any formal leadership or influence roles that implies a determined hierarchy of roles and responsibilities within an organizational structure, remunerated or not. As will be discussed, the distinctions between public, not-for-profit, academic and private offices as well as between administration councils and directorship have been purposely blurred as it aimed to target women's underrepresentation in positions of influence within Acadian and New Brunswick society in general.

studies to give me an accurate and situated portrait of the situation. The voices of nine Acadian or French-speaking women that hold decision-making positions will illustrate some of these findings, as well as to offer some solutions that will be integrated within the results of this research.

In the context of my master's degree in international gender studies and as part of my personal ethics, I wanted to use the knowledge and methodology acquired through my extensive previous studies as well as my privileged position to research on a subject that matters for the women for whom my thesis is intended. That is, the economic autonomy and prosperity for women as well as equal possibility to participate in the development of their community.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the background and context that frames the current project, followed by the statement of the problem, the research questions and justification. It then discusses the methodological approach, limitations, my positionality, and the structure of this thesis.

7.1 Background and Context

The present study is situated at the interstice of two fields of studies: (1) gender and organizational studies, and (2) Acadian studies. This sub-section aims at weaving the background and current contexts of these two fields in a coherent fashion and presenting the narrative that lead to putting in place this study.

There is a general belief amongst Acadian people of New Brunswick that, as soon as women could vote, study, work and open a bank account without their father or husband's approval, gender equality had been achieved. In particular, that women have equal access to positions of influence and power within hierarchized organizations, and that if fewer women make it to the leading positions it is for other reasons than the gendered nature of work structures.

However, when looking at the numbers and individual experiences of women that aspire or have reached to leading positions within their field, it is possible to tell a different story. In 2013 in New Brunswick, 9,600 females were in a management position in comparison to 14,800 males (39% female) (GNB 2014, 74). However, when looking at the senior management positions, the number of females was so low it was kept anonymous due to confidentiality concerns, while 900 males hold such positions (WEB-GNB 2014, 74). Women are currently systematically underrepresented in positions of influence in every imaginable field, be it in the public, private or non-governmental

sectors of employment, even in historically female-dominated fields such as health. In the same length of thought, NB women still earn 67% of the males' median income (GNB 2014, 48).

The Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick are doubly discriminated when it comes to reaching to leading roles within their province. They are not only discriminated on the ground of their gender, but also for coming from a linguistic minority community and having French as the first language. In the province, English is mandatory for holding a leading position, and bilingualism is perceived at best as an asset (VILLENEUVE 2013, 14).

Acadian and French-speaking people of New Brunswick had been excluded from economic development plans up until the 1960s to the benefit of the dominant Anglophones (ALLAIN, MCKEE-ALLAIN & THÉRIAULT 1993). Bilingualism was finally officially recognized in those years, a hundred years after the foundation of modern Canada. The first French-speaking New Brunswick university opened its doors in Moncton in 1963, giving access to the local francophone communities to higher education in their first language and own province.

In the context of the Acadian of New Brunswick social, economic and cultural renaissance of the sixties and seventies, moves were made to reach to greater political and economical autonomy. However, as aforementioned, women were left behind in the process and until now cannot fully contribute to the development of their communities.

In 2017 I worked for a short period of time at the *Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick* [New Brunswick Feminist group] (RFNB), an organization dedicated to the promotion and defence of Acadian and French-Speaking women's rights and interests in New Brunswick. In 2014 the aforementioned organization applied at *Status of Women Canada (SWC)*⁴ for a grant for a project to increment the economic power and prosperity of Acadian and French-speaking women in the province. In 2015 the organization received the blessing to move forward with the project. In order to set up a working plan, a study of the barriers encountered by the target population in accessing to decision-making posts was required and this is where I jumped in as of February 2017 as a temporary research coordinator for the organization. Among other tasks, I had to

⁴ *Status of Women Canada* (SWC) is a federal government organization that promotes equality for women and their full participation in the democratic life of Canada. It is responsible amongst other for providing strategic policy advice and gender-based analysis support and to fund eligible organizations in support of projects at the local, regional and national levels that address predetermined priority areas. To know more: *Status of Women Canada* <www.swc-cfc.gc.ca>.

specifically work on the nine interviews conducted with Acadian and French-speaking women that are the research material of the present study.

It must be noted that the project had by then undergone many difficulties that may have had an impact on the results. Among other, the fact that the project had passed by the hands of many workers due to the low retention of workers within the organization, meaning that it could not meet its pre-established delays and due dates. Indeed, the project was officially set to take place between March 2015 and March 2018, and the research part was intended to be the first step of the project, thus taking place between March 2015 and March 2016. The planned individual, semi-structured interviews took place between June and September 2016. However, the analysis would only start when I entered into function by February 2017, a year before the official end of the project, while the other aspects of the projects were not yet underway. This would thus affect the quality and in-depth of the study, as well as the credibility of the organization in the long run.

Another difficulty experienced by the organization in achieving its expected results is the prevalence of negative attitudes towards feminism and self-identified feminists within its target population. Indeed, while the organization had identified different potential partners and participants for the project, many refused to be associated with a “feminist” organization or expressed concerns about our goals. They took for granted that we would harshly criticize their internal functioning, that we may even go public with sensitive information and while they would argue of being in favour of gender equality, they would not identify as “feminists”. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, many of the participants held negative views about feminism and were responding defensively. Undoubtedly, beyond the research, the RFNB aimed at creating partnerships and solidarities with these women. Some of the participants expressed relief when realizing we were not attacking them and became more open to share experiences of sexism with us.

The project aimed at (1) identifying what barriers are encountered by Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick in reaching to leading positions and (2) to identify solutions to overcome the said barriers.

During the literary review part of the research, the Gender at Work analytical framework, presented in Chapter 2, was chosen amongst other analytical approaches as it seems fitted the RFNB values. Indeed, the Gender at Work approach relies on change agents situated within the organization, or “feminist warriors within” (RAO & al 2015,

174), therefore relying on individual agency. However, it looks at lifting the burden from women's shoulders and tackling simultaneously individual/systemic and informal/formal components of the barriers and solutions to reaching gender equality (Chapter 2).

Taking into consideration that I was still a full-time master student and that I needed to go on with my thesis project, I asked permission to the organization to use those same interviews for the present research thesis. They accepted.

7.2 Statement of the Problem

Countless studies, strategies and programs have been published and promoted in North America, different laws prohibit discrimination against women in Canada, and women in the province have been organizing and fighting for equality for more than 50 years now. They have fought not only to have equal access to decision-making positions, such as politicians, judges, senior managers or rectors, but also to change mentalities regarding gender roles, parental leaves, affordable childcare, and so on. Notwithstanding, Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick are still facing the same barriers that their mothers had to face when entering the job market decades earlier: pay equity, lack of access to childcare services, flexible work arrangements for parents, etc. Some people, both men and women, believe it is to women to adapt to the masculine, working environment, and not for society to undergo profound structural changes. Their evidence is that a handful of women make it to the top. There is evidence that gender equality has not been reached and women are still facing a number of prejudices on the basis of their gender in their quest for reaching to leadership roles within their communities.

7.3 Research Questions and Central Thesis

Part of the literature on gender and organizational change emphasizes strategic, essentialized qualities of women and men in relation to leadership roles, while another part will fight from a legal understanding of gender equality and claim that women have equal rights to reach to decision-making positions. However, most fail at taking into consideration the different contexts in which doing gender at work takes place, in our context, the particular context of the Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick. This thesis is designed to address two key research questions:

- What are the specific barriers encountered by Acadian and French-speaking women from New Brunswick in their career trajectory to reach to decision-making positions?
- How can we identify and develop solidarities with change agents?

To address the research questions, I will rely on a feminist constructionist theoretical framework and as for the methodology, the Gender at Work analytical framework, both presented in Chapter 2. My research questions are interwoven in both gender organizational studies and Acadian women studies, requiring that I conflate them in a coherent fashion in relation to the subject at stake.

I believe that current gender organizational studies tend not to take specific contexts into account. Indeed, they tend to be universalizing, while they are located in the context of Anglo, white and middle-class women of the United States. While Acadia of New Brunswick is indeed located in North America, it differs in that it is a linguistic minority community of Catholic culture and, in consequence of British colonization, remained under-developed and secluded for a period of over 200 years (Chapter 2). We are therefore discussing about a population that has a specific historical articulation of gender, ethnicity and a history of oppression.

I will argue that while Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick and their underrepresentation in leadership roles have to be taken into their context, the Gender at Work framework is flexible and can offer great analytical insight in comparison to other frameworks. It addresses simultaneously individual and systemic issues, for example individual women that feel the need to take some training in self-confidence and leadership, as well as tackling systemic pressures on women. The RFNB felt it was important to rely on a framework that was understandable of their situation as a not-for-profit organization that works simultaneously on women empowerment and social changes. The idea is that, while society must change and not to women to adapt to patriarchal schemes and working environment, their members also address needs for small-scale trainings to help them in their career development.

7.4 Methodology

First and foremost, I have approached the current study from a feminist perspective. I believe feminist research should be feminist action and aim at reaching gender equality (LEATHERBY 2003, 62) while acknowledging the multiplicity of viewpoints and positions among women. I also made sure that my conclusions would be illustrative of Acadian and French-speaking women's experiences and voices in relation to their ambitions and career trajectories.

Quantitative research methods are useful for providing an overall picture of a given situation, here the underrepresentation of women in influence positions, and the changes that take place over time with the adoption of specific laws, strategies and programs. However, they largely ignore women's voices and alternative perspectives and tend to ignore the influence of contextual variables such as social organization, culture or the political context (BAMBERGER 2000). On the other hand, qualitative researchers complain about their research not being taken seriously for not being "scientific enough" and not generalizable.

In this context, I have chosen to integrate both quantitative and qualitative research. Indeed, a qualitative research is suited to this thesis as I intend to identify change agents and understand their role and barriers within their organizations.

I have started this research with a literary review of current debates in gender organizational studies as well as different studies on Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick.

Given the time frame and the resources available for the execution of the present study, I will rely on the Gender at Work analytical framework and limit my data collection accordingly. The whole of quantitative data are taken from previous similar studies and are summarized in Chapter 3.

In addition, nine semi-structured interviews have been conducted with Acadian or French-speaking women of New Brunswick that have reached to decision-making positions, paid or unpaid, to get their insights on the different barriers they encountered, or that they perceive other women encounter. The participants came from different parts of New Brunswick to have somewhat better geographical representation. They were also purposely selected for coming from different working fields: private, public and not-for-profit sectors as well as one University professor.

The questions were elaborated in the light of the Gender at Work framework, thus addressing individual, systemic, formal and informal components and addressed a number of issues, from work family balance, to professional interviews, to strategies adopted for increasing women's representation in leadership positions and gendered working environments.

While the information gathered cannot be generalizable, they are insightful and teach us of similar struggles in different fields of professional activity.

The interviews, conducted in French, have been transcribed and submitted to a categorical analysis and then distributed alongside the Gender at Work framework.

7.5 Thesis limitations

There are a number of ways of conducting feminist constructivist analysis as well as different analytical frameworks. Also, considering the tantamount literature available on the subject of gender organizational studies, a vast number of studies had to be ignored. In comparison, there was scarce information on Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick and therefore the second chapter may not offer the complete picture.

In addition, only 9 interviews were held with female leaders of the community, which represents a very small sample and is hardly generalizable. However, the interviews have made possible to illustrate with fragments of lives different barriers that are specifically encountered by women on their professional trajectories towards leading positions.

Despite these limitations, this provides a holistic picture of the situation of Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick in relation to gender, organizations and leadership roles.

7.6 Ethical considerations

While I have participated in the analysis of the current study as a research responsible, I have not personally set up the whole project and different actors have been involved. The project was born out of the identification by the RFNB that Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick did not have equal access to leadership positions. However, it is coherent of my vision of feminism and with my objectives as an international gender studies master program enrolee, that is, as a highly privileged woman I wanted to put the knowledge acquired through my (expensive) studies to the service of a more “practical” cause. Indeed, I wanted to combine both my academic knowledge to my first-hand (intuitive?) knowledge acquired formerly in different women’s organizations. That objective is clearly attained.

Also, the interviews conducted in the context of the present study were not held in the context of this thesis, but rather for the ends of RFNB project. I have obtained the right to use them as long as the persons interviewed remain anonymous.

7.7 My positionality

Positionality should be systematically incorporated to research practice (ROSE 1997; MCDOWELL 1992). The researcher should be able to position herself or himself within the research process and with the subject of the study. Indeed, we have to acknowledge that the researcher “holds a ‘privileged’ position - by deciding what

questions to ask, directing the flow of discourse, interpreting interview and observational material, and deciding where and in what form it should be presented” (MCLAFFERTY 1995, 437; cit. found in ROSE 1997, 307). There are different debates at stake here.

First of all, I have to admit that I, generally speaking, hold strong opinions about hierarchized and masculinized working environments as well as the patriarchal and capitalist system under which we are subjugated. This was sometimes conflicting during the research process. Indeed, while part of the literature on organizations argue in favour of lessened hierarchies and for greater involvement of workers in decision-making processes, close to none of the interviewees questioned the socio-economic system within which these organizational processes are taking place and how they reproduce the current unequal systems. The same goes for the *Gender at Work* framework. Furthermore, some of the interviewees, while claiming of being in favour of gender equality advances, would position themselves against feminism and attribute most of their successes to their own work and not for holding certain privileges.

However, I was acting mainly as a researcher for the RFNB and act conformingly to its values. I believe however it is important to construct solidarities across our different systems of beliefs and this is the reason why I had great interest in this project. I wanted to take the voices of these women and study them as situated knowledges.

Finally, for two years now I have undergone a process of deconstructing my understanding of Canadian geopolitics in relation to French-speaking minorities of Canada. The phenomenon of ‘Québec bashing’ by the Anglophone majority of Canada is documented⁶ and there is negative media coverage of Québec, amongst other because of the separatist movement or because the government of Québec has made French the only official language of the province. However, in my point of view, the people who identify as Québécois and Québécoises tend not to acknowledge their own privileged position in comparison to that of First Nations and, linked to the present research, of francophone minority communities in other provinces. I believe that we, in general, completely ignore minority communities such as the Acadians and their fights for maintaining their language. To make a long story short, due to this ignorance, we tend to appropriate the French fact in Canada and to act condescending towards other French-speaking communities because of their different accents and idioms (COUTURIER 2000, para 3). This can be problematic when entering in contact with

⁶ See Maryse Potvin, « Some Racist Slips about Quebec in English Canada Between 1995 and 1998 », *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. XXXII, n° 2, 2000, p. 1–26.

Acadians, because of their views of Québec people as condescending, and also because some of them experience “linguistic insecurity”⁷ when speaking in their first language with Québec people. Indeed, I have heard different testimonies from a number of Francophones born outside Québec that any time they talk with Québec people, the latter will switch to English or qualify their accent as “cute” because of the way it sounds to our ears. Here in New Brunswick I have been told by a number of my interlocutors that they were trying to speak their “best French” with me and could not therefore talk freely to me. This is important for me to acknowledge this system of power at the moment of interacting with people, especially when holding interviews. Indeed, in my province where French is the most spoken language I could hardly experience linguistic insecurity.

7.8 Structure of the thesis

The current chapter outlined the background context and methodological design of the thesis.

While the present study occurs at the intersection of two fields of studies, Chapter 2 not only contends a theoretical framework and an analytical framework, but also an overview of gender and organizational studies. Past and current debates in organizational processes and women’s access to position of influence are highlighted. Chapter 3 summarizes a number of publications in Acadian women studies and addresses the historical, cultural, economical, social and political context within which Acadian and French-speaking women are located.

Chapter 4 provides the integrative qualitative methodological design used in this research.

Chapter 5 presents first the interviewees’ profiles and an analysis of the semi-structured interviews that will be integrated to the analytical framework presented in Chapter 2. Secondly, it addresses the second objective of this thesis, that is, how to identify and develop solidarities with changes agents in their working contexts.

Chapter 6 draws conclusions based on the findings from the literary review, the qualitative research findings observed in Chapter 5 and quantitative data gathered in Chapter 3.

⁷ To know more about linguistic insecurity in New Brunswick, see Cormier, Yves. (2015). « Je... euh... je... Linguistic Insecurity in Canada’s Francophone Communities ». *Franquêtes*, vol 1, online, <<https://www.ctf-fce.ca/Publication-Library/FRENQUETES-11-2015-Insecurite-linguistique-Resume-ang.pdf>>.

8 Chapter 2: Theoretical and analytical framework and literature review

In Chapter 2, I will present the theoretical and analytical framework that have helped design and structure the present study, as well as current and ongoing debates in the gender/women, leadership and organization literature. I will start first by giving my definitions of feminism, gender and women and acknowledge my position on other social categories that were excluded from this study because of the nature of the project and the length for this thesis. I will continue by presenting a quick overview of the current trends in gender and organizational studies that I divided along the lines of (1) explanatory literature, that is, the motives behind the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions, and the (2) literature that focuses on organizational change and the arguments in favour of investing in women. I will then argue that the Gender at Work analytical and working framework is best fit for the purposes of the current study and present its different components, finishing with a discussion on change agents, how to identify them and eventually collaborate for helping them with bringing gender equality and change within their organization.

8.1 Theoretical framework: my definitions of feminism, gender and women

Considering this chapter will address a number of debates in gender and organizational studies and that the objects of this study are “Acadian and French-speaking women from New-Brunswick”, it seemed important to outline my understanding of the concepts “women” and “gender” and their historical articulation.

Indeed, many established authors in organizational studies, even certain feminist academics, do not reflect critically on their definitions of what the sexual categories of “women” and “men” are. They tend to present them as fixed, universal and binary ontological postulates (BENDL 2000). As authors and researchers, they do not situate themselves nor their knowledges within their specific, local contexts (HARAWAY 1988), such as white middle class from the United States. They tend to hold universal claims, as a number of postcolonial academics have argued (MOHANTY 2003). As stated by Joan W. Scott, “We need to scrutinize our methods of analysis, clarify our operative assumptions, and explain how we think change occurs” (SCOTT 1986, 1068). Similarly,

my previous professor in international relations, Dan O'Meara, would constantly argue that it is necessary to approach every study critically by asking who the author is, for whom they are writing and in which ways do they benefit from their writings (also BENDL 2000).

To my sense, "gender" is a useful category of analysis as it acknowledges that gender roles are socially and culturally constructed and derivative from power relationships. "Gender is, in this definition, a social category imposed on a sexed body" (SCOTT 1986, 1068). Certain attitudes and roles are expected from sexed bodies due to their perceived, socially constructed gender roles and attributions.

In my culture for instance, a woman is expected to be less ambitious in regards of her professional career and more family-orientated, while her spouse is expected to be assertive and highly competitive. Indeed, it has been argued that the French-Canadian and Catholic woman was for centuries the undisputed "reine du foyer" [queen of the house] and her spouse held a secondary role in the private sphere, while she held no position within the public realm (MOREUX 1979). That situation changed dramatically in the 1970s with the cultural revolutions' winds of change that were blowing in the Western societies – many more women have remunerated jobs currently than in the past (ROBERGE 2017, 3). However, mentalities tend to change slowly and currently French-Canadian women has to put up with the double burden of producing and reproducing work.

In order to be more specific, in the context of the present study, "gender is a foundational element of organizational structure and work life 'present in [its] processes, practices, images and ideologies, and distributions of power' (ACKER 1992, 567)" (citation found in BRITTON 2000, 419).

The attribution of gender roles and systemic pressures would partly explain, in the eyes of different authors, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles. These social constructs are produced and reproduced through dominant social institutions and discourses, such as religion, capitalist corporations and mainstream medias, in order to deter change from happening and to maintain privileges for the dominant classes.

