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The Role of Mothers in Muslim Families in Ouakam, Dakar: Navigating Traditional Gender Roles in a Modern Context

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The Role of Mothers in Muslim Families in Ouakam, Dakar:

Navigating Traditional Gender Roles in a Modern Context

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Senegal: National Identity and the Arts,
SIT Study Abroad, Fall 2012

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ABSTRACT

My study is on the role of women in Muslim families in Dakar, Senegal. What are they expected to do for their families? How do these women feel about their position and role in their families? What aspects of their role in the family do they enjoy and which do they wish were different? How is their role changing as more women enter the workforce? This topic interests me because many people in the United States have a negative perception of the position of women in Muslim societies. They claim that these women are oppressed and that the women suffer from the paternalistic values of Islam. I want to hear the stories and opinions of the Muslim women in Dakar and allow them to express how their religion affects their role in their families and how they feel about this influence. In order to not overextend myself, I limited the scope of my study by doing a case study of Muslim mothers in my neighborhood of Ouakam in Dakar. I conducted my research primarily through interviews with women and a few men in my neighborhood and through limited (participant) observation in their homes and in my host stay family. I also did secondary research on the topic of women's roles in Muslim societies that are similar to Senegal as well as the experience of Senegalese women, specifically.

INTRODUCTION

As a feminist Anthropology major, I had some concerns about my ability to maintain cultural relativism in the face of Muslim gender roles. It is commonplace in the United States to hear talk of repressive patriarchal Muslim culture – Muslim women are physically repressed by their veils and conservative clothing, intellectually repressed by their lack of educational opportunities and emotionally repressed by their complete submission to their husbands, or so people say. The typical experience of a Muslim woman can be made to sound pretty awful. Of course it does not help that U.S. news sources highlight only negative stories about Muslim women. We hear about the honor killings, the female genital cutting, and the women who set themselves on fire because they cannot stand to continue with their lives. We miss all of the ordinary happy stories about Muslim women who enjoy their lives and their experiences and value their role in society.

There is also a conspicuous absence of Muslim women's voices in discussions on the state of Muslim women and their rights, and this is what inspired me to study the role of Muslim women in Senegalese families. My vision for this study was to give voice to Muslim women's opinions on their experiences – what they do in the family, what they like, what they do not like, how their role is changing because of cultural shifts. I wanted to be able to come back to the U.S. with a backpack full of real stories that I could offer up in any theoretical discussion on Muslim women's rights and experiences. I hope to be able to counter unfounded negative outsider judgments with real stories and insights from insiders of the culture.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Judging by some of the stories of women in the Qur'an, Muslim women of antiquity played a more active role in government, education and politics than their descendants. Muslim women are only now regaining the rights of their foremothers, like the Prophet's wives who were strong, educated women who were not relegated to the domestic sphere. A'ishah, one of the Prophet's wives, was regarded as an expert on the *hadith* to such an extent that men would travel from other countries to ask her advice on matters relating to the Prophet's teachings (Dangor 109). Muslim wives of ancient rulers even sometimes lead their countries in the event of their husbands' deaths. For example, Shajarat al-Durr took command of Egyptian troops after her husband's death and went on to defeat the French invasion led by King Louis in 1249 CE (Dangor 110).

However, medieval interpretations of the Qur'an broke from the classical idea that women are incorruptible and instead argued that women have a weak nature that leaves them susceptible to corruption. They must be made to follow men, the infallible gender, so as to not go astray