Gender is not the sole analytical category that may impact upon one's particular trajectory towards leading within organizations. Indeed, different elements of identity or perceived identities will articulate historically for specific social groups (WADE 2013, 189). Race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, mental or physical

abilities, and other social constructs will have different impacts and may constitute barriers or privileges for an individual (HOLVINO 2008). As we will see in Chapter 5, the women that were interviewed for the present study identify for the majority as Acadian women, of Catholic culture and part of a linguistic minority community. While countless studies seem to elude those aspects from their studies, I wanted to make sure to acknowledge my own positionality as well as to where the present study is located.

In the present study my object of study were “women”, which I understand as sexed bodies that, as a social group, experience discrimination in the masculine workplace. By this I do not intend to erase the existence or experiences of transwomen or non-binary persons, simply, I believe other studies should be conducted to assess of their particular professional trajectories, although there are common grounds with my research.

Also, the question of motherhood and maternity is very present and fundamental, especially in matters relating to work family balance. Consequently, it has been particularly difficult to separate “women” from “mothers”. Indeed, pregnancy is an experience exclusive to uterus holders and, as have argued many of the interviewees of Chapter 4, pregnancy and child rearing have an impact on a professional trajectory and access to leadership roles.

Furthermore, to my sense, feminism is an open movement in constant evolution, not an end in itself (THÉRIAULT, 59) to be built upon solidarities amongst the different groups of women and other social justice advocates across gender regimes (MOHANTY 2003, 534). “We are in an era where instrumentalist arguments – such as ‘investing in women is smart economics’ – are dominating the gender equality agenda as the statements from World Bank attest. But smart for whom?” (RAO 2015, 2) Gender equality, as a sustainable goal, is advocated by a large number of human rights and international development organizations, but what precisely is gender equality, who defines it and who are they targeting?

8.2 Trends in gender and organizational studies

There is a myriad of publications on feminist organizational studies or studies on the barriers that women have to overcome to access leadership positions, some of them originating from the academic discipline *per se*, some being the product of economic development or financial institutions’ researches, others intended for larger audiences

such as self-help career books⁸. There are a number of potential classifications of the existing literature.

For the purposes of this study, I identified and selected two currents of literature concerned with the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles within organizations. The first current is explanatory literature and addresses the reasons why they are underrepresented, which will be split between theoretical motives and more tangible, objective motives. The second current is more concerned with the arguments that are put forward within the existing literature on why gender equality should be put on the agenda of organizations.

8.2.1 Explanatory literature

Consistent with the finding that gender equality has not been achieved, part of the curriculum is concerned with the reasons why women are still underrepresented in leadership positions and will identify a number of structural barriers that keep them from breaking the ceilings. Some of these barriers are more “discursive” or “subjective” and remain largely at the theoretical level, others are grounded in practice and are thus perceived as more “tangible” or “objective”, for instance such as lack of access to free or affordable childcare services. It has been argued that while organization theory was traditionally constructed as being neutral and thus non-gendered, it was demonstrated later on by a number of feminist scholars that organizations were, in fact, gendered.

8.2.1.1 Discursive barriers

Materialist feminist author Joan Acker systematized the theory of gendered organizations when she wrote an influential piece on which many feminist scholars would draw, “Hierarchies, Jobs, Bodies: A Theory of Gendered Organizations” (1990) in which she argued that traditional organizational theories presented jobs and hierarchies as abstract and gender-neutral concepts and “assumed a disembodied and universal worker” (p. 139). She built her argument around the fact that a job does not objectively exist; it is only a description of different tasks and responsibilities eventually written on a piece of paper. It is false, because “the abstract, bodiless worker, who occupies the abstract, gender-neutral job has no sexuality, no emotions, and does not procreate” (p.

⁸ My own informal search of publications with keywords such as “gender”, “women leadership”, “organizations”, “management” on WorldCat.org, a research engines that provide access to library content across the world, lead me to several thousands of results.

151). What is objective is the worker, the person/body that will fill a position. However, it is men that have conceptualized jobs and hierarchies and have attributed to them masculine qualities such as rationality over emotionality and the absence of or low commitment to the work of child bearing and rearing. In this context, women would be undervalued in comparison to their male counterparts because they are attributed such functions as reproduction of work and their body will not be fully available for the organization. They, therefore, get relegated to lower positions within the organizational structures.

Dana M. Britton (2000) evaluated how the aforementioned theory of gendered organizations would impact further searches in the discipline of gender, work and organization. She synthesized three distinct approaches that emerged following Acker's influential writings:

first, the notion that organizations are inherently gendered, patterned on a distinction between masculinity and femininity, and will inevitably produce inequality; second, research on the extent to which jobs and occupations are dominated by men or women; and finally, the ways in which masculinities are mobilized in the workplace that privilege some groups over others. (RAO & al 2015, 15)

At the end of her article, Britton argued in favour of future research and proposals that would lean forward less oppressive gendered organizations rather than expecting the end of the gendered organization.

For her part, Regine Bendl (2000) categorized three existing feminist epistemologies and the discourses these epistemologies have produced within organizational theorizing: (1) "gender as variable" or "feminist empiricism" approach, (2) "feminist standpoint" approach, and (3), the "feminist postmodernist/poststructuralist" approach (BENDL 2000, 375-376). The first and second approaches have in common that, while they arise different problems in order to explain gender inequality within organizational structures, they tend to rely on sexed bodies as ontological postulates – it is mainly about women versus men. The third approach separates gender and is theoretically independent from sexed bodies. However, for the sake of transparency, the author acknowledges that she herself experienced difficulties in her research to separate gender from sexed bodies. Bendl argues that "in essence, the three epistemologies are connected dialogically and reflect the conflict between liberal, Marxist and postmodernist theories within the discourse of gender in organization theory" (BENDL 2000, 379).

As mentioned by Britton (2000), it is now commonplace to qualify a number of variables such as jobs, hierarchies, workplace, relationships between workers, and

relationships between workers and superiors, as “gendered”. What these gendered dynamics imply will differ according to the different authors.

8.2.1.2 Objective barriers

A number of recent studies published in Canada have aimed at identifying a number of more “down-to-earth” or tangible barriers encountered by women that are otherwise aiming at reaching to leadership roles within their organizations.

The *Réseau de développement économique et de l'emploi du Canada*⁹ (RDÉE Canada) in collaboration with the *Alliance des femmes de la francophonie canadienne* (AFFC) have carried out a study in 2013 on the situation of French-speaking women from linguistic minority communities in Canada regarding their access to management positions (VILLENEUVE 2013). Villeneuve, the author of the study, categorized the results of her qualitative and quantitative research, that is the barriers encountered by these women, between three social levels: (1) individual, (2) organizational and (3) societal¹⁰. She found out a number of recurring challenges encountered by these women, among which were the (1) under-representation of women in work-related social networks, (2) low self-esteem, (3) lack of work-family balance policies in regards of the organization of work¹¹, (4) sexist prejudices, and (5) lack of female role models (VILLENEUVE 2013, 3-4). Also, she found out that the women targeted in her study could hardly fulfil their professional ambitions of reaching to “important” management positions, that is to say in major enterprises or organizations, in their first language.

For their part, the *Claire-Bonenfant Chair for Research on the Status of Women at Université Laval* conducted a mostly qualitative study in the city of Québec with women that hold leadership positions within three organizations that had adopted an equal access to employment program. The objectives were to identify the barriers encountered by these women in their professional trajectory and the factors that contributed to their success, while simultaneously debunking a number of myths and misinformation about women in management in Québec. They found for instance that

⁹ The *Réseau de développement économique et d'employabilité* promotes the economic development of the Francophone and Acadian communities (FACs) in Canada. This not-for-profit organization maintains a presence in every province and territory (except Quebec) via provincial and territorial organizations to which RDÉE Canada provides a wide range of activities and support services. Together, they form the national Network and support two main areas of the Canadian economy: business development (entrepreneurship) and employability. For more informations : RDEE.ca/en

¹⁰ It must be noted that the author does not offer a clear definition of what these levels entail.

¹¹ Amongst other things, the absence of public childcare services in every province except Québec and flexible working arrangements.

while it is believed that women applying for leadership roles have less diplomas and years of experience (due to pregnancies for instance) in comparison to men, they actually have either as many diplomas or more diplomas and cumulate the same number of years, but their professional network was not as influent as that of male counterparts (LEE-GOSSELIN & ANN 2012, 7). In this regard, the authors found out that it was potentially related to the fact that in order to go up the job ladder, women had to navigate through different working environments, that is to say apply every time to a new organization, while men had more opportunities to evolve within the same organization. The latter would result in males' social networks being more solid.

Also, the authors found out that while it is thought that women do not apply for leadership positions because of the considerable responsibilities they entail, women were found to be as ambitious as men regarding these positions, but not at any price. The most difficult aspect for the majority of them was to find family-work balance while meeting job criteria, such as higher diplomas or a given number of years of experience. Interviewees mentioned that they had to delay their first pregnancy in order to obtain diplomas or a certain hierarchical level within their organization, to later find out that these high criteria were potentially unnecessary to successfully perform their duties as managers.

Among the barriers encountered by these women were: (1) heavy responsibilities and duties hardly compatible with family duties, (2) lack of credibility due to stereotypes on women obliging them to work "harder" than their male counterparts, (3) masculine organizational culture, (4) the absence of women in informal, professional networks, (5) limited access to mentorship. It must be mentioned however that in Québec, in comparison to other Canadian provinces, there are public childcare services available for a small daily fee (7\$/day at the moment of this study).

However, as advanced in a Catalyst study conducted by Nancy Carter and Christine Silva (2011), there is no particular recipe for women to reach to management positions in the face of adversity. In their quantitative study titled "The Myth of the Ideal Worker: Does Doing all the Right Things Really Get Women Ahead?" they studied 3,345 high potentials in the United States of America, males and females, who stayed on a "traditional" career path following graduation from a full-time MBA program, who consistently worked full-time in companies and firms with no breaks. They studied their tactics to reach to higher positions: (1) get trained through experience, (2) gain access to power, (3) make achievements visible, (4) blur work-life boundaries, (5) get formal

training, (6) plan career, (7) seek advice when needed, (8) scan for opportunity outside the company, and (9) scan for opportunity inside the company (CARTER & SILVA 2011, 3). They found out that while females used the same tactics as males in similar numbers, men advanced in terms of positions and compensations further than women, and were also generally more satisfied than women with their advancement. They demonstrated that “while conventional wisdom encourages women and men to be proactive to advance up the corporate ladder, we found that only men advanced further and faster when they did “all the right things” while this strategies did not result in “the same payoff for women” (CARTER & SILVA, 5).

Across the aforementioned studies, we can draw similar results: work-family balance, masculine organizational culture and stereotypes that affect women, women’s specific socialization (lack of self-esteem for instance) and the absence of women in informal networks. Similar findings have arisen in the present study. These issues are similar to that presented in the precedent section on Discursive barriers. Now that we have selected a number of studies highlighting the barriers encountered by women in their professional trajectory towards leading positions, let’s have a look at the different propositions for organizational change.

8.2.2 Gender and organizational change: Arguments for investing in women

The purpose of the present study was not to compare different organizational change models, but rather to identify the barriers encountered by Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick in accessing to leadership roles and eventually their suggestions for change. However, as a number of interviewees have mentioned a number of debates on the representation of women in mid-range and senior management roles and the changes they brought to the table in the context of their employment or existing gender equality programs, I thought it was important to present a quick overview of the situation, in particular, the arguments brought forward for having more women on board. I have grouped them under two debates: (1) women as smart economics and (2) business management literature on women’s leadership.

8.2.2.1 Women as smart economics

“Investing in women/gender equality is smart economics” is currently the motto of a number of important development organizations, such as the World Bank¹², International Monetary Fund¹³ and a majority of business think tanks (CHANT & SWEETMAN 2012). In effect, smart economics is an economic trend that “rationalises investing in women and girls for more effective development outcomes” (CHANT & SWEETMAN 2012, 517). It came out when the World Bank and the International Monetary Found were accused to contribute to feminization of poverty in consequence of their structural adjustment policies. In the international development world, gender equality has become a pivotal and almost mandatory goal to include in the main objectives for agencies applying for funding (CORNWALL 2010).

Furthermore, some research institutes have hypothesized about whether or not there is a causal relationship between the presence of women on directors’ boards and organization’s performance.

Some suggest corporate performance benefits from greater gender diversity at board level, while others suggest not. In the positive camp are the likes of McKinsey and Catalyst. Catalyst has shown that Fortune 500 companies with more women on their boards tend to be more profitable. McKinsey showed that companies with a higher proportion of women at board level typically exhibited a higher degree of organization, above-average operating margins and higher valuations. Other studies, such as those conducted by Adams and Ferreira or Farrell and Hersch, have shown that there is no causation between greater gender diversity and improved profitability and stock price performance. Instead, the appointment of more women to the board may be a signal that the company is already doing well, rather than being a sign of better things to come. (CREDIT SUISSE 2012, 6)

Therefore, some gender-equality advocates have used the argument that having more women on board was profitable to the companies in order to promote women in leadership roles. However, as argued by a number of feminist scholars such as Sylvia Chant and Carol Sweetman (2012), we have to remain cautious at the moment of using these arguments. Indeed, “smart economics seeks to use women and girls to fix the world” (CHANT & SWEETMAN, 523). It (officially) aims at individual economic

¹² World Bank Group (2006), Gender Equality as Smart Economics: A World Bank Group Gender Action Plan (Fiscal years 2007–10), online : <https://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/GAPNov2.pdf>.

¹³ See Revenga, Ana & Sudhir Shetty (2012), “Empowering Women Is Smart Economics“, *Finance & Development*, Vol 49 No 1, online: <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/fandd/2012/03/revenga.htm>.

empowerment of women while cutting back on social investments and services. This is a phenomenon that has been observed in many countries with the introduction of austerity measures and state withdrawal and deregulation. Also, these development programs are not rights-based or aiming at social, economical and political equality. Rather, they target girls and women simply as worthy for investment because they represent 'good investments', not because every human being deserves equal chance to develop. "Smart economics is concerned with building women's capacities in the interests of development rather than promoting women's rights for their own sake" (CHANT & SWEETMAN 2012, 527).

8.2.2.2 *Business management literature on women's leadership*

As aforementioned, books and studies on women and management are countless. While women in the Western world were massively entering the job market in the 70s and 80s, the traditionally, Western male-dominated management world got invested by professional women. Consequently, the Business Management Literature¹⁴ opened a new market niche for these customers, relying on the newly developed concept of "Women's Leadership" (MEDINA-VICENT 2015).

Tips on how to obtain a management position or on how to be a successful woman manager are commonplace in this kind of literature. The book titles tell a lot: *The Next Generation of Women Leaders: What You Need to Lead but Won't Learn in Business School* by Selena Rezvani, *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office: 101 Unconscious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Career* by Lois P. Frankel, *The Power of Unpopular: A Guide to Building Your Brand for the Audience Who Will Love You* by Erika Napoletano, or *I Shouldn't Be Telling You This: Success Secrets Every Gutsy Girl Should Know* by Kate White¹⁵.

The problem with these studies or self-help books is that they tend to attribute essentialist characteristics to women's type of leadership, one of "nurturance", "cooperation", "empathy" and "caring", while men's leadership would tend to be more

¹⁴ "Business Management Literature includes a set of ideas of the traditional economic thought and determines the management practice of modern business organizations. [...] Such books can be found in bookstores, malls and airports in the "business books" category, which define a working philosophy rather than specific actions" (MEDINA-VICENT 2015, 70).

¹⁵ These books were part of an article that put forward a list of books intended to « women leaders » by the Huffington Post. See Jonha Revescencio, « 16 Inspiring Books Women Leaders Need to be Reading », Huffington Post, 20 July 2016, online: < http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jonha-revescencio/16-books-aspiring-women-l_b_11090646.html>. [Consulted on 11 May 2017]

“authoritative” and “competitive” (GREMMEN & BENSHP, 172). Women are encouraged to capitalize on these “female” traits in order to obtain success, because this is somewhat society is expecting from them.

Those types of studies do not usually question how women and men are socialized, nor do they evaluate the impacts of such claims. Different authors have contended that they tend to reify the image of the feminine woman, “a traditional (biological) notion of being a woman [...] they understand that capacities such as empathy or intuition belong naturally to women” (MEDINA-VICENT 2015, 70). If a woman does not comply with these “feminine” standards, she risks being punished and othered, considered abnormal and not worth of a management position. Indeed, they present “femininity” and “female” as inherent characteristics of women, instead of envisioning them as social constructs to which a woman or any other person may or may not adhere.

Furthermore, those types of publications put the burden of women access to leadership positions onto women’s shoulders and not on fundamentally unequal, male-dominated structures that confine women to subaltern roles, except for the few tokens that break the glass ceiling. They capitalize on ‘self-esteem’ and ‘self-help’ instead of denouncing an unfair system. Indeed, and this is going to be very important for the analysis of the results in Chapter 5, they proclaim that women tend not to be self-confident enough. That in order to reach for leadership positions, one must be very self-confident, and that by putting forward specifically feminine skills, then sky is the limit and a woman can fulfill any of her ambitions.

In subsection “Trends in gender and organizational studies”, I intended to present a quick overview of current debates and existing analytical frameworks, of theoretical and perhaps more objective nature, around the subject of gender/women, organization and leadership. It was a difficult task in view of the existing, vast literature across a number of academic disciplines. I had to discard a number of topics in order to highlight others for the purpose of offering insights that will be fundamental for the analysis in Chapter 5. Indeed, I decided that, instead of presenting a number of ongoing debates and capitalize on the weaknesses of these, I would rather select a number of findings to complement the present study.

In the next section, I introduce the analytical framework that will be used in the current study that was preferred to others in view of the nature of the research project.

8.3 Analytical framework: Gender at Work

In this section, I will present the analytical framework introduced by *Gender at Work*¹⁶ (GAT) according to which the present chapter and the study findings will be structured. I will first explain why I chose GAT over other analytical frameworks and go on with describing the functioning of the said framework. It must be understood that Gender at Work relies on change agents to achieve greater gender equality. I will explain that considering the nature of the project the current study is derived from, the GAT methodology seemed the more adequate for the ends of the current study.

8.3.1 Why Gender at Work

The GAT authors contend that, for organizations that have gender equality as a priority to their agenda, to effectively bring change in the contexts they work in, they must be self-reflective of their own internal functioning regarding gender equality issues. In short, organizations should be coherent and transparent in their discourses and practices, and apply the very same principles they promote for others to themselves.

Indeed, different development organizations such as the World Bank promote gender equality and female leadership for development to be more equal and effective. A classic example is by facilitating access to micro-credit for rural or poor women, as was promoted by Mohammed Yunus back in the 90s (WORLD BANK 1998). However, while the World Bank promotes female leadership in the world, parity has not been reached yet within leading positions (37,5% of females¹⁷) within their very own

¹⁶ *Gender at Work* is an international collaborative of different gender equality and international development specialists that have been involved in the area for more than twenty years, working with different organizations processes to help build a culture of equality and social justice. They first published in 1999 the first version of their comprehensive study and working framework Gender at Work to later found their own consulting enterprise. They have worked with a number of organizations, including certain United Nations agencies, as well as international and local development organizations in a number of regions and countries around the world. More information : GenderAtWork.org [consulted on 22 April 2017]

¹⁷ I obtained this statistic by comparing the number of female and male staff as they appear on the « World Bank Group Leadership » staff list available on the World Bank website. There were 18 women and 31 men listed, for a total of 48 staff. See : WorldBank.org <<http://www.worldbank.org/en/about/leadership/managers>>. [Consulted on 22 April 2017]

organization. Also, the past 12 presidents of the organization were all American men (ZUCKERMAN 2016).

Another interesting aspect of GAT is the importance they grant to the formal and, particularly, the informal contexts of the organizations they work with, or what they call the “deep structures” of organizations,

that is, the collection of values, history, culture and practices that form the ‘normal’ unquestioned ways of working in organizations. We conceptualized the deep structure as a collection of the deepest held, stated and unstated norms and practices that govern gender relations in all societies. (RAO & al 2015, 5)

In fact, as is discussed in a number of gender and international development studies, many gender equality policies and strategies pushed forward in a number of contexts either completely fail or lead to poor results and are thus not cost-effective (RAO & al 2015, 4). While the intentions may be good, these organizations tend to apply ‘stir-and-fry’, already made programs that do not take into considerations local customs, understanding of the world and distribution of power amongst different social groups.

For her part, Oyeronke Oyewumi, a Nigerian feminist scholar, denounced how white, Western feminists have been relying on their own epistemologies and understanding of patriarchal structures to then apply them indiscriminately to African contexts (OYEWUMI 2002). They would not take into account the different articulations and social organization of African cultures. The results were often disastrous or completely useless. Indeed, while in the Western world distribution of power is gendered and unidirectionally exercised from men towards woman, Oyewumi makes a case of the Yoruba social organization where power is not only distributed along the lines of gender, but also in regards of seniority and marital status. Therefore, certain women of these communities are more powerful than certain man for a number of reasons, and these variables have to be taken into account at the moment of setting up a program aiming at “helping” the women of these communities. Gender at Work emphasizes the importance of taking into account the local and social context and the deep structures that explain gender inequality in given circumstances.

Furthermore, it is important to note that while GAT methodology may seem simple in comparison to other methodologies found in the academy, it subscribes to the principle that knowledge should be accessible to all and not reserved for a small intellectual elite. “Author bell hooks (1994) implores feminists to root their scholarship in “transformative politics and practice,” pointing out that “in this capitalist culture, feminism

and feminist theory are fast becoming a commodity that only the privileged can afford” (bell hooks 1994, 71, quotation found in HESSE-BIBER 2012, 4). To my sense and as argued by the GAT authors, the framework has been elaborated mixing theoretical studies to field experience, and its findings are presented in a accessible language. As is contended, GAT aims at change, and for change to happen, it must be within everyone’s reach.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter 1, the current thesis is derived from a project launched by a not-for-profit and small feminist organization, the RFNB. The organization experienced a number of problems in developing partnerships with local enterprises or other NGOs in part due to negative publicity around the word “feminist”. It made sense, consequently, to rather look for potential change agents and make alliances with them in order to identify the barriers encountered by women for reaching to leadership roles within their communities and organizations.

In order to tackle gender inequality in their actual and overall contexts, GAT has put in place an analytical framework that will be presented in the next section.

8.3.2 GAT analytical framework

In this sub-section, I will describe the functioning of the GAT analytical framework (Figure 1 The Gender at Work Analytical Framework (RAO & al 2015, 26)1).

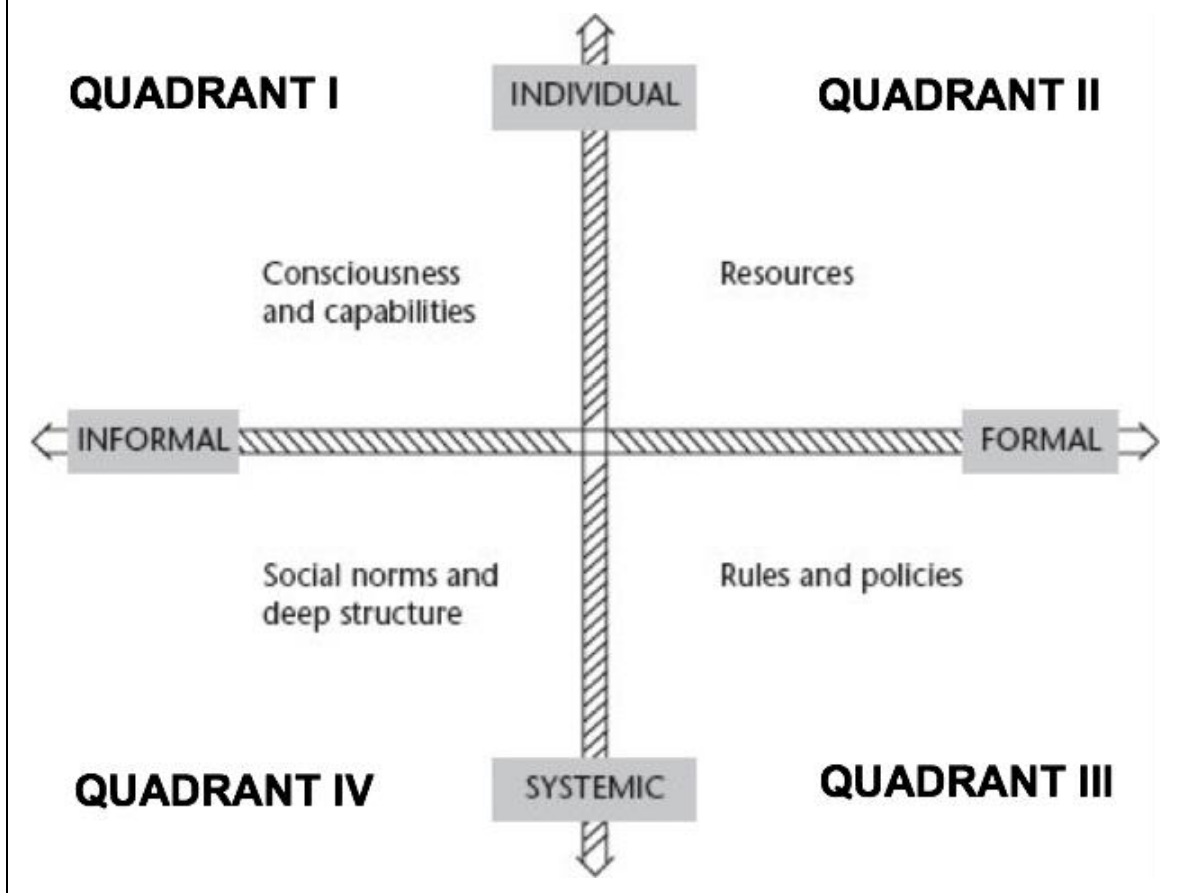
8.3.2.1 Formal/informal/individual/systemic

The GAT analytical framework, as it is mainly aimed at helping development organizations in different parts of the globe, is multidirectional and intends at tackling simultaneously the different components of the “human condition” (RAO 2015, 26) or of gender equality: the informal and formal aspects, but also the individual and systemic aspect.

Indeed, instead of focussing, say, on women’s psychology and individual capabilities at reaching to leading positions and exercise their power positively, or on the legal landscape of a given context, it will analyse all those aspects at the same time.

- The right part of the scheme, the **formal** one, refers to what is noticeable, for instance written laws (systemic/formal).
- The left part of the scheme, the **informal** one, refers to what is not tangible, shared beliefs or customs for instance.

Figure 1 The Gender at Work Analytical Framework (RAO & al 2015, 26)



- The top part, the **individual** one, is most likely a reference to the “agent” or the “agency” understanding in sociology, to the individuals or groups of individuals that take actions and impact on the structure, but whose practices are also impacted upon by that same structure (GIDDENS 1993).
- The lower part is concerned, the **systemic** one, is concerned with what is above us, the gender regimes, the laws or even social practices that we may or may not be aware of.

However, what is of major interest here is what happens in between the four quadrants, as we will see in the next subsections.

8.3.2.2 Quadrant I: Consciousness and Capabilities

The top-left (informed/individual) quadrant is concerned in our context with aspects of gender consciousness and capabilities (RAO & al 2015, 40). It is mainly about the individual's knowledge of gender equality and his or her desire to maintain a status quo or to act for change. It relates to an important aspect about change agents that will be addressed . While in an organization you may encounter different individuals that are unconscious or indifferent to gender equality causes, or that are so embedded in their own privileges that they would not act in fear of losing them, you have to target “change agents”, those that are willing to act. However, as this framework demonstrates, in order for this change agent to be able to act, certain resources (quadrant II) and/or a certain rules or policies (quadrant III) could help them reach their goal.

The GAT authors borrowed Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization, who envisioned the change process as *conscientização*, a two-step process of reflection, which allowed people to understand the power relations around them and then take action to transform those relations (RAO & al, 28).

8.3.2.3 Quadrant II: Resources

The top-right (formal/individual) quadrant refers to resources available to individuals to change their conditions, either internally or externally to the organization, such as health or education. In the context of the present study, it could refer to the availability of public childcare services to facilitate work-family balance.

As noted by the authors, while resources are **sometimes** already available, they are **sometimes** not made available to the individuals (quadrant I) or certain individuals could be punished for reaching to these resources (quadrant III or IV). For instance, while women's professional networks may at first be perceived as sites of empowerment and resources to reach to decision-making positions, some women get formally or informally punished for reaching to those (GREMMEN & BENSCHOP 2011).

8.3.2.4 Quadrant III: Rules and policies

The bottom-right (formal/systemic) quadrant focuses on the formal rules, “the visible and documented laws, policies, regulations, procedures or strategies” (RAO 2015, 104) of either the organization or the country. In a number of countries certain legislations have

been adopted concerning gender discrimination at work or sexual harassment. Also, there is a number of strategies that can be adopted by organizations in order to attain parity within their board members, such as imposing quotas or financial incentives to the hiring committee if parity is effectively reached.

However, while certain rules may exist formally, they may not be applied effectively. As has been discussed in the previous sub-section, “gender equality” as a priority may only be a “fuzzword” or less important than other priorities. In order to be effective individuals (quadrant I) have to know how to use them – therefore, certain resources have to be made available in order to use them (quadrant II). In the long run, formal policies that were first imposed upon people can impact upon social practices in a given context.

8.3.2.5 Quadrant IV: Social norms and deep structures

The bottom-left (informal/systemic) quadrant is concerned with the deep structure of social organization, that is, a “pattern of the most profound, mutually reinforcing, stated and unstated norms and practices that govern gender relations” (RAO & al 2015, 30). It refers to gender truth regimes, where a given group knowingly or unknowingly shares certain beliefs and customs about gender roles.

In the field of organizational studies and career advancement strategies, it could refer to certain ideals such as the myth of the “ideal worker”. There are a number of tactics that have been promoted by mentors and self-help books alike to reach to higher positions within an organization, such as “blurring” work-life boundaries, make achievements visible to superiors or getting extra formal training while working. However, it has been demonstrated through quantitative studies that even if “high potential” women use the same tactics as that of men, and they actually do so in comparable numbers, their career still evolved slower than that of their male counterparts (CARTER & SILVA 2011). We can conclude that there are differentiated, hidden norms applied to both sexes.

Social norms and deep structures certainly are the most complex aspect of the framework and the most difficult aspect to change. The authors identified that they tend to be invisibilized, layered and mutually reinforcing, they are constantly being reproduced, highly resilient, and finally, may feel as both unchanging but with the possibility of changing. This is the reason why article 5 of the *Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women* (CEDAW) calls not only for

changes in laws, but also for policies to target specific social norms and values that are harming to gender equality. While over a hundred countries have incorporated gender equality in their constitutions and receive constant international pressure to effectively implement CEDAW, the reality on the ground is usually another story (SEMU 2002).

In the context of the present study, such social practices and deep structures could refer to sexist attitudes and prejudices against women in organizations, such as associating them with motherhood or their marital status (VILLENEUVE 2013, 5), the under-representation of women in informal networks, as well as a number of qualities associated with the “ideal worker” aforementioned.

8.3.3 How to use the framework

The present framework is intended for change agents and organizations in general to identify the “what” of the problem before the “how to” change the situation. Change agents sometimes feel powerless or alone because they do not connect with like-minded individuals, or that fighting for changes is too costly. This framework, once the different parts have been filled, helps with identifying the problems at stake for developing the next steps in a more cost-effective fashion.

The framework is multidirectional and every step of the process is interdependent. For a change agent to create impact, she or he may need to put in place certain resources or have an access to them, to then elevate the consciousness of other individuals (Quadrant 1 <-> Quadrant 2), however resources may have to be put in place by a formal authority, and mentalities have to change in order to accept that certain individuals will access certain resources and to put them in place (Quadrant I <-> Quadrant II <-> Quadrant III <-> Quadrant IV).

8.3.4 Changes agents: who are they and how can we work with them

When speaking of change agents, GAT authors prefer to refer to them as “feminist warriors”, because they face sexism, misogyny, harsh criticism and exclusion not only in the organizations they belong to, but also from the feminists outside of these formal structures (RAO & al 2015, 173). First, coworkers and superiors may try to silence them, claiming that women’s issues are not a priority in the light of other urgent issues. Second, fellow feminists would accuse them of reproducing patriarchy and other oppressive structures such as colonization and capitalist system by working inside of

these patriarchal institutions. Potential and actual change agents often find themselves alone in the fights they lead for advancing gender equality and without resources.

Change agents are referred to in a number of studies under different appellations, some prefer “gender equality champion” for instance (de VRIES 2015).

I decided to differ slightly from the definition of change agent as proposed by the GAT authors in the current study. Indeed, I thought that their definition of change agents was too narrow – they refer specifically to ‘feminist’ warriors that work inside of organizations and are paid for their work (RAO & al 2015, 173). We are therefore talking of ‘gender equality’ specialists or consultants, which contradicts the many different testimonies offered all along their book who are more often than not individuals that, while not being paid for it or necessary directly benefiting from it, have challenged their institutions and organizations for gender unequal practices. I would like to extend the definition of change agent to any individual, who identifies or not as feminist, but aims at gender equality and at change in their specific circumstances, be they women or men or any other person along the gender spectrum.

To my sense, a change agent is a person that has either identify gender unequal practices within their organization, or has tried to modify certain attitudes, rules or practices within their organization, and have challenged these unfair attitudes and/or practices.

I agree with the GAT authors that change agents are not heroic individualists¹⁸. “Feminists warriors [...] are different individuals who play leadership roles at different moments; ultimately, however, feminist warriors within, working from different locations and with wide-ranging internal and external alliances, demonstrate what collective impact actually looks likes” (RAO & al 2015, 173).

It must be acknowledged that reaching gender equality within organizations is still perceived as women’s job (de VRIES 2015, KELLEHER 2013). Indeed, while “male” issues are everyone’s problem, “female” issues are women’s problems. It is generally up to women to denounce unequal policies and practices. It has been demonstrated that a woman holding an influential position within a masculine organization will be automatically attributed to the task of achieving gender equality. However, the capacity

¹⁸ This is important in the context of the present study, because as was shared to me a number of times by local informants, there are a number of self-proclaimed feminist heroic individualists in the Acadian and French-speaking community of New Brunswick that, “while they may have broken glass ceilings and reached to influential positions, they did it for themselves and not for the feminist movement or for women themselves.”

of high ranking women in masculine organizations to address systemic gender inequalities may be more limited than we realize” (de VRIES, 2015, 30).

For her part, de Vries (2015) as well as the GAT authors contend that both men and women must champion gender equality and change, and that their roles should be complementary.

In this chapter, I have presented my theoretical and analytical framework for the present study, as well as discussed a number of current debates within the gender, organization and leadership discipline. I have argued in favour of a feminist constructivist approach and understanding of gender, organization and leadership. In view of the project the present study is part of, I have mentioned the inherent contradictions of the women’s organization work, that is to say, the application of theory to the practice. As mentioned a number of times throughout the chapter, the Gender at Work framework was adopted because it best suited the ends of the project and was adapted to the current situation.

As the GAT authors contend, it is fundamental to take the social and cultural context in which we desire gender change to take place. Consequently, in the next chapter I will present a quick overview of the situation of Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick.

9 Chapter 3: Acadian and French-Speaking Women of New Brunswick

In this chapter, I intend to circumscribe my subjects of study, the Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick, amidst their gender, cultural, geographical and historical context, in order for the reader to situate himself or herself in relation to these women and draw their own conclusions. I believed it was important to do so, having in mind that many studies on women leadership do not situate their subjects in their specific contexts, and following Gender at Work framework.¹⁹ I will thus present a brief overview of the history of Acadia, a statistic portrait of the underrepresentation of Acadian and French-speaking women in leadership roles in the province and the legal and political landscapes of New Brunswick in relation to gender equality.

9.1 Acadia for New Brunswick Francophones

In this section, I will present a brief overview of the history of Acadian and French-speaking women in New Brunswick, in the larger context of Acadian people's strive for autonomy within New Brunswick.

Acadia has this particularity that it does not correspond to the definition of a nation-state with its own government and territory; it is rather an "ideological discourse", a "geographical construct: the cluster of francophone communities within the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland" (KEPPIE 2011, 200).

Formally, Acadia was a French colony established at the beginning of the colonization of North America by France in 1604 in Eastern Canada and is not recognized as a territory since the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) when it was

¹⁹ One difficulty with the present study was the lack of resources and publications on Acadian and French speaking women of New Brunswick. Simone Leblanc-Rainville (2012), a prominent feminist scholar in Acadia, has published the only one historiography of the French speaking women's movements in the province. She argues that this absence of production of knowledge is due to the absence of a gender studies department at the *Université de Moncton*, the only French-speaking and relatively small university of New Brunswick. I characterize the distinct knowledges produced in this sense as 'fragmented' in comparison to its counterpart the province of Québec, which boasts different departements of gender studies in its different French-speaking Universities. There are indeed only a handful, while extremely dedicated and worthy of praise, feminist academics at UdeM, that work in different faculties and departments, though mostly in social work and sociology, amongst them, professors Lise Savoie, Jeanne d'Arc Gaudet, Isabelle McKee-Allain, Simone Leblanc-Rainville.

ceded to the British Empire²⁰. Living mainly off the land, Acadians were allowed to remain on their territories under the British crown, until they got forcibly removed from them and men were separated from their families and sent away in 1755 in the context of the British military campaign against New France. In short, as many as half of the Acadians perished as a result of the operation, and their lands were distributed among British settlers. This period became known as “Le Grand Dérangement” [Great upheaval] and is the foundation of the “Acadie de la diaspora” [Diaspora of Acadia] (KEPPIE 2011, 200).

In line with the subject of this study, I will circumscribe to the situation of the Acadians and Francophones of New Brunswick. Shortly, while certain Acadian families were able to elude the expulsion, other Acadians were able to return to the territory of New Brunswick decades after the deportation. French speaking populations of New Brunswick are nowadays concentrated in the North-East, North-West and Peninsula, and South-East of the Province.

Sociologists Greg Allain, Isabelle McKee-Allain²¹ and Yvon Thériault (1993) describe Acadia as a “fait social global, une société en mouvement” [social and global fact, a society in movement] (ALLAIN, MCKEE-ALLAIN & THÉRIAULT 1993, 382). They contend that acadianity per se is a social construct built in the middle of 19th century around a Catholic, French and rural heritage that, while it has been reproduced through social practices, has greatly mutated through the passing of times. They have established different socio-historical discourses in order to understand the Acadian society of New Brunswick. The periods are divided as follows:

Le moment traditionnel [traditional moment]: 1860-1960. Period characterized for upholding “traditional” social relationships, where the Catholic clergy, in alliance with a small French-speaking elite, dominated social institutions and promoted communitarist and agricultural economy. It was said that Acadians from New Brunswick were lagging behind in their economical development in comparison to their Anglophone counterparts because of their social and cultural practices. Concomitantly, French-speaking women of New Brunswick were perceived as more passive and submissive in comparison to their Anglophone counterparts due to their oppressive religion and family context. In reality, and this is discussed in a number of studies, women of French-speaking linguistic

²⁰ Acadia was a different colony than that of New France (1608) which now forms the province of Québec.

²¹ Fortunately, given the context of this study, this particular study gives us precious insights about the gender roles of women in Acadia.

minority communities were responsible for the reproduction and survival of their “race”. These women had to fight on a daily basis against ethnic and linguistic assimilation. They were always involved in a number of fights for the rights of their people to an education in French as well as health and legal services in their first language (BERTHELOT 1991, LANG 2016, MCKEE-ALLAIN 1983).

Le moment modernisateur [modernizing moment]: 1960-1970. It is a phase marked by a difficult passage from a “traditional” society where the “cleric-professional elite” loses its hold on social, organized institutions such as health and education to the hand of the state. From there on, health and education are the state responsibilities. Acadians opened to modernizing practices, claiming they would no longer remain behind and submitted to the Anglophones. Acadian youth questioned the traditional practices of their communities. The opening of the first French University in Moncton, New Brunswick in 1968 is fundamental to that cultural upheaval. Simultaneously, in 1968 the Acadian feminist movement was born through the creation of a Women’s Committee.

Le moment critique [critical moment] 1970-1980. It is a period characterized by a neo-nationalist movement and there were huge protests against Anglophones’ domination. However, a “nation” was not achieved. At the same time, gender roles in the Acadian society underwent profound transformations, when women of different backgrounds (single, married, nuns or defrocked) united and organized to reclaim their rights. Their efforts culminate with the launching of their first feminist association, Liberté, Égalité, Sororité [Liberty, Equality, Sorority] in 1974 (CARDINAL 1992, 8).

Le moment organisationnel, mais fragmenté [organizational, but fragmented]: 1980-1990. While sovereignty could not be achieved, different non governmental associations as well as stronger local governance were put in place in order to represent and defend the interests of the Acadian and French-speaking communities of New Brunswick²². Individualist ideologies have made their ways into the daily lives of Acadian and French-speaking inhabitants of New Brunswick. Acadianity was no longer lived through mutualist practices, but rather individual initiatives. The Acadian and French-speaking women’s movement was also fragmented and there was no coherence between the Anglophone and the Francophone women’s movements in New Brunswick. It has been argued that Acadian women were vociferous about their rights and more

²² The protection of the Acadians interests and rights are no longer uphold under the socio-cultural and ethnic banners, but rather for being part of an officially recognized linguistic minority (French speakers of Canada).

often then not the leaders of protests and activism in general than their Anglophone and First Nations' counterparts (LANG 2016, para 40; CARDINAL 1992).

There are currently a number of Acadian and French-speaking women-only organizations in the province, mainly informal ones, across the province, such as the *Cercle des dames d'Acadie* [Circle of Acadian ladies] (CDA) that has different chapters across a number of cities and villages, and the *Institut féminin du Nouveau-Brunswick* [Feminine Institute of New Brunswick]. The CDA, founded in 1978, is responsible for the opening of different childcare services, women shelters, community centers, etc. They also founded the New Brunswick *Women's Union for Pay Equity* in 1998.

However, the women/feminist movement was somewhat split up in 2007 after the *États généraux des femmes en Acadie du Nouveau-Brunswick* [Estates General of women in New Brunswick Acadia]. While the event led to the foundation of the *Regroupement féministe du Nouveau-Brunswick* (RFNB), an organization aimed at representing the interests of the Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick, it also meant the end of the CDA. While this organization still exists, it is currently more informal in comparison to its counterpart the RFNB. The CDA was known for being an organization flexible enough to respond to the evolving needs and operating requirements of its members. For its part, the RFNB is more academic, as well as Moncton-centered (the largest city in the province) and experiences difficulties in reaching to other, rural regions. Generally speaking, the RFNB is experiencing a crisis with its militant base (RFNB 2016, 9).

A number of Acadian feminists have argued that Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick suffered double discrimination on the grounds of being women and French-speaking. This would partly explain their particular trajectory as a small, but vociferous movement as they had nothing to lose since they were at the bottom of the social hierarchy (LANG 2016, para 40; CARDINAL 1992).

Acadians are not recognized as a distinct nation or ethnicity within Canada, in comparison for instance to First Nations or the nation/province of Québec. The government of New Brunswick applies a policy of biculturalism and bilingualism, referring to the Francophones and Anglophones, not to Acadians per se.

Now that the historical and social movements of French-speaking and Acadian women's movements have been exposed, in the next section I will offer a statistical portrait of their current situation.

9.2 Statistics on Acadian and Francophone women in New Brunswick

One of the main obstacles for Canadians, both men and women, to acknowledge that women do not have the same access to decision-making jobs in comparison to their male counterparts is the shared belief that gender equality has been achieved and women do not experience more obstacles than men in reaching such position (KELLEHER & STUART 2008, 8). This section will present an overview of statistics concerning the situation of Acadian and Francophone women of New Brunswick in a variety of aspects and demonstrate that gender equality has not been achieved and that there is a long way to go²³. Statistics information have been divided along the lines of the double burden of being French-speaking and female, the income and wages' gap and the underrepresentation of women in positions of influence.

9.2.1 Double discrimination on the ground of being a woman and a Francophone

While the total population of New Brunswick was 756,050 inhabitants in 2014, women made up 50.6% of the province's population (GNB 2014, 6). Of that number, 123,645 women had French as a mother tongue²⁴ or 33% of all women in NB (GNB 2014, 6).

Francophone communities are unequally ranged across the NB territory and are mostly found in Madawaska, Acadian peninsula (North-East) and South-East (92,8% of them all) (VILLENEUVE 2013, 35).

According to a survey distributed amongst 130 Francophone women located in linguistic minority communities across Canada (excluding the province of Québec), 70% of the respondents believed that to look for a decision-making position in their first language represented an obstacle to their career advancement. The author of the study suggested that these women were thus open to apply for such jobs in English-only speaking organizations. Also, to master the English language represented a major asset to obtain a decision-making job or 92% of the respondents, while French represented an asset for only 78% of the respondents (VILLENEUVE 2013, 14). However, in the context of New Brunswick, these numbers may have to be pondered, considering certain areas such as Madawaska are largely Francophone (VILLENEUVE 2013, 39).

²³ It must be noted that specific statistics for francophone women living in context of linguistic minority outside Québec in Canada are scarce and rarely present comparative datas between the sexes (VILLENEUVE 2013). Therefore, statistics are drawn from Statistics Canada, the Equality Profile 2014: Women in New Brunswick²³, Catalyst and similar studies to the present study.

²⁴ Mother tongue is here understood as the first language learned at home in childhood and still understood

9.2.2 Income, poverty and wages: women earn less than men

9.2.2.1 Incomes

Regarding income, 301,840 (52%) females have income in New Brunswick and the median income is: \$23,240\$, which represent 67% of the males' median income (\$34,850). Females thus earn in average only two-third of males' wages. Also, while 22,340 females declare to have an income inferior to \$5,000 per year, there are only 13,860 males in the same situation. On the flip side, while 18,210 males declared to have an income above \$100,000, only 4,910 females had similar income (GNB 2014, 48). There is thus a higher number of women in situation of extreme poverty and a higher number of men earning high incomes.

9.2.2.2 Wage gap

In 2012, NB women earned on average 88,9% of what men earned resulting in a wage gap of 11.1% (GNB 2014, 77). It is the smallest gap registered since 1997 when data on the hourly wage gap began to be published. A quite striking finding is that the wage gap between women and men with union coverage is much smaller than for non-unionized workers (GNB 2014, 77). Indeed, the wage gap between the first was only 3%, while non-unionized women were paid 18% less than unionized men did.

Shockingly, in 2013, newly graduated females from NB community college (2011) who were working full time earned on average 22% less than their male counterparts (GNB 2014, 82).

In relation to the last paragraph, it can be noted that working women in NB predominate in certain occupational groups and are significantly absent in others. They predominate in certain areas such as health, business, finance & administrative and sales and service occupations, while they are mostly absent in goods-producing sector (19% female). Notwithstanding, their wages remain lower in comparison to their male colleagues even in areas where they predominate, and where wages are lower, as they occupy the lower ranks of their fields (GNB 2014, 72-77).

It must be noted that young women (15-24) had an average wage closer to that of young men (7%), but both groups show low income in comparison to that of older groups. Also, in constant 2011 dollars, average full-time, full-year female earnings had increased modestly since the 1980s, while male earnings had hardly changed (GNB 2014, 80). Therefore, for a number of conditions, women are slowly narrowing men's average wage while the latter only stagnated.

Lower wages cannot be excused by lower educational attainment, as 55% of women in labour force and aged 25+ have pursued post-secondary education (19% of women have a University degree while 36% have a post-secondary certificate or diploma) in comparison to 52% of men in the same category (GNB 2014, 64).

9.2.3 Women in management occupations

In 2013 in New Brunswick, 9,600 females were in a management position in comparison to 14,800 males (GNB 2014, 50). However, looking at the senior management positions, the number of females was so low it was suppressed due to confidentiality concerns, while 900 males hold such positions. There are therefore very few women holding senior positions in NB.

In 2014 in Canada women hold 20.8% of board directors seats of all amongst the 60 first Canadian Stock Indexed Companies (CATALYST 2015, 1).

9.2.4 Politicians and decision-makers at the local, provincial and national levels

While the United Nations and the Inter-Parliamentary Union consider 30% of female representation to be the minimum proportion needed in a political body to have a significant impact on the work of government (GNB 2014, 89), only 16% of women were elected as Member of the Legislative Assembly in the 2014 Provincial General Election (GNB 2014, 89). It is significantly less than at the federal level, where the representation of women at elected seats is 25%. Currently, there are only two women appointed as Members of the Executive Council of New Brunswick, while parity has been achieved at the federal level with the Trudeau government in 2015 (FRANCIS 2016). Women political representation at both the provincial and national levels are very low.

9.2.5 Provincial government: appointed agencies, boards and commissions

In 2014, amongst the 19 departments responsible for agencies, boards and commission (for instance, NB Liquor), the overall women's representation was 28%. Of these, only one had achieved a parity representation (Executive Council Office) i.e. 1 male and 1 female for a total of two. The Education and Early Childhood Development and Social Development department came close with having slightly more women on board than men. Otherwise, other departments such as Economic Development and Natural Resources were clearly dominated by males (GNB 2014, 91). Women representation in

these perhaps less visible positions of influence than others (for instance, politicians) is still slightly low.

9.2.6 Representation of women among provincial court judges

In August 2014, there were only 8 female NB Provincial Court Judges (26%) and no women occupied the position of Chief Judge or Associate Chief Judge (both males). It must be noted that there are 32% of NB female lawyers with +10 years of experience, a criteria for appointment at the bench. There is thus unequal representation of women in NB justice (GNB 2014, 91). However, as of 25 April 2017, it was announced that parity between men and women would be reached among its full-time judges, and a first female chief judge has been named chief judge effective 2 June 2017 (GNB 2017).

9.2.7 Full-time university professors by academic rank

In 2010/2011, while women made up 41% of the full-time teaching staff in New Brunswick universities, only 26% were full professors, while 41% were associate professors, 52% were assistant professors, and 63% were lecturers, instructors or other. Overall women are not only less represented in teaching staff at NB universities, they hold precarious positions in comparison to men.

9.2.8 N.B. public school administrators and educators

In 2011/2012, while women occupied 59% of public school principal's jobs and 62% of vice-principals, there was still only 36% that occupied the post of superintendents, a higher position (GNB 2014, 96).

According to the statistical portrait presented in this section, Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick are underrepresented in almost any influential positions and are discriminated on the grounds of being women and Francophones.

In the next section, I will present the political and legal landscapes of Canada and New Brunswick in relation to women's representation in decision-making jobs.

9.3 Political and legal landscapes of Canada and New Brunswick in relation to women's representation in decision-making jobs

In this section, I will briefly go over the provincial and federal legal landscape in relation to women's representation in decision-making jobs.

9.3.1 Canadian political and judicial systems

Canada is an officially bilingual federation of 10 provinces and 3 territories. Power is divided between the executive, legislative and judicial branches. Legal competences are distributed between the federal, provincial and town constitutive assemblies. Generally speaking, provinces are in charge of social governance and services, for instance health, education and employment, while the federal government is in charge of the defence, environment, international relations (treaties) and First Nations affairs.

The judicial system that prevails in Canada and in New Brunswick is one of *common law*, a system that offers greater flexibility for judges to find a legal remedy adapted to the situation of the victim and for an active participation of judges to interpret the law and facts (SYAM 2014).

Every political level is submitted to the Constitution, which enshrines a list of political and civil rights, amongst other, the right to equality between the sexes and the prohibition of discrimination between men and women (art. 15²⁵). It must be noted that the Constitution does not specifically protect the social, economic and cultural rights of the person as understood in the *United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*.

Due to the nature of its judicial system and the fact that through the incorporation of a human rights bill in its Constitution, Canada has been the scenery of much feminist judicial activism, leading for instance to the legalization of abortion (*R v Morgentaler*, [1988] 1 S.C.R. 30) or the definition of sexual harassment in the working place (*Janzen v Platy Enterprises Ltd*, [1989] 1 S.C.R. 1252). It must be therefore noted that many women's rights were acquired through judicial processes rather than a result of the political granting or recognizing certain rights (TRAKMAN & GATIEN 1994, 422). Indeed, the judicial power in Canada is viewed as almost holding a legislative power. For

²⁵ *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, Part I of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, being Schedule B to the *Canada Act 1982 (UK)*, 1982, c 11.

instance, while abortion was illegal except under certain circumstances under the Criminal code, the Supreme Court legalized it in 1988.

While the criminal laws are a federal competence, meaning therefore that it was the federal government that was prohibiting universal access to abortion, health is mostly a provincial competence. The provinces were therefore obliged from now on to put in place programs to grant access to abortion in public facilities. In short, many women's rights were acquired through the judicial and not through the legislative power.

9.3.2 Federal government

In 1995 the federal government committed to using the *Gender-Based Analysis Plus* (GBA+) as a means of advancing gender equality in Canada. GBA+ is an analytical tool used to assess the potential impacts of policies, programs, services, and other initiatives on diverse groups of women and men (STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA 2016). The government recently renewed its commitment to GBA+ and Status of Women Canada, the ministry in charge of making effective gender equality in Canada, is currently in the process of training and developing tools for other federal agencies.²⁶

9.3.3 New Brunswick government

In relation to the legal landscape, New Brunswick has adopted a new *Human Rights Act* in 2011 that prohibits discrimination and harassment in employment, housing, public services, publicity, and certain associations, on the grounds of different motives, amongst others sex (including pregnancy and gender identity), marital status, sexual orientation and social condition (RSNB 2011, art 4). The *Human Rights Commission of New Brunswick* is in charge of applying the *Human Rights Act* and individuals can submit a written complaint to the Commission (RSNB 2011, art 12). Notwithstanding her rights are protected by law, it remains difficult for a woman to demonstrate whether she has been the victim or not of discrimination in employment.

Also, New Brunswick has adopted a Pay Equity Act back in 2009, which covers only civil service, health, education and Crown corporations. It was intended to adjust unfairly low wages for female-dominated working areas in comparison to that of males for similar level of competencies, for instance child-care workers versus construction

²⁶ It must be noted that Canada sometimes partners with the *Gender at Work* team for external consultation on gender equality matters (KELLEHER 2008).

workers. In 2010, the Government announced that five groups from the private sector would receive pay equity adjustments, but so far only one group has complied with the evaluations and it was found that wages were not unfair, a result that met opposition from women's organizations (COALITION FOR PAY EQUITY 2017).

It must be noted that childcare is not public nor is it subsidized in New Brunswick and childcare expenses must be fully covered by parents. The Child Day Care Services Program is only in charge of regulating childcare institutions. There is also a Day Care Assistance Program that will partially cover childcare fees for parents who have (very) low income, are studying or are sick (SERVICES DE GARDE DE QUALITÉ 2017). Absence of public childcare has been identified by different studies to be a break to women's career, especially for reaching to decision-making decisions. Indeed, monthly fees for full-time childcare are very high (up to 740\$ per month per kid) (GNB 2014, 51) in comparison to wages and some women end up working part-time or staying at home (ROBERGE 2017).

The *Economic Growth Plan of New Brunswick* for the period 2016-2020, a plan intended to ensure New Brunswick's economy growth and to realize maximum benefits, has ignored gender equality issues. New Brunswick is the only province in Canada whose population is decreasing and is experiencing difficulties retaining skilled workers. The plan does not have gender equality as one of its goal or pillar. It only considers "improving opportunities for women" a strategic focus within the "Building talent" pillar (GNB 2016a, 13).

However, "Advancing women's equality" is one of the seven pillars of the *New Brunswick Family Plan* (GNB 2017b), a plan that aims at showing the importance of "investing in proactive measures that improve the determinants of our families' health" and also to complement the aforementioned *Economic Growth Plan* (GNB 2016b). The *NB Family Plan* suggests focussing on, amongst others areas of focus, "removing barriers to access and opportunities", "recruiting more women to fill positions of influence", and "enhancing pay equity within the province" (GNB 2017b). The plan suggests that gender equality is part of the recipe for economic growth. Some may wonder the reasons why the "Advancing women's equality", since it is so orientated towards development, is not part of the *Economic Growth Plan*, instead of being part of the *NB Family Plan*. The *NB Family Plan* aims at improving the province's health, and while gender equality certainly provides for that, it is ironical that women remain associated with the family.

In this chapter, I have presented a quick overview of the situation of Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick in order to circumscribe the problem at stake in this thesis. As demonstrated, while the law protects a number of women's rights, gender equality has not been achieved yet and women remain underrepresented in almost all decision-making jobs.

In the next chapter, I will provide the integrative qualitative methodological design used in this research.

10 Chapter 4 : Methodology

The aim of this study is (1) to investigate the barriers encountered by Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick in their professional trajectories to reach for decision-making positions, and (2) how to identify gender equality change agents and work together in order for organizational structures to achieve gender equality. This chapter will explain in detail how the research was conducted. First, the choice for a feminist methodology and of mixed research will be discussed. Subsequently, it will be explained how the data was gathered and lastly, how it was analysed.

10.1 Choosing a research methodology

10.1.1 A feminist methodology

While “methods” typically refer to the techniques employed by researchers for fulfilling their study objectives, “methodology” refers to the study of the methods that are employed (BRYMAN 2008, 160). These methods can either be qualitative or quantitative, or mixed. The choice for methods in social sciences has become increasingly connected to philosophical positions. “Methods became as much to do with philosophical choices as technical ones” (BRYMAN 2008, 161).

Subsequently, a number of self-identified feminist social sciences’ researchers located in the Western hemisphere and from a variety of academic disciplines have contended that up until recently

it was largely men (but only a small group of men) who produced [knowledge] and had access to it and male identity was confirmed and accorded a high status by it. Morgan (1981) notes that academic discourse is, in reality, a male discourse hiding behind the labels of science, rationality and scholarship. (LEATHERBY 2003, 39)

In line with their philosophical commitments, feminist research is feminist theory in action, because it has political goals and aims at gender equality and change (LEATHERBY 2003, 62). Feminists have questioned masculine concepts of objectivity and rationality, considered superior and worth of attention, in comparison to feminine concepts such as subjectivity and personal experiences. “Feminist research begins with questioning and critiquing androcentric bias within the disciplines, challenging traditional researchers to include gender as a category of analysis.” (HESSE-BIBER 2012, 5). They

have grounded their theories in the daily experiences of women (and men) that they have put forward in their writings. Somehow, the feminist researchers have broken the glass ceilings of positivists' philosophies (LAMOUREUX 1992).

Following my predecessors, I have approached the current study with a feminist methodology that will at once acknowledge the multiplicity of viewpoints and positions among women, yet draw a number of conclusions that would be illustrative of Acadian and French-speaking women's experiences in relation to their ambitions and professional trajectories.

10.1.2 Mixed methods research: Quantitative and Qualitative methods

There is an ongoing debate among feminist researchers over the use of quantitative methods and of qualitative methods (LEATHERBY 2003, 84). Quantitative methods were preferred by social scientists of the "positivist" era because of their attributed higher scientific value and because findings were generalizable, that is, because they were seen as rational, scientific, objective, reliable and replicable (BRYMAN 2008; HESSE-BIBER 2012, 8). Postpositivists feminist researchers aimed at breaking down "methods' hierarchies" by challenging the male model of detachment and objectivity (OAKLEY 1981, quoted in LEATHERBY 2003, 85). While some feminist researchers argue in favour of using qualitative methods over quantitative ones because of their attributed inherent mainstreamness/malestreamness, other feminists have argued that it is possible to combine both and that we should avoid the "gendered paradigm divide" (LEATHERBY 2003, 86).

To my sense, quantitative research methods are useful for providing an overall picture of a given situation, here the underrepresentation of women in influence positions in society in general, and the changes that take place over time with the adoption of specific laws, strategies and programs. They aim at measuring social phenomena by numbers and testing hypotheses through fixed variables and facilitate the finding of generalizable data (PATTON 2002). Even though a number of feminist researchers have raised concerns about quantitative research, "this method can serve as an effective tool for supporting feminist goals and philosophies and can offer a number of advantages not found in qualitative work", such as "determining the best course of action in implementing social change for women because such techniques help us to identify patterns of gender oppression" (HESSE-BIBER 2012, 304-305).

However, quantitative findings largely ignore individual and diverse women's voices and alternative perspectives. They overlook the influence of contextual variables such as social organization, culture or the political context (BAMBERGER 2000). "Male-defined epistemologies deny the importance of the experiential, the private and the personal" (LEATHERBY 2003, 42).

On the other hand, qualitative research focuses on in-depth understandings of words, opinions and experiences rather than on numbers. They tend to concentrate more on the individual than on the general, they can therefore provide some back-up on certain generalized claims. Qualitative researchers complain about their research not being taken seriously for not being "scientific enough" and not generalizable (BRYMAN 2008).

In this context, I have chosen to integrate both quantitative and qualitative research to produce a mixed methods research (TASHAKKORI & TEDDLIE 2009; HESSE-BIBER 2014, 363). Indeed, a qualitative research is suited to this research for two reasons. The first reason is that I intend to add an "in-depth" understanding of quantitative data (Chapter 3) by adding a more complete understanding of statistics. The second reason is that I intend to identify change agents and understand their role and barriers within their organizations. However, in order to comply with the GAT analytical framework and to provide a bigger picture for the ends of the project, I also rely on a number of quantitative findings that were reported in Chapter 3. I do this for the purpose of completeness, "to make sure a complete picture of the phenomenon is obtained. The full picture is more meaningful than each of the component" (TASHAKKORI & TEDDLIE 2009, 287).

It must be acknowledged that the thesis project was built upon the statistical findings that Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick were underrepresented in decision-making roles. However, the main focus of this research is inductive, as I am trying to develop an understanding of the barriers that are encountered by the aforementioned women and also to scope their potentials as change agents.

10.2 Gathering the data

In order to gather data answering the research question, a suitable research method needed to be found. In the following, the choice for semi-structured interviews and how these have been conducted will be explained.

10.2.1 Choosing a method

In qualitative research, various methods can apply, such as interviews, ethnographic studies or focus groups (LEATHERBY 2003). For this thesis, interviews seem to be a suitable method because they allow asking open-ended questions to a small sample (TASHAKKORI & TEDDLIE 2009, 296) and exploring individual experiences or opinions regarding the researched phenomenon. They would give space for women's voices to be heard but also their knowledges obtained through their own experiences to be confronted to mine as a researcher. "Interviews are a powerful method of data collection, because they entail one-to-one interaction between the researcher and the individuals he or she is studying" (TASHAKKORI & TEDDLIE 2009, 296)

In quantitative research, questions are often highly structured in order to reach a high validity and reliability (BRYMAN 2008). Semi-structured interviews or unstructured interviews tend to be more flexible, notwithstanding that they are still somewhat structured and that the researcher intends to extract some information "on the field" to bring back to its "laboratory" (LEATHERBY 2003, 84). Those kinds of interviews tend to focus on the interviewee's experience and understanding of certain social phenomena.

For this thesis the semi-structured interview seemed to be a suitable method because structuring through an interview made it possible to keep orientation during the interview. The structuring of the interview made it possible to cover theoretical issues as entailed by the GAT framework and eased the categorizing process. On the other hand, the fact that the interviews were not completely structured allowed for a number of side-stories or more in-depth replies to be offered by the interviewees. Due to the explorative character of the research question, the interviewees understood different questions differently, leading me to gather rich and diverse contents. With a structured interview those side stories could not have been accounted for.

Just as any other method, interviews have their limitations.

10.2.2 The questionnaire

Before conducting the interviews, a literary review was produced and the *Gender at Work* analytical methodology was adopted. The gained insights and the analytical framework helped designed the questions that would cover the four quadrants detailed in section of Chapter 2 in order to circumscribe the experiences of Acadian and French-speaking women on the job market regarding decision-making roles and how to change

the situation. The questions were developed and distributed ahead of time to interviewees. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

While the interviewees could prepare their answers in advance, the order of the questions was not strictly followed. Instead the interviewees could speak freely and arise a number of subjects at one time or on separate occasions. Some interviewees even brought extra topics. In particular, some asked the interviewer the reasons why men were not involved in the study.

The interviewees came from a number of backgrounds and some asked a number of clarifying questions, to which the interviewer would reply by reformulating the question at stake.

After developing the questionnaire, a pre-test was conducted in order to test the interview questions, the questionnaire and the analysing method. This test resulted in some minor change in the interviewer style. During pre-test the interviewer would not, for instance, clarify or reformulate a question, but rather ask the same question again. It led to a very short-lived interview of 20 minutes, in comparison to other interviews that lasted 40-60 minutes. Yet, because it gave some interesting insights, the pre-test interview was included in the findings.

10.3 Conducting the interviews

For the purpose of the project, and indirectly for this thesis, nine Acadian or French-speaking women of New Brunswick who hold decision-making positions, paid or unpaid, within their professional or voluntary structures, were interviewed. The interviewees were approached through different channels and were sampled purposively in order to “generate much detail from a few cases, to maximize the possibility of answering the research questions” (TASHAKKORI & TEDDLIE 2009, 291).

Most interviewees were personal contacts of the RFNB executive-director or of RFNB board members. One interviewee was a former consultant for the RFNB. The potential participants contacted were so due to their likeliness of providing insightful content, as well as their different geographical locations and the different natures of the organizations they worked in.

For the present study, those attributes were of being a Francophone woman working in New Brunswick and holding a decision-making position. Two interviewees were from Edmundston (North-West) and two were from Bathurst (North-East). The

remaining were from Moncton. Five interviews took place at public places like a coffee shop, while four others took place through a telephone call. Each interview took between 20 and 60 minutes.

It is furthermore relevant to point out that six of the interviewees were holding negative views about feminism, or would at best not identify as feminists, but rather as being in favour of gender equality. The name of the organization includes the word “feminist” and some of them expressed concerns over being harshly judged by the interviewer. This could be explained by the feminist paradox, that is, the phenomenon where

feminist issues such as equal pay for equal work, reproductive rights and expanded child care options [garner] support from the majority of the people polled, while most of the same respondents show a reluctance to personally identify as feminist, or with feminist (SPEARS 1995, 17).

This is important to mention because, over the interview, participants tend to relax and become more open about their views on women in leadership roles and other related topics as soon as they realized the interviewer was not “aggressive” nor “judgemental”. They became more likely to recount sexist practices they experienced or observed within their working structures.

The interviewees that were not formerly acquainted with the organization asked for more information about the RFNB activities and projects.

The interviews were conducted and transcribed in French, the first language of both the interviewer and the interviewees, except for one bilingual participant who spoke fluent Arabic and French.

10.4 Qualitative content analysis

In this section, I will describe the qualitative content analysis technique I have used in order to analyze and summarize data.

After the interviews were conducted and recorded, they were transcribed in order to process them for the subsequent analysis. When I was transcribing, I found myself already immersed in the process of analysis, discovering aspects I did not think of in the first place, and discussing the interviews with my peers.

At the outset I must admit that my qualitative content analysis was rather intuitive and not based on any predetermined qualitative content analysis strategy (which is contrary to feminist scholars like Hesse-Biber (2012) recommendations when they write to master students such as myself on how to design a research). However, I eventually

realized that my intuitive approach was similar to the grounded theory data analysis and I adopted it as such as it tailored my research questions and objectives for this thesis.

The grounded theory data analysis strategy "is a method of analysis in that it provides a way to develop 'progressively more abstract conceptual codes that are called "categories" to synthesize, to explain and to understand' data" (CHARMAZ 1995, 28; quoted from HESSE-BIBER 2012, 395). I knew I had to "code", that is, I had to go through a process of organizing and sorting the data obtained through the interviews. Also, I had in mind the GAT analytical framework and I knew I had to lean towards it, at the end.

There were "pre-set" codes that were related to the GAT analytical framework, and I allowed myself to add a number of emerging codes, such as "self-confidence", which, while it was not even mentioned in the interview guide, was mentioned by participants in all interviews.

I read through my textual data (i.e. the interviews) for the first time and wrote in the margins a number of concepts and ideas. I was somehow "reading the data 'line by line' and meticulously coding each line (HESSE-BIBER 2012, 395). At the beginning, my codes were rather literal, but the more I went through the different texts, the more my codes were becoming more focussed. I went through the transcripts for a second time with the purpose of piecing together my participants quotes in an Excel document along their assigned codes.

However, at that point, I realized I had to write comments to go along those quotes in order to contextualize them, a process that would allow me, as contend Hesse-Biber, to "'hear' the voices of the participants, [...] memoing about your data will help you grounded to your participant's meanings" (HESSE-BIBER 2012, 397). I therefore wrote extensive memos in order to maintain these quotes' meaning, all the while acknowledging my own bias and judgments on the material at stake. Alongside this process, I refined my codes, erased some codes that I thought were superfluous, mixed-in codes, etc.

In the end, I was able to fit my codes within the different quadrants described in Chapter 2. I was therefore categorizing my codes.

During data interpretation, some contents were kept, others were not, *inter alia* due to the length of the current thesis, and in order not to lose focus on the research questions. However, it was important for me to maintain and write down results when they were discordant.

In this chapter, I have outlined my feminist methodology, my use of mixed research methods for the purpose of complementing quantitative and qualitative data, as well as my rationale for my qualitative content analysis.

In the next chapter, I will proceed to the analysis of data.

11 Chapter 5: Data analysis and findings

In this chapter, the findings from the semi-structured interviews will be presented. I will first present the interviewees' profiles in order to outline their backgrounds. I will then go on to analyse the findings according to the methodology adopted. I will finish this chapter with a discussion on the findings in light of the literature review found in Chapter 2 and 3.

11.1 Interviewees' profiles

In this section, the profiles of the interviewees will be briefly described in order to understand the backgrounds of the interviewed persons. Most of this information has been collected during the interviews and on Internet (LinkedIn and other online professional profiles).

All participants identified as women and held similar professional paths in that they first went to university after they finished their secondary studies to get at least a bachelor's degree and then started working full-time in jobs related to their studies. All interviewees hold one or more decision-making positions, paid or unpaid. They either worked for the government, private corporations or not for profit organizations.

While a number of them mentioned they either did not plan or were currently planning on having children, or already had been on maternal leave and were or had reared children, they were not categorized accordingly as it was not specifically asked and the information is not available for all participants. Almost all participants had an intimate partner of the other sex in their lives, except for one participant that never mentioned any spouse or partner (Liane).

Also, interviewees were selected in order to represent diversity across their region of residence, career stages (number of years working full-time) and age. They came from different parts of New Brunswick where Francophones are either predominant or present in important numbers (North-West, North East, South East (Moncton)). Only one interviewee, Maha, was born outside of Canada. Their ages ranged from 20-70 years approximately.

1. Dominique lives in Edmundston and holds a bachelor degree in business and marketing and speaks English and Spanish as second languages. She started working full-time since the summer of 2014. She currently is a manager at a local clothing retailer and is also part of an administration council at a local youth organization.
2. Joëlle holds a master's degree in political science. She started working at the RFNB right after she was finished studying for a short period (9 months) to then switch to become the executive director of an organization that organizes national games for Francophone youths.
3. Katherine finished her bachelor's degree in business management back in 2008 and worked full-time for a couple years. She then went back to school to obtain a double master's degree in business administration and human resources that she completed in France. Back in New Brunswick, she started working as a director for a marketing enterprise. She is also a city councillor in her hometown in North-East New Brunswick.
4. Maha, of Lebanese origin, is highly educated as she holds a PhD in linguistics that she pursued in France and the USA. She worked for a few years in Paris in different linguistic businesses before moving to Moncton, New Brunswick, where she kept her ancient job for some time. She currently works as the executive director of a local organization for Francophone immigrants.
5. Anne obtained two B.A.s, one in psychology and one in Law before she started working as a lawyer in the 90s. She then switched to work for some years as a political analyst of an Acadian business association, to later work as their executive director for 9 years. At some point of her career she studied part-time to obtain a MBA. At the moment of the interview, she had been working for 8 months as the executive director of a local Law firm.
6. Claudette has an important position within the government of New Brunswick, for whom she has been working for the past 40 years, and she is also the president of an important Acadian organization.
7. Liane has a very diverse professional background. She first obtained a bachelor's degree in social work and a master's degree in education and professional orientation in the 80s. She has held different decision-making positions in a number of areas, including private and public structures, and has worked abroad (France and Burkina Faso) for a number of years. She currently

- lives in North-East NB where she studies to obtain her PHD in management of cultural diversity and works as a professor.
8. Marie-Linda completed a Bachelor's degree in Political Science at the University of Ottawa, a Master's in Comparative Canadian Literature at the *Université de Sherbrooke*, and a PhD at the *Université de Moncton*, where she teaches in the Information-Communication program. She has worked for 37 years, starting as a journalist, to then become a professor at the *Université de Moncton* where she is currently the vice-rector. She is also the president of a French-Canadian film organization.
 9. Rachelle, originally from Moncton, first obtained a bachelor's degree in psychology and started working in human resources right away. She moved to Fredericton with her husband to work for the government for 5 years, to later come back to Moncton to work for an important life insurance corporation. In the past 20 years, she has progressed there to leadership positions. She is now vice-president there and is also involved in a number of local administration councils, amongst other, she is the president of a NB semi-public organization. She also pursued part-time studies in order to obtain a master's degree in administration.

11.2 Data analysis

The first objective of this study is to identify the barriers encountered by Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick in reaching to decision-making roles. In order to get feedback from the interviewees, who had already reached to decision-making positions, a number of questions were concerned with how to reach to these positions rather than asking directly what the barriers are. The reason why the questions were asked in this fashion was to avoid triggering the interviewees with negative questions and to gain their thrust. I would ask them what their recipe for success was in order to lead them to comment on why women were underrepresented in decision-making positions. The second objective was to explore ways to identify change agents within organizations and how to develop solidarities with them in order to work towards positive gender changes. For this, I have asked the interviewees about parity measures and strategies they knew, as well as read between the lines of their transcripts to have a feel of the meanings they attribute to gender changes, unequal practices and feminism.

11.2.1 Do men and women have equal opportunities in reaching to decision-making positions?

From the outset, the majority of interviewees claimed or implied that any women, just as men, could get managerial positions within their hierarchical structures. The only clouds on the horizon according to many of them were the barriers that women impose upon themselves.

Q7 asked the interviewees directly if they believed men and women had equal opportunities to reach to a decision-making position.

Both Dominique and Joelle claimed right away that while gender may represent an obstacle in the eyes of certain working women, being a woman never represented a barrier to them:

According to me, I would say so [that women and men have equal opportunities], but from what I hear it is something else. [However] from what I see here what matters is the person's competence. (Dominique)

I have never felt like I was treated differently because I was a woman, but I am aware that these are things that happen in the real world, but I have never experienced it (Joelle)

Joelle even added that she believed her workplace and work team was feminist, because parity had been achieved in her office and the director was a woman, implying that her workplace was exempt of gender discrimination. Dominique contended that proper balance between men and women allows for higher productivity.

For their part, on a more measured basis, Maha and Katherine agreed in that gender was not *per se* a barrier to reach to leadership roles. Katherine expressed that gender never represented a barrier to reach to a decision-making position, but that her authority was questioned on the basis of her gender after she started working on a volunteer basis as a city councillor.

Maha asserted that what stopped women was “the projection of what the life of a woman is supposed to be” and the fact that “very often we put barriers on ourselves, for instance, we say ‘I am a woman and I am not able’”. Furthering her argument, Maha claimed: “the worst enemy of the woman is the woman herself”.

The other interviewees generally agreed that women had equal opportunities, but that “women tend to not seize the opportunities that arise” (Rachel) or act in ways that will undermine their chances to reach to a decision-making position (Liane, Rachelle, Claudette), for a number of reasons that will be further discussed.

Claudette added that things had changed a bit in the past twenty years; “there was no discrimination as such [back then], there was potentially some favouritism because men were dominating the directorate”. However, she did not suffer from discrimination because she was “always a leader. You had to know how to take your place”.

Corroborating, Anne, back when she worked as a lawyer in the nineties, would hear of cases of gender discrimination amongst her female peers, “but that never happened to me”, notwithstanding the fact that, as will be further discussed, she recounted an experience of flagrant discrimination in a hiring process for a position as executive-director.

Marie-Linda was the only dissenter, when she claimed that women did not have the same opportunities as men because it is mandatory

To have a reputation. When I say reputation, I mean that her reputation has to be bigger than that of a man who would apply for the same position. [...] The CV (curriculum vitae) that we possess has to be bigger, longer, more convincing than that of a man. We have to work harder, so, yes, we experience additional pressure.

In short, except for Marie-Linda, all interviewees would at first agree that women had equal opportunities then men to reach to decision-making positions, but that experiences would differ from one woman to another, and also that individual women were somehow their own enemy (to which Marie-Linda would agree, too). This could be explained by the fact that, generally speaking, it is believed in Canada that equality has been achieved. It seems obvious too that, if the interviewees were able to reach to such positions, any woman can reach to them.

At first glance, except for Marie-Linda, their claims could fit within quadrant I of our analytical framework, that is the individual/informal resources. However, as will be

discussed, the interviewees, especially the advanced career ones, have identified a number of unequal practices that could impact upon a woman's career trajectory.

11.2.2 What is the recipe to success and the obstacles specific to women?

A number of questions were concerned with key components that are widely presented as being fundamental steps to reaching to leadership roles. As discussed in Chapter 2, there are a number of positive steps that individuals can take that are thought to facilitate access to managerial positions, such as networking or seeking for mentorship. While the questions were understood differently by the interviewees and certain components seemed more important than others to them, these "key steps" seemed to resonate across all interviewees. The different components of the successful recipe that came out were (they are not put in any order): (1) role models and mentoring, (2) professional networking and volunteer work, (3) education and training, (4) self-confidence, (5) work family balance and support network, and (6) stereotypes and gendered roles. These components, which came out as a result of categorization of the transcripts, will be discussed in this section.

11.2.2.1 Role models and mentoring

Question two directly addressed the debate on the importance for women of female role models and professional mentoring for reaching to leadership roles. The belief that images of women leaders and mentoring are key to influence women and to counterbalance the phenomenon of women underrepresentation in decision-making positions is widely shared in a number of organizational studies' publications. As discussed in Chapter 2, a number of studies contend that the more women will break the glass ceilings and be present on administration boards, the more other women will be influenced in following their steps. "The figure of 30 percent forms the so-called 'critical mass', believed to be necessary for women to make a visible impact on the style and content of political decision-making." (UN 2005) To reach to these positions, mentoring by a senior coworker or by some sort of professional women board is considered an asset, as they provide support and counselling.

Interestingly enough, there was no consensus regarding the necessity for a female role model or a mentor in order to reach for a decision-making position amongst the interviewees.

Regarding mentoring, 6 interviewees claimed they did not currently have a mentor *per se* or did not mention resorting to a mentor at all in the course of their career. The exceptions, Dominique and Anne, mentioned they were mentored at some point by their former bosses into applying for leadership roles. It was especially crucial to Anne, because she "would never have braced herself to apply for this job" (as an executive-director). Her boss not only convinced her into applying, he pleaded for her cause before the administration council.

For her part, Liane had the help of a number of informal mentors in her life, males and females. She believed it was therefore crucial in order to move up the ladder and reach to "important" positions. She pleaded for the importance of "nurturance" relationships with older coworkers.

On the contrary, Rachelle claimed that "at my level, it is not as if there were many women presidents of companies. Even amongst the vice-presidents I am the only woman around the table". By this she meant that, at this point, it was impossible for her to seek female mentoring if she wanted to achieve the last step, to become the president of the company she works for.

Notwithstanding these mixed results regarding the importance of professional mentoring to move up the professional ladder, 6 interviewees mentioned they either offer mentoring services against remuneration or offer informal counselling to younger coworkers.

Regarding female role models, the question did not seem to attract much of the interviewees' attention. Only four interviewees directly replied to it:

There are not enough role models for girls.... But they (women) succeed just as men do. (Dominique)

There are many inspiring women in Acadia, but they have very little public presence. I got to discover them when I was working at the RFNB (Joelle)

No, there are not enough female role models. It is crystal clear that there are not enough of them (of female role models) (Marie-Linda)

For her part, Marie-Linda had elaborated opinions about female role modelling. She took her mother as a role model:

My mother, she was a woman ahead of her time [...] she was the only teacher in her (Catholic) convent not to wear the traditional veil, it took her a lot of determination and a deep conviction to be able to impose respect within the congregation and amongst nuns.

In the eyes of Marie-Linda, her mother challenged the roles and behaviours assigned to a woman of her position and her times and lived accordingly to her own set of convictions. Her mother inspired her. Marie-Linda also mentioned she herself is serving as a role model for her children that are very supportive of her. However, Marie-Linda believes not only there are very few female role models available for girls and women, but the ones available would discourage women from pursuing such careers. Taking Hillary Clinton or Pauline Marois²⁷ as examples, Marie-Linda contended these women were victims of negative media coverage because of their gender. They were the proofs of the high price women have to pay when aiming at success. In this sense, she believes many women look at them and decide not to pursue political careers, because they sense the price to pay is too high. Joelle would agree with her, claiming “models (present in the media) are often stereotypes. [...] even for women in situation of power, it needs to get better” (Joelle).

On the flip side, while Rachelle did not mention any role model in her life, she explained that her own mother lived traditionally, staying at home and with little education, while herself and her sisters all occupied high positions within their work structures. By that she meant that she did not need that her parents be in decision-making positions, as long as they provided the necessary support to their children. She herself teaches her daughters to pursue their dreams and to work hard to achieve them. Rachelle, at the end of the interview, realized she was probably even more insistent with her daughters because they were girls and not boys, therefore concluding she had gender bias.

²⁷ Pauline Marois was a former prime minister in the province of Québec.

In short, all together the interviewees did not hold decisive and coherent opinions on female role modelling and mentoring. About female role modelling, the few who expressed an opinion mentioned right away there were not enough of them, but did not seem to express much of a need of it either. As for mentoring, while a number of them offer informal or formal counselling to mentor seekers, they did not contend it had been key to their professional advancement.

11.2.2.2 Professional networking and volunteer work

4 interviewees from all career stages spontaneously suggested that professional networking was key to reach to decision-making positions. Also, 7 interviewees spontaneously recommended volunteering outside of work in administration boards or local associations as ways of gaining extra work skills, in particular, managing skills. A majority mentioned they were currently volunteering or had volunteered in the past and that it helped gain skills and reputation, which later ended in their reaching to higher positions within their working structures.

In the present context, I connected professional networking with volunteer work, because different interviewees mentioned that the volunteer work they conducted in organizations and associations helped them gain skills and professional reputation. Also, it had them meet with influential members of the community and therefore networking with other professionals, which in turn would result in progress in their professional trajectories.

About professional working, as aforementioned, 4 interviewees suggested that it was key to reaching to decision-making positions. Dominique believed it was fundamental, particularly “when we are young [...] it allows to meet with people from the professional world that can help you and provide advice”. Katherine contended that contacts “can make a significant difference”. Katherine and Rachelle would agree in that “5-7²⁸ are not always easy to go to, but you have to go out of work and get visibility outside of work, it can take you far away” (Katherine). Indeed, Rachelle, speaking as a human resources expert, contended that “a good network of contacts” is really key to reaching to decision-making positions.

²⁸ A « 5-7 » refers to informal meetings taking place after work in bars or cocktails between professionals.

In the same length of thoughts, Liane had arrived to the interview with a list of three reasons why women do not have equal access to leadership roles. Amongst other reasons, Liane asserted that women tend to do less networking than men. She would explain that by the fact that women have other occupations or have to take care of children and that this was detrimental to their networking activities. She believed that networking was a powerful tool to reach to higher positions and that women did not enjoy these opportunities enough.

Interestingly, Rachelle spoke about her own experiences of networking and how networking as it currently takes places is unfair to women, just as the business world is unfair²⁹. “I hate golfing” said Rachelle right away. Indeed, according to her, golfing is an activity that lends itself well to the business world to make contacts and to close up deals.

Social activities are often about golfing. I realize that it is very often golfing. It is rare, you go to a gulf tournament, there are what, 10% of women? 90% of men? [...] these are activities that women dislike, for my part, I hate it.

She hates golfing, however it represents an important activity in the business world and she does not want to miss networking opportunities. Consequently, Rachelle had to make up a compromise.

I wondered if I wanted to participate in an activity that I hate. What I do, I skip (the golf tournament) and go straight to the dinner (when the golf tournament is finished). I love it, I go to the dinner, it's the best of both worlds.

Thanks to her compromise, Rachelle is still able to engage in this important social activity, while not obliging herself to take part of a social activity she despises. In the same length of thoughts, Rachelle contended that there are sacrifices that have to be done in order to move up the ladder, and that women tend not to want to sacrifice their personal time and invest themselves in their career outside of the working schedule. She distinguished two types of workers, those that do not want to evolve and just do their shift, and those who want career advancement. To the latter, she recommends to do “unconventional or irregular things”. She added:

²⁹ I will discuss in the next section about feminism and situations of inequality identified by the participants

we don't do career advancement by working the minimum 8:15-4:30, I guarantee you, it's about reading, activities, social involvement [...] You will reap what you sow (Rachelle)

Indeed, by assisting to these social events, Rachelle realized other professionals from distinct workplaces had heard of her good reputation at work.

This is where I connect with volunteer work as a way to not only gain skills as contended by the participants, but also as a way to network and build a reputation outside of work.

As aforementioned, 7 interviewees either asserted volunteer work was key to reach to leadership roles or made some connection between their volunteer work and their career advancement.

For Dominique, volunteer work represented a strong argument for entry-level job seekers to present to potential employers to demonstrate they acquired different and alternative skills. It would help building a solid professional reputation.

Joelle believed that her generation was the generation of social change, but that to reach to decision-making positions that made change possible, youths had to get socially involved in organizations in order to gain the proper skills. She connected the desire of reaching to decision-making positions to the desire for change.

Marie-Linda also argued that her career advancement was strongly linked to her reputation inside and outside the university. Not only her publications had drawn a lot of attention, she had also been part of a number of administration councils and carried out large-scale projects. "My reputation outpaced me".

Claudette, who while she did not connect career advancement to her own experience (she is the president of an important Acadian organization), argued that volunteer work was an opportunity to demonstrate competences:

Sometimes people don't realize they have those skills, that they acquire them at home by preparing the family budget or organizing a trip to go to Europe or Asia [...] it hurts, they never had the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities. (Claudette)

For their part, Rachelle and Liane openly linked their career advancement to their involvement in different committees and associations, through which they gained skills and good references. They both asserted that women had to take the plunge and do extra work outside of their day jobs in order to develop new skills. However, as aforementioned, Rachelle and Liane asserted that women tended not to get involved enough into these types of activities for a number of reasons. According to Rachelle, this was due to some lack of will and commitment to moving up the ladder: “women limit themselves [...] they tend not to take the opportunities”. Rachelle’s husband would say about her that her hobbies were mainly about career advancement – that is what she would do in her free time (networking, volunteering, etc.). In the eyes of Rachelle, and Maha would agree with her since she put a lot of emphasis in her interview about women’s wills, reaching to leadership roles is mainly a question of will, about “walking the extra mile”, as the expression contends.

However, and I will discuss work family balance further, Rachelle acknowledged that “women tend to put other people’s needs before their own”, while Maha, Claudette and Liane made similar comments.

In conclusion, professional networking and volunteer work were thought to be key steps to career progress and reaching to decision-making positions. While the former allows for meeting with other professionals, the second permits to develop and demonstrate skills that could not be obtained in a paid position. However, as a number of the interviewees contended, the women they know tend not to take advantage of these opportunities.

11.2.2.3 Education and trainings

Interestingly enough, education and trainings were rarely mentioned as key assets compared to professional networking and volunteer work. All interviewees were highly educated, holding at least one bachelor degree, and would spontaneously speak about their education. When asked about their professional backgrounds, they would spontaneously mention their educational trajectory first. Only Maha, who never

mentioned any of the latter key steps and the only foreigner interviewee³⁰, put the emphasis on the importance for women to decide what they want their future to be and spoke of the importance of education:

Go to learn. If you say: my dream is not to be an educated woman... even there, go to school, get your diplomas, and from there, decide if you want to use them or not. If you put onto yourself obstacles at the moment you were able to do things, afterwards, it will be too late. Seek after instruction, seek after experience, experiment, travel, and after, make choices. (Maha)

In the same length of thought, getting extra training empowered Maha, Anne, Rachelle and Liane for applying to leadership roles.

You will observe in your interviews that us, women, we have the tendency to think that we always lack a course, a training (Liane)

I always feel better equipped when I have done a course (Anne)

Both Anne and Rachelle have obtained *Masters in Business Administration* (MBA) studying part-time outside of work. Even Marie-Linda, after working for 10 years at a Canadian news broadcaster went back to university to pursue her PhD and work as a professor and researcher³¹.

Different interviewees gained extra training years after finishing their studies. Every time Maha decided she wanted to try out a new field, she would first study in the field, obtaining a PhD in France and doing a student-exchange in the USA. On the same length of thought, Katherine, after working a few years, went back to university to obtain a double master in business administration and human resources.

Other participants did not mention getting extra training or going back to school after they started working full time, nor did they mention education and extra training as important assets to reach to a decision-making position.

³⁰ I am not making an assumption here that, because she is a foreigner, she believes education is more important in comparison to the other interviewees. I just thought it was interesting that she would be the only interviewee who thought about education in itself.

³¹ It may seem obvious that, in order to work as a University professor, an applicant needs a PhD (and this is not always the case in Canada as one can cumulate enough professional experience in order to teach). However, this is to support the claim that many of the interviewees have gone back to school after working full-time in professional jobs.

In sum, it appears that higher education as a condition to reach to decision-making positions is implied. While only one interviewee mentioned it openly, every interviewee mentioned their educational background as part of their professional trajectory as some sort of logical step to enter the working world. Also, according to an important number of interviewees, getting extra training empowers women to apply to such positions.

11.2.2.4 Self-confidence and how women are lacking it

Almost all interviewees spontaneously suggested or implied that self-confidence was key to reach to a decision-making position (7 out of 9). Amongst other comments, there were:

We have to start socializing girls at a young age and to give them self-confidence and eliminate barriers. [...] You are not different because you are a girl, you can do whatever you want. I would not limit myself or put barriers unto myself in my personal trajectory. (Joelle)

We must not be afraid to dare for it. We must not let ourselves be intimidated. (Maha)

I believe that for women to apply (for leadership roles), it's all about self-confidence. We must be self-confident, we must think that we are good, that we have the skills. (Claudette)

I believe women have to trust themselves, in terms of their abilities... (Liane)

We have to trust ourselves. If I summarized it in one sentence, we have this responsibility of trusting ourselves and to not let others define us. (Marie-Linda)

I want people to have self-confidence (Rachelle)

However, as would say Maha, women are apparently their own worse enemy. While these interviewees mentioned that self-confidence was the key, they would generally state right away that women tended to lack this self-confidence and provide an explanation to this phenomenon.

For instance, Joelle perceives traditional ways of life as negatives and believes that women's lack of self-confidence is linked to their socialization.

When we are told at a young age that as a woman you have to have children, that you have to stay at home, well you will want to get married and a prince charming. [...] (we have to) eliminate this at a young age. I believe barriers, the

glass ceiling if you want, we will break it with socializing little girls differently. [...] it's a social effort, all actors of civil society have to be involved, private, public, parliament, family, every one has to be involved [...] to change how little girls perceive society. [...] it's a change brought by this generation, and change will happen (Joelle)

However, other believed that it was women's fault if they lacked self-confidence.

very often we put barriers on ourselves, for instance, we say 'I am a woman and I unable (Maha)

We (women) tend to not know our abilities, we have to become more conscious of that we know more than we think. (Anne)

It's another women's trait. [...] I would never have applied if people had not encouraged me to do so. (Liane)

Women have the tendency to not assert themselves, or to assert themselves for the wrong reasons (Rachelle)

However, Rachelle asserted that self-confidence grows with age and life experience.

(speaking of a recent experience) It's to make sure that we have the respect we deserve, we must not be afraid to take our place, but at 30 years old, I would not have done that. Or at 25 years old. But with gaining experience and credibility... (Rachelle)

At the end of the interview, she discussed about how she was socialized. She remembered that in high school, no girls, including herself, would dare to say out loud they aimed at managerial position or even of going to university.

I did not want (my classmates) to judge me, they would mock me, say: who do you think you are? And I had the best grades of the class... and it goes on and you internalize (this discourse) (Rachelle)

In an environment hostile to ambitious females, Rachelle adopted coping strategies, "it was the best approach", and not discuss her ambitions. She never even imagined she could become a senior manager, it came later in her life.

Finally, Maha argued that women have to accept "social pressure" and preconceived ideas of women and follow their own desires. She was somehow midway through admitting that there are preconceived ideas about women's abilities and roles and also asserting that women own the fault of not being self-confident enough, of not daring enough.

Accept their questions, accept when the other says: oh but you are a woman, are you sure you want to do that? Do I have the skills, do I have the experience, the will? Come test me and then don't tell me I am soft because I am a woman. We must dare. (Maha)

The question of self-confidence is definitely crucial to the present thesis, because, as contended by the interviewees, it is about daring to dream for a job, to apply when a job opportunity arises and to be able to market oneself, to say: I am the best fit candidate for this job. The interviewees were, for the most part at least, very self-confident or gained self-confidence through their career trajectories. This explains partly why they reached to these positions, and why other women do not succeed.

There is a contradiction between asserting that women must be self-confident, that is to say, it is their individual burden to develop their self-confidence, while women are simultaneously socialized to not be self-assertive and too confident, as mentioned by Rachelle, Maha and Joelle. What is meant by Rachelle and Maha (Joelle acknowledges her background as being responsible for her own self-confidence) is that we must not act like victims of this system, but rather "play the game" (Maha).

11.2.2.5 Work family balance and support network

Questions related to family work balance, maternity and support network can not be avoided when discussing women's access to the work market and particularly to decision-making positions, as motherhood was historically equated to femininity in the Acadian culture (Chapter 3). All interviewees recounted their experience in relation to this aspect of their lives, of the importance of their relatives in their career trajectory and how they managed to balance so called private and public life. Indeed, a managerial position entails certain responsibilities, including a lot of travelling (Anne, Maha), the impossibility of getting off work to take care of a sick relative (Rachelle) or assisting to meetings outside of normal schedules due to family-related responsibilities (Katherine, Anne, Rachelle).

Consequently, all interviewees were agreeing that a "support network" (an expression I took from Liane), that is a network composed of family and friend to whom we can turn to when seeking support is *a sine qua none* condition for women aiming at managerial positions:

It is fundamental (to have support) when a woman wants to accomplish herself, to be a woman of career, to push her limits (Dominique)

I could not have done it without the support and encouragement of my parents from a young age (Joelle)

(My partner) encouraged me a lot, it is good that he encourages me because I realize that my implication at the council will take a lot of my time (Katherine)

I had it (support), inevitably, without it I would not be where I am at now (Maha)

In my childhood my parents had an important influence on my education [...] I see my husband everyday so yes, we don't have children, but if we did, I would have had this support (Anne)

Yes, for sure, and the friends' network. Friends are very important. (Liane)

Yes, I have children that encourage me, as well as a husband, brothers and my parents when they were there. (Marie-Linda)

The most important thing for me was the support of my partner (Rachelle)

Relatives' support is apparently so important that Maha even mentioned discriminating questions that were asked to her during an interview that related to her life partner:

Are you married? Do you have someone? Would it bother the other person if you travel all the time? To which I replied: if I were a male candidate, would you ask the same question? He excused himself. (Maha)

Three interviewees mentioned in particular the importance of the life partner's support and the importance of setting clear boundaries and responsibilities for each partner in relation to domestic tasks and the family care.

Maha spoke of "negotiating" with the partner, and also that a woman had to chose her partner according to her life ambitions. By this, she meant that if a woman desires to be a stay-at-home mother, then she must chose a partner accordingly. However, if she is aiming at a career, then she must find the right partner that will take his fair share of domestic work.

Rachelle recounted that with her husband they had negotiated a schedule in which every partner had free time to dedicate to their hobbies. While her husband enjoyed sports and would play golf over the weekends, she dedicated herself to her career, taking extra training or going to networking events. She also mentioned that she

found herself lucky that, while he still worked full-time, her partner was not career orientated. If her husband had been career orientated, then things would have been more complicated. She believed that her marriage was a success and that this was how they manage to be happy together for so long.

In the same length of thought, Rachelle recounted of board meetings with vice-presidents or directors where not only she was the sole woman present, but that her male coworkers' life partners (all women in this case) were either stay-at-home parents or working part-time. She felt as if these women had to give up their career so their partner could move up the ladder. Also, Rachelle found unfair that, in her life, both partners were working full-time and had to manage on a tight schedule, while her coworkers could enjoy the full support and time of their partners.

Speaking of negotiation with life partners and by way of anecdote, Joelle explained that with her partner they had to negotiate who was going to apply for the job she currently holds. Both are involved in the relatively small world of Moncton not-for-profit organizations and both parties were interested in the same job as executive-director. However, they concluded that it was in Joelle's best interest to get the job instead of her partner, who was "more experienced and older" and therefore "more likely to find a good job" (Joelle) than her.

It must be noted that no interviewees mentioned situations of domestic violence or abusive relationships in general as potential obstacles for women aiming at decision-making positions. Also, none of them spoke of single-parent families' specific struggles. I assume here they either avoided the subject (maybe they were affected at some point) or could not think of women in situation of unequal/abusive relationships or that are on their own to raise their family. Indeed, if we are talking of "negotiation", ideally negotiation takes place between equal parties that have to come to an agreement. What happens for women (or men) who are in unequal relationships or do not even have a partner to count on?

Now that the importance of support network has been discussed, let us add an additional variable: children. It must be noted that interviewees were not directly asked whether they found themselves in a conjugal relationships and if they had children or not. Rather, they were asked if a woman's desire to have a family, or to already have

children, could represent a barrier to reaching to decision-making positions. Interviewees would spontaneously mention if they either wanted children or had children and how this impacted their career trajectories.

Some interviewees believed that the desire to have children represented a barrier for women aiming at decision-making positions. Their opinions would differ slightly according to career stages, as early and mid-career interviewees spoke of the impacts of “wanting children” while advanced career interviewees discussed largely about work family balance and the impact of pregnancy upon their career trajectories (except for Maha who expressed opinions about these two situations). The barrier was described to be simultaneously individual and systemic, meaning that:

- (Individual) women were convinced that the fact of having children represented an obstacle to their chance of obtaining a decision-making position,
- (Systemic) and employers would assume that all women of a certain age were either desiring or planning to have children.

The interviewees³² described a number of scenarios:

Even at my interview for my current job, I mentioned that I was not planning on having children, and the guys from the interview, because they were all men, the guys told me that they were not taking this into consideration, that they did not have the right to. But I felt the need to say it because I knew it represented a disadvantage to be a 26-year-old woman in an interview for a managerial position. (Joelle)

It could affect my position as a city councillor, if I get pregnant, I will have to resign. I thought this was unbelievably unfair. (Katherine)

Sometimes it comes from women. There are women that have told me: are you sure you want to do this job, because one day you will want to be a mother. [...] As many women do, I decided to have children and therefore to have a more sedentary job. [...] There are certain things you can't do (when you have a family), such as travelling all the time when pregnant. To have a baby and be flying all the time, it's not compatible. (Maha)

Joelle also believed that the fact that she can pregnant while her partner can't led to unfair situations:

³² Dominique cut short the question as she claimed to not want children and that this situation therefore did not apply to her – she would not give general opinions and speak of other women's situations.

I live it personally. When I am going to start rearing a family? Because I would like to have children and I believe it is an obstacle in all working environments. [...] I am counting the months and I have to watch myself because I cannot get pregnant before 2017. [...] It is like a life schedule that is annoying to me, but that I have to manage, and this is a burden that my life partner does not have to bear. (Joelle)

For their part, Maha and the other interviewees spoke of the impact of pregnancy upon a career trajectory, of work family balance and their partners' involvement with raising the children and domestic chores, when holding a decision-making position.

I took 7 months of maternity leave with my children. [...] to claim that I will come back and (complain) that people would not have waited for me in a multinational environment? There are things that happen, there are contracts from which I won't earn commissions, there are decisions I have not been implied in, and this is normal. [...] You must be humble, because, yes, during 10 months things have happened without you. (Maha)

I always wondered what would have happened if I had children [...] the person that (take the children) to childcare. He (my husband) already took care of more than a half of domestic chores. For me, it would have been doable. It is easier when you don't have this additional responsibility. (Anne, who also mentioned she travelled extensively because of her job)

For sure if I had little children, I would not work like I am now. [...] I managed to work from home. [...] I became less active for a few years (Liane)

Time management. How much time will she spend at work, vs at home. To make it home by 5:00 PM with a decision-making position, it's hard. So we always wonder: how to balance work with home. It has been a while that we work on that, but enterprises don't have the tools yet to ease it for women, childcare, or flexible schedules for women. (Claudette)

If I, in my career path, leave for a full year, I come back, I can no longer work during the evenings, the weekends. I have a baby, my baby is sick, I have to stay home, it can affect me. From there, to claim that it can be an hindrance forever, no, but yes it can be an element (an obstacle). [...] to claim that it won't have an impact upon my career path or my development, or my ongoing training, it's completely false. (Rachelle)

Rachelle was also the only interviewee mentioning fathers' leave. She believed that men are increasingly involved in the rearing of children and, with the passing of time, tend to use increasingly their father leaves to help taking care of newly born or adopted babies.

Going further then logistics and technicalities such as daycare or maternal leaves, some interviewees from all career stages have linked family and child rearing

with definitions of what it means to be a woman in this society and negotiations with their sense of femininity.

No matter the social changes that we aim for, this will always be the difference, and it is better to embrace this difference, instead of saying we are equal at this level, like us (women) we have to give birth will all the complications that come along and these are not the same for women as for men. In a society we must aim for equity and not equality. (Joelle)

This is not the type of life I wanted for my children. I did not want to be the mother that goes back home over the weekends and have the children reared by a nanny. Once again, it depends on the type of mother and the type of woman you want to be. (Maha)

These are self-questionings that we always have, to be the good wife, to have a clean house, good children, my parents live in the region, to maintain a relationship with them, see them on a regular basis, my sisters and nephews. In the morning you want career advancement and development, and you want to take trainings, it's the concept of superwomen. [...] the concept of superwomen, I believe in it, it is feasible (Rachelle)

In summary, having children did represent an obstacle in the eyes of the interviewees in reaching to decision-making positions. Indeed, it meant that, as soon as women had children, they were no longer fully available for work, having to take some time off when pregnant or at the moment of adoption, or being available to their children during the evenings and weekends. As was discussed in Chapter 2, Joan Acker (1990) criticized the criteria of full-availability of the worker that are included in a number of supposedly gender-neutral job descriptions, a criteria that exclude women *de facto* because of their obligations outside of work. According to the interviewees, managerial positions entail responsibilities outside the usual weekday schedule, such as being away for days at a time or assisting to meetings at unusual hours. These situations make women in decision-making positions' lives harder, as they have to rely on their support network (relatives or friends). They have to make choices and compromises that will have an impact upon their career trajectories.

It must be noted that while a number of interviewees spoke of experiences of negotiations with their life partners in relation to domestic chores and child rearing, 8 of the 9 mentioned they had the full support of their partners and could rely on a support network. None of them mentioned troubles affording daycare services. Even more, one interviewee spoke of recruiting a nanny. It means that, potentially, the interviewees were

not finding themselves in difficult financial situations. 1 interviewee was allegedly a single parent and exposed that, when she adopted her child, she managed to work from home and would rely on friends if necessary. While this thesis is not specifically addressing the question whether wealthier women or women with stable life partners are more likely to reach to decision-making positions, it must not be excluded that class and relationship status may have an impact upon one's career path³³.

Furthermore, questions about family arose spontaneous debates for the interviewees about their definitions of femininity and what it meant to be simultaneously a mother and a woman. Women would be perceived as necessarily wanting to have children or as being the principal responsible for looking after children, a belief that subsequently impacts their chances at getting hired in managerial positions. During the hiring process, employers allegedly have to calculate the impact of maternal leave, just as women have to calculate their absence from work as impacting their career trajectories. They may have to leave out some of their career ambitions if they want to have a family.

This is important at the moment of listing the obstacles encountered by Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick to reach to decision-making positions and their place in the GAT framework, because pregnancy and having a family could be perceived as an individual choice and/or systemic acceptance of this choice.

11.2.2.6 Stereotypes about women or attributed managerial behaviours

Last but not least, the interviewees identified a number of stereotypes attributed to women that may intercede in their hiring processes. Others have attributed attitudes and management styles to women that are negative to them. The question of female stereotypes has been addressed in different circumstances in the past subsections, especially in relation with work family balance and self-confidence. However, there

³³ As discussed in Chapter 3, daycare services are not public in New Brunswick and are generally extremely expensive in comparison to wages. Indeed, certain families will decide to have a stay-at-home parent, generally the woman in heterosexual families, because the cost of daycare services ends up being equal to that of a wage. Also, as mentioned in Chapter 2, in their study, Chaire Bonne Enfant found out that women in senior positions tend to have more children than the national average, but that their support network was crucial to their career path. For her part, Roberge (2016) found out that if women earned less in average than men, it was partly caused by their need to find flexible jobs because of their unpaid work, and not because women are less ambitious than men (domestic chores and child rearing).

remain a number of results that deserve attention before I move onto the partial conclusion of this section.

As evidenced by two interviewees, there are positive aspects to having women in management positions. Claudette supported the idea that when a woman leads a meeting, she is likely to install a climate of respect and harmony in the group. Joelle believed that if her meetings were free of discriminatory practices, it was because the director was a woman that allowed for a culture of gender equality. Dominique believed women could do just as well as men, and took as examples a number of local enterprises that were owned by women. She herself claims “to treat everyone equally” (Dominique).

However, Marie-Linda and Liane believed that women had issues while holding authority. Indeed, Marie-Linda believed that by moving up the ladder, a person becomes increasingly the target of criticism, and that women had issues with dealing with these critiques. She believed women tended to be “insecure”. In the same length of thought, Liane contended that women, when feeling “insecure” tended to become authoritarian.

Women are categorical at wanting control. When you control, it is most likely because you lack self-confidence. You have to open up. You have to share with others. (Liane)

Liane even had a theory about why women tend to be authoritarian when put in leading positions:

Women hardly work in the grey (area). It's either black or white. And often in managerial positions it's about grey. It's not black or white, it's grey. We will work according to (established) politics, but you have to take different politics to resolve a situation. Politics are there to provide guidance, they are not absolute rules. [...] later on in my career I realized that women are more black or white. That is how we are. 'It's prohibited', 'we don't do like that.' (Liane)

Marie-Linda believed that different leadership styles are expected of women and men, and that women then are evaluated more harshly than men on their management skills.

Before she took the lead of her organization, Anne's managing abilities were put under harsh scrutiny by the administration council. While her boss encouraged her to apply as an executive-director and that her work as a political analyst was praised by the administration council, the same administrators would not trust her into a managerial

position, even though she met all criteria and had full support from her team. They would say that as a woman she would not be able to engage in fruitful negotiations. In the process, Anne's self-confidence was negatively impacted upon, to the point where she withdrew her application for the executive director position. The administrators hired a younger and less experienced man instead, who lasted only one year because he did not have the proper skills for the job and that Anne had to undertake some of his duties. This is when Anne finally acceded to the position as an executive-director. While Anne would attribute these sexist practices to the age of the administrators, "all old, grey-haired men" from some out-dated past, she also admitted that in their hiring processes these administrators tended to question a lot women's abilities on the basis of their gender, while men only needed the contacts and positive feedback from other males.

Interviewees also spoke of intergenerational shocks and "old ways of doing", i.e. sexist practices at workplace as if they belonged to a bygone era. I mention this here, because I believe the thought that sexism no longer exists represents evidently an obstacle for women desiring to reach to decision-making positions.

For her part, Maha believed these harsh internal struggles "were part of the game" and were the same for men and women. She would therefore not question this way of doing things.

In short, a number of negative stereotypes have been identified by the interviewees, such as women struggling with authority issues when put in position of power over other workers and an attributed manichaeism at the moment of applying rules. Some of them were actually perpetuated by the interviewees themselves. It was also mentioned women were too emotional to receive criticism. These negative stereotypes may represent obstacles for a woman when looking to reach to decision-making positions.

The issue with stereotypes is that they tend to be applied indiscriminately to an entire social group, in this case, sexed bodies (women). To perpetuate stereotypes is to fail to acknowledge that social behaviours are the result of socialization and a number of conditions. They lead to quick conclusions and generalizations and have very negative impacts upon women that are trying to reach to decision-making positions.

In this section, I have gathered together a number of key steps to reaching to decision-making positions for women and the downside they meant for these same women. Indeed, for every step, it was found that women in general did not act properly to succeed in said steps. In the next section, I will discuss about parity strategies and the interviewees' views on feminism.

11.2.3 On parity strategies and perceptions of feminism

Evidently, organizations in New Brunswick do not exist in a vacuum and they have adopted a number of strategies and rules in order to address the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions. The interviewees were acquainted with a number of them. Reflecting the literature addressed in Chapter 2, I found out that some interviewees believed they were either dangerous or ineffective at best, and also that it was a woman's job and not everyone's job to bring around gender changes. This led some interviewees to speak on their views of feminism.

Dominique and Joelle evolved in environments where parity had already been reached.

Maha, Joelle and Claudette thought that imposing ratios were effective measures, in that they "get the message thru" (Maha).

I am always looking for an equilibrium between men and women when I hire
(Joelle)

We have tools in our politics, we made sure the organizing committee would be 50/50. [...] we will be conscious before hiring. There will be women and men. [...]
(Claudette)

Claudette also believed in empowering people in trusting themselves and looking at alternative skills, such as that they developed through volunteering.

Also, they need to evolve in an environment where they feel free to express themselves. We need to valorize them, help them in seeing their skills, their strengths. (Claudette)

Joelle thought it was important to convince (predominantly male) managers of the benefits of having a diverse team and to point out to them on their tendency to hire other males.

According to Liane, “in these years (1995-97) there were federal and provincial programs, people were more aware”. She contends there were more women in non-traditional fields in consequence as there are now.

Marie-Linda has fought a number of times for parity measures within the different structures she has been involved in, but according to her, these are not effective. She claimed that parity measures lead to, yes an equal number of men and women in positions, however, men remain with the permanent jobs while women have temporary and precarious jobs. Later in the interview she also suggested organizing workshops for women to encourage female professors to speak in public.

Anne managed to implement some parity measures for the hiring process (I did not understand if it was for hiring employees or administrators though). However, even if the council had approved these measures, there was still some resistance to apply them. A young man even told her: “I am in for choosing women, but not at the expense of men’s places”. In the end, the parity measures were not conclusive, “we managed to have 3 or 4 women instead of 1 or 2”.

Rachelle urged caution with strategies that promote women in decision-making positions. She contended that those types of measures

are very, very, very dangerous. The reason is when we use strategies like this, we tell ourselves we need to fill job positions with women and not persons with the rights skills. Consequently, we put a woman in place who does not have the right skills. It will be apparent when she is in position (that she did not have the skills for the job) and it will harm her credibility. It reinforces the stereotype that she got the job just because she was a woman. [...] they will say, oh they had it because she is a woman or because she was part of a certain group that we were targeting. It takes away any social credibility to the person, essentially it creates stereotypes” (Rachelle)

When asked about the equal competence clause, she replied: “oh that sounds perfect, however, it rarely is at equal competence for real”.

Also, Rachelle mentions she had to stand up once in her quality of women who held a decision-making position.

there was this situation [...] that made me feel uncomfortable, an orientation that I thought was not equitable to women. I felt like it made even myself

uncomfortable. Fortunately where I am at in my career I have the courage to say it, to say that I was not comfortable, that I would not accept that. They brought changes after my intervention. [...] it is not that I don't benefit from that (change), but it is something that brings more objectivity to the organization. According to me it was a situation potentially unfair. (Rachelle)

Anne mentioned similarly that

It was not my job to insure equal representation of women on the administration council, but I thought it was essential to talk about it (Anne)

Also, the interviewees expressed a number of views about feminism. They seem to correlate feminism with gender changes:

The problem is, as a woman, it makes you very uncomfortable to bring these subjects (gender unequal practices) because you are perceived as the annoying feminist (Anne)

I'd say, the name, the term feminist, has a very negative connotation nowadays for women. If today you ask me: do you consider yourself a feminist? Not more than that. No, I am a progressive. I want things to move on, but the connotation feminist scares away men and makes women uncomfortable. (Rachelle)

It comes from the inside out, not from the outside in. We victimize ourselves too much, we are waiting on being recognized. (Maha)

Interestingly, Joelle admitted that working at the RFNB provided her with "glasses" that would allow her to see that not every woman is able to break the glass ceilings while she felt she was able to attain her goals.

11.3 Discussions

In this section, I will discuss about the interviewees beliefs about gender equality in reaching to decision-making positions and the barriers they identified. I will first argue that while they, for the most part, first asserted that men and women had equal chances in acceding to them, they went on identifying specific barriers for women and even claiming that somehow, individual women were the main reason why they did not succeed. Indeed, a lot of pressure was put on women's shoulders that are probably not shared by their male homologues. I will discuss this situation in the light of the literary debates addressed in Chapter 2 and other problems raised in Chapter 3.

As discussed in Chapter 3, New Brunswickers tend to believe that gender equality has been achieved and that women have equal chances with men on the job market. The women interviewed were, at different levels, apparently no exceptions to this phenomenon. However, as demonstrated earlier, for a reason, or another, or many reasons, Acadian and French-speaking of New Brunswick women are underrepresented in almost all of positions of influence across all sectors, do not hold equal shares of the economy (lower wages) and are discriminated on the ground of being women and from a linguistic minority community. Therefore, we can assert that indeed gender equality has not been achieved in the province and that collectively, women are left behind in reaching to decision-making positions.

Generally speaking, the interviewees held conflicting views if women and men had equal opportunities in reaching to decision-making positions and the specific barriers encountered by women in the hiring process. Indeed, except for one person, all interviewees believed men and women were fundamentally equal when looking to move up the ladder and become leaders within their organizations. However, almost every one of them at one moment or another of their interviews identified obstacles that were specific to women and/or had observed or experienced situations of sexist practices that could impact upon women's career trajectories. Notwithstanding, a majority of the interviewees tended to put the blame of women's underrepresentation in leadership roles on the same women. I believe at this point I can assert there is a gap between the discourse and the practice.

Potentially, the interviewees' own position of power within their work structure and their discomfort in discussing with a feminist organization about gender equality and organizations had them on the defensive. While they themselves held decision-making positions within their structures, they potentially feared that I would judge them harshly.

The reality is, in the light of the interviewees' conflicting views and the literature addressed in Chapter 2, there is no success recipe to reach to a decision-making position, nor are women individually faced with the same obstacles. Women (and men) all find themselves at the historical crossways of gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, mental, emotional and physical abilities, etc., in particular political, social, cultural and economical contexts. These will certainly have differentiated impacts upon women's career trajectories.

Some interviewees had a clear and decisive vision of the pathway to decision-making positions, while others contributed more vaguely to the subject. It felt though as if these ideal pathways were at the crossroads of the gender-neutral “ideal worker” (Chapter 2) and the reality that not everyone is socially equal and while they navigate through their career path. That is not to say the interviewees were lucky in getting where they are at and did not work hard, but they seemed to have been particularly privileged in their trajectories.

A number of components thought to be fundamental to move up the ladder arose across the interviews and were discussed in this Chapter, such as professional networking or self-confidence. What is for sure is that for every of these components it was also mentioned that women tended to not act properly. In consequence of this improper behaviour or mindset, women were less likely to reach to leadership roles. This lack of ‘self-confidence’ or ‘involvement in networking activities’ would constitute the reasons why women are underrepresented in decision-making positions.

I, along with the GAT authors (RAO & al 2013), believe the interviewees and society in general tend to put the blame on individual women for their underrepresentation in decision-making roles and not to acknowledge the obstacles encountered collectively by women. The interviewees were quick in blaming women for not being self-confident enough or for not negotiating work family balance the right way (“putting other people’s needs before their own”), instead of looking at the bigger picture as to what lead women to trust themselves less than men (or predominantly male hiring committee members to thrust less women than men). It felt as if it was up to women to cope, change and adapt to society’s standards rather than to society to open itself to new ways.

Speaking of coping strategies and adapting to masculinized environments, in different occasions the interviewees mentioned ways they found to navigate around their working environment in spite of their gender. Rachelle only attends dinners during golf tournaments that are predominantly attended by men, in order not to miss networking opportunities. Maha and Rachelle negotiate with their partners for the care of children. Liane worked from home for a few years and withdrew from social activities in order to be able to take care of her son. Maha directly challenges her job interviewers on their sexist views, but also suggests that women should deal with sexist practices and with

competitive working environments. Joelle counts the months before she can get pregnant. Marie-Linda pushes her pride aside when she gets attacked in the newspaper on the basis of her gender (“I’m an easy target because I am a woman”). Claudette spoke louder than men during meetings in order to get heard. The list could go on. It suggests once again that it is up to women to find tactics to circumvent patriarchal working practices and to move up the ladder, without disturbing the unequal structures in place.

Furthermore, reflecting the debate raised by Joan Acker (1990) and other feminist organizational studies scholars about “doing gender” at work and women’s roles in society, interviewees mentioned difficult self-questioning they went through in relation to their sense and definition of femininity. Is it possible to be a manager and a woman at the same time? Acker argued that job positions as they are currently understood entail selflessness and even absence of the body. The body is barely allowed to be, as the worker as to offer full availability and dedication to its job.

Indeed, some felt as if acting like the “ideal worker” that does everything right to move up the organizational hierarchies put on jeopardy their sense of femininity and what it meant to be a proper woman. Rachelle mentioned for instance how she had been questioning, especially when her kids were small, about whether she was being a good spouse and mother if she spent so much time at work. Joelle spoke of embracing the sex differences and to perceive them as something positive, because women (or uterus-holders) do get pregnant while male bodies don’t. As a woman desiring children, she asserted that she had to accept pregnancy would impact upon her career trajectory. Maha was particularly direct about it: “You have to ask yourself what type of woman you want to be” (Maha).

The situation observed among interviewees of putting the whole blame on women’s back and of asserting that it is only up to women to change reflects current federal and provincial governments’ lack of will and commitment to reaching to gender equality through their policies and action plans as discussed at the end of Chapter 3. For instance, the government of New Brunswick currently refuses to implement public childcare services in the province, a measure that could help families in general, and women in particular as they are regarded as the main caretakers of children, in balancing work and family.

In this chapter, I have provided the data results and analysis of the interviews. I was mostly interested in the interviewee's recipe for success and their views on the different steps that are generally thought to be key to reach to leadership positions as well as the specific barriers encountered by women in their professional trajectories. Also, I intended to read in between the lines, identifying a number of stereotypes or managerial behaviours attributed to women that impedes them in moving up the ladder.

12 Chapter 6. Results and conclusions: are women individuals objectively their worse enemy?

In the context of this research I intended to develop an expertise on the underrepresentation of Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick in leadership positions. The research itself was located at the interstice Acadian studies (Chapter 3) and gender organizational studies (Chapter 2). A feminist methodology was used along a mixed methods methodology, that is, recurring to both quantitative and qualitative data (Chapter 4). Nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick that hold leadership positions within their organizational structures in order to explore what barriers were encountered by women in their professional trajectories and also to help identify potential change agents. The present study was part of a RFNB project that aims at French-speaking women of New Brunswick economic prosperity.

There were therefore two main objectives to this study:

1. Identify the specific barriers encountered by Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick in their professional trajectories to reach to decision-making positions;
2. Identify potential change agents.

In this last chapter, I will present the limitations of this study followed by the results to questions number 1 and 2. I will shortly conclude with an opening.

12.1 Limitations of the study

The results of this study are limited.

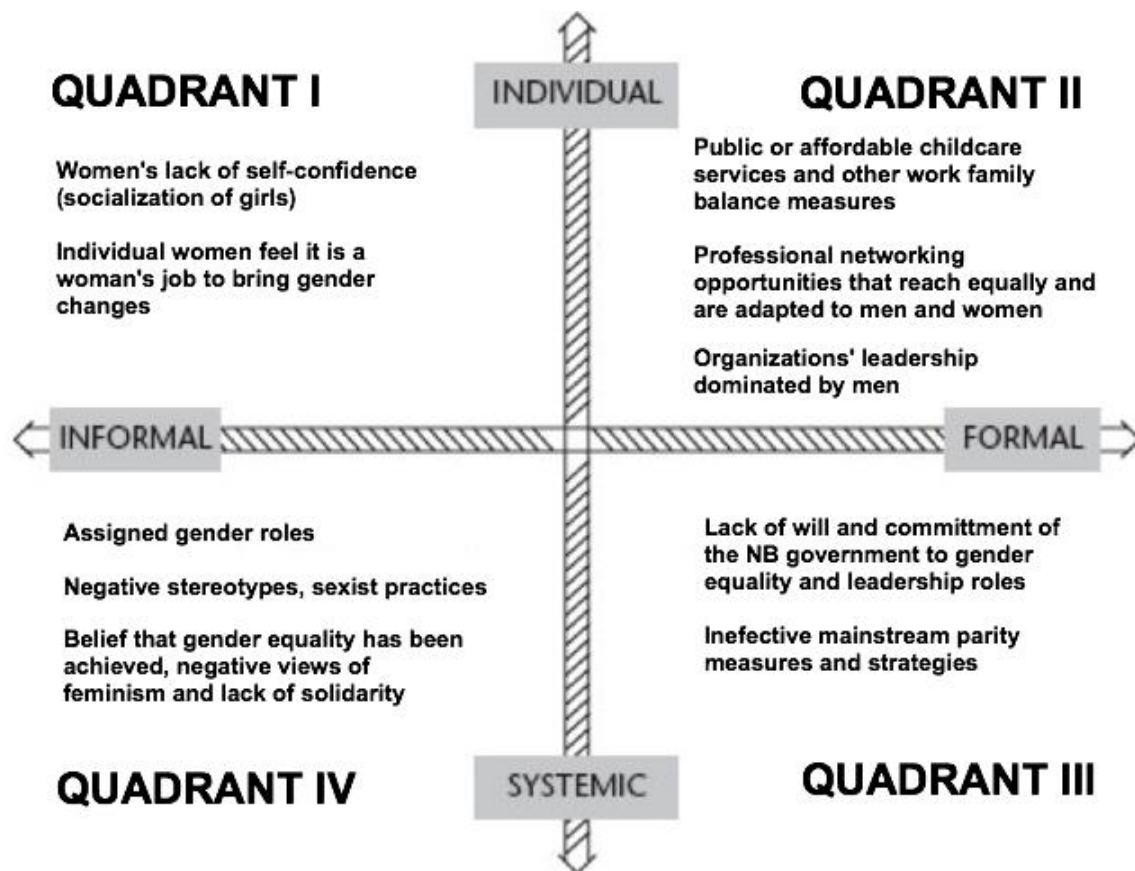
While there is no magical number of interviewees according to which a research results are founded or not, I am acutely aware of the limited scope of the present study, even for Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick. Nine interviewees can hardly encompass the voices of thousands of other women's different trajectories.

Also, working on my thesis, I have come to realize that my research questions were too broad and that many debates that could have been addressed in further details have been let aside.

12.2 Objective 1: the results

In regard of the findings explored in Chapter 2, 3 and 4, I arrived at the following analytical framework as to what are the current barriers encountered by Acadian and Francophone women of New Brunswick for reaching to leadership roles. I mixed some “objective” and “discursive” barriers.

I have drawn a number of conclusions that are summarized and inserted as keywords within the GAT analytical framework. I will briefly comment on each of them.



12.2.1 Quadrant I: consciousness and capabilities

Women's lack of self-confidence (socialization of girls). "Self-confidence" is key to reach to leadership roles and women tend not to be self-confident enough in their career trajectories and in taking opportunities. Some interviewees connected it to the socialization of little girls, claiming therefore that it is not that women fundamentally lack self-confidence, but rather they are educated in thinking that they are less than men. I agreed at this condition, however I connected this to other variables that could impact upon women's generalized sense of self-confidence, such as lower wages, underrepresentation in influential roles, negative stereotyping and lack of political will to reach to gender equality.

Individual women feel it is a woman's job to bring gender changes. As asserted by the women interviewed and in view of the literature, the fact that individual women feel it is a woman's job to bring gender changes, and not up to all workers or the organization's leadership to bring about gender changes, is also a barrier. Indeed, and in relation with findings from Quadrant IV, the feeling that the fight for gender changes must be led individually entails high costs for the person looking for it, as contended by Marie-Linda. Many of the interviewees would rather adopt "coping strategies" instead of putting in jeopardy their career and destabilizing unequal structures.

12.2.2 Quadrant II: resources

Public childcare services and other work family balance measures. The absence of public childcare services in New Brunswick is unavoidably a barrier for women's career trajectories. In view of their historically assigned role of primary caretakers of the family and the high costs associated with child care in the province, many women are pushed to stay at home or adopt coping strategies that does not allow them to reach to managerial positions with the responsibilities they entail currently.

Professional networking opportunities that are equally accessible for men and women. As contended by the interviewees, professional networking is a resource for women to reach to decision-making positions. However, as exposed, the conditions in which networking takes place currently do not deserve equally to men and women and are not adapted to everyone's needs, like parents. In view of the literature professional

networks are characterized for being predominantly male. As a result, some women have organized and made up their own women-only networks. However, this is not sufficient to achieve real change and grant equal access to women to networking resources.

Organizations' leadership dominated by men. As contended by the GAT authors and as mentioned by a number of interviewees, organizations' leadership dominated by men is an impediment to women's access to leadership positions. An interviewee mentioned that male dominated selection committee (who are often directors themselves) tend to judge more harshly women's competences and skills than that of men, consciously or not. They will attribute a number of stereotypes or behaviours to women, link them to maternity and motherhood, etc. More room has to be made for women in the higher spheres and more glass ceilings must be broken to encourage more women to jump on board.

12.2.3 Quadrant III: Rules and policies

Lack of will and commitment of the NB government to gender equality and leadership roles: as discussed in Chapter 3, the NB government, notwithstanding the poor results the province has in terms of female representation in leadership positions, does not show long term commitment to gender equality in the long term.

Ineffective mainstream parity measures and strategies: while organizations have adopted a number of parity measures and strategies, as contended by the GAT authors and the interviewees, many of them prove to be ineffective or to even jeopardize equality between men and women. These measures tend not to challenge the fundamentally unequal organizational structures that subsist, but to be some sort of temporary and incomplete measures that have the advantage of not threatening the patriarchal nature of the organization as we know them.

12.2.4 Quadrant IV: social norms and deep structure

Assigned gender roles and definitions of femininity. Assigned gender roles, in particular motherhood and the care of family by women, were found to be deeply problematic and rarely unquestioned. They were a deterrent for women looking to apply for managerial positions and the blame for not dealing with these gender roles was put

on women's shoulders. As contended, women had to adopt "coping strategies" to circumvent assigned roles, by "negotiating" with their partner (if they had the right partner) for instance. They also led to women questioning their femininity in relation to these assigned roles.

Negative stereotypes, sexist practices. There are a number of negative stereotypes surrounding women that are shared and reified in the professional world, such as Manichaeism or incapacity to negotiate. They were found to be a deterrent to women's access to decision-making positions. They would also lead to sexist practices, since men are found to be trust worthier of becoming managers. Indeed, women's abilities and skills are put under harsh scrutiny in hiring process in comparison with men.

Belief that gender equality has been achieved, negative views of feminism and lack of solidarity. The belief that gender equality has been achieved because women have formally (legally) acquired equal civil status with men is probably among the worse deterrents in women's access to decision-making positions because it leads to believe that society has changed and it is now to women to adapt, and does not acknowledge the prevalence of negative stereotypes and sexist practices in organizational environments. People hold negative views of feminism and will view any woman denouncing unfair practices or rules as a "feminist", therefore undermining her arguments and demands for change. Also, by lack of solidarity, I refer to the tendency of putting the burden on women's access to decision-making positions only on them without acknowledging an unfair system and viewing them as a collective that faces an unfair number of obstacles in their professional trajectories.

In this section, I have addressed a number of barriers encountered by Acadian and French-speaking women in their professional trajectories. In the next section, I will address how to move on to change through change agents.

12.3 Objective 2. What about change and change agents?

As a gender equality advocate with her own flaws and contradictions and as an women rights' NGO worker, it was important for me not only to identify what the 'problems' were in relation to the underrepresentation of Acadian and French-speaking women of NB, as I have done in the past section, but also to think about change and in

particular, change agents. I wanted it to be a reflective process, where I could think of my own goals and definition of gender equality in relation to the interviewees. Especially through the interviews, I have come to learn and understand that while we are not all at the same place along the feminist/women's rights fight for equality spectrum, there are ways to work together with individuals/change agents that are enrolled in unequal organizational structures, to create bonds and solidarities and to work together for gender change.

As contended by the GAT authors, we have to be open to the different allies we can make, as some of them could be more unexpected than others. The participants in this study demonstrate this phenomenon. I have in this sense identified two key aspects from which we could work as gender advocates when intending to have more women in leadership roles with the help of individuals already involved inside of organizational structures: (1) identification of sexist practices and (2) advocacy for effective gender change.

Identification of sexist practices in employment: by a way or another, it is fundamental to rise potential change agents' awareness on the existence of unequal, sexist practices and to lead them to understand that they are of a systemic/global nature and not individual women's fault. Indeed, it was identified that there is a tendency to put women's underrepresentation in leadership positions as being the women's fault, and not on fundamentally unequal organizational structures.

Advocacy for effective gender change: potential change agents that have already identified sexist practices in employment should receive necessary support in the workplace or from local organizations to challenge those practices within their workplace and to effectively bring changes.

A number of interviewees, while not necessarily identifying as feminists, had already identified unequal, sexist practices within their organizational structures and advocated for gender change:

- Joelle identified as a feminist, but she also believed there were no sexist practices within her workplace. However, she would readily identify

- discriminatory practices there and openly advocated in favour of a diverse workplace.
- Maha was able to identify a number of sexist practices in employment and would challenge them on the spot. She also believed that imposing quotas was an effective manner to bring change.
 - Katherine identified discriminatory practices against women with no children and pregnant women at the city council she volunteered for. However, she did not feel empowered enough yet to challenge them.
 - Claudette identified certain situations that are specific to women, such as child rearing. She also brought some gender changes at the organization she presides, such as parity measures in employment.
 - Rachelle, while she claimed that feminist was a negative label, believed that little girls were socialized into not reaching to their ambitions and that this affected their professional trajectories. She also challenged certain sexist practices at her workplace and suggested changes to put an end to these situations, changes that not only benefitted her and other women, but the whole image of the company.
 - Marie-Linda would readily identify sexist practices within her workplace and strongly advocated for changes, at the expense of her professional reputation.
 - Anne identified and suffered of a number of sexist practices at her workplace. Once she became the executive-director of her organization, she brought around some changes, trying to hire more women on the administration council and easing their entry into managerial positions. However, she expressed concerns over the fact that it was considered a woman's job to bring gender changes and felt that she was identified as a feminist for the sole reason that she had challenged gender inequalities.

While the majority of the interviewees would not self-identify as feminists, they were able to identify discriminatory practices and even ready to challenge them. It is therefore a question of looking individually at all these potential change agents, take them at where they are and start working together, bonding, creating solidarity, and offering the necessary support.

12.4 Conclusion

What is crucial in the end, as discussed in Chapter 5, is to collectively realize and act upon the fact that the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions is partly linked to a tendency to accuse individual women of failing to follow the so-called key steps to reaching to such a position. In short, the blame is put on women's shoulders instead of looking at the bigger picture. Indeed, while some steps, such as networking and extra training, may work for some women and others have helped empowering some in their professional trajectories, altogether many women realize all those steps notwithstanding the rough road to obtain leadership roles. Still, gender equality has not been reached yet in the workplace, and this is linked, as contended in the framework to a number of features on the individual, systemic, formal and informal levels.

For NGO workers interested in connecting with change agents operating in different spheres, such as private corporations or governmental structures, it is important to identify said change agents and to learn how to work with them. While not all may identify as feminists or even hold negative views of feminism, it can be surprising how they can become crucial allies positioned within the targeted structures.

Acadian and French-speaking women of New Brunswick find themselves at the interstice of different systems of oppression on the basis of their language, culture and gender. The Acadian community at large has been turned upside down when entering 'modernity', that is the current globalized capitalist economy, as well as gender roles have quickly changed and evolved. The women find themselves one the fence between traditional gender roles and new roles, such as their new roles in the formal work market. The system itself is experiencing a muted struggle with the massive entry of women in the work force and the destabilization of patriarchal structures.

As such, the present study was of an exploratory nature. Further research should be led on the definition of gender and the different barriers encountered by women in the different working environments, such as the world of NGOs, private corporations and governmental structures. Alternative management models have to be studied and proposed.

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14 APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire for individual interviews

Individual interviews:

List of questions for women who have reached to decision-making positions³⁴

1. Can you tell me about your professional background?
2. Would you say you had a role model or a mentor that inspired you in your career path? If so, who and how did this person inspire you? If not, do you think youths have enough role models? What about girls?
3. According to you, what are the criteria to access to decision-making or managerial positions?
4. Did you apply for your current position or was the position offered to you? How did you feel during the hiring process?
5. Have you ever felt uncomfortable or that you did not belong to your workplace? What could make you feel less self-confident?
6. Was the support of your family (parents, relatives, partners or spouses) an important aspect of your career path?
7. Do you think that men and women have equal opportunities to reach to decision-making positions? If not, what makes you think so?
8. Have you ever been in the obligation of choosing between work and family? Did this decision have an impact on your career path? Do you think that the choice of having children affects female managers in any particular way?
9. Do you think your workplace promotes equally men and women in leadership roles?
10. Looking back, do you believe certain obstacles you encountered in your professional path are specific to women? If so, what were these obstacles?
11. According to you, how can your workplace or any workplace for that matter could become a gender equality champion or ally?
12. Do you perceive that relationships or dynamics with your male coworkers are different than those with women? If so, how are they different?
13. Have you ever paid attention to the number of men or women present in your professional meetings? Have you ever noticed any distinction between men and

³⁴ The questions were translated from French to English by myself. The questions were asked in a colloquial language, I therefore intended to maintain the original language level while translating the questions.

- women in speaking in public? If so, have you ever observed a man « stealing » a woman's idea minutes after she offered the same thought or idea without him acknowledging the original author? If so, did you or your colleagues react?
14. Do you believe women of diverse background (race, ethnicity, age, physical or mental abilities, etc.) have equal opportunities in terms of reaching to managerial positions? If not, why?
 15. If you had the opportunity of speaking to a group of young professionals that aim at a managerial position, what would you say to encourage them? Would you add something about gender equality?

Łódź, data/date 30 September 2017

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(wersja polska/Polish version)

Oświadczenie

Oświadczam, że złożona przeze mnie praca magisterska, kończąca studia pt.: Gender and organization: On the underrepresentation of Acadian and Francophone women of New Brunswick in decision-makings positions and the strive for change, jest moim samodzielnym opracowaniem. Oznacza to, że nie zlecałem/am opracowania rozprawy lub jej części innym osobom, ani nie odpisywałem/am tej rozprawy lub jej części z prac innych osób.

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I hereby declare that my Master's thesis submitted upon completion of the studies, entitled Gender and organization: On the underrepresentation of Acadian and Francophone women of New Brunswick in decision-makings positions and the strive for change, is my own work written unaided. This means that I have not had it or any of its parts written by a third party, and I have not copied it or any of its parts from anyone else's work.

Alexandra Mauger

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Oświadczenie

Wyrażam zgodę na udostępnienie mojej pracy magisterskiej pt.: Gender and organization:
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makings positions and the strive for change

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I hereby grant consent that my Master's thesis entitled Gender and organization:
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makings positions and the strive for change be made available³⁵.



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³⁵ For consultations in the faculty library.

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Oświadczenie

Zaświadczam o zgodności zawartości danych na nośniku elektronicznym z przedstawionym wydrukiem pracy magisterskiej.

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I hereby declare that the digital version of my Master's thesis is an unaltered copy of the printed version.

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Imię i nazwisko promotora/Name of the supervisor: dr Grażyna Zygałło

(wersja polska/Polish version)

Oświadczenie

Oświadczam, że złożona przez Panią/Pana Alexandra Mauger praca magisterska, kończąca studia pt.: Gender and organization: On the underrepresentation of Acadian and Francophone women of New Brunswick in decision-makings positions and the strive for change, spełnia wymagania kierunkowe dotyczące prac oraz egzaminów magisterskich na Wydziale Studiów Międzynarodowych i Politologicznych Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego i została przeze mnie przyjęta jako praca zaliczająca seminarium magisterskie.

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I hereby declare that the master's thesis submitted by Ms. Alexandra Mauger upon completion of the studies, entitled: Gender & Organization: On the underrepresentation of Acadian and Francophone women of New Brunswick in decision-makings positions and the strive for change, abides by the official requirements in regard to Master's theses and exams established by the Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Łódź, and has been accepted by me as an assignment for the Master's seminar.

.....
(podpis promotora/supervisor's
signature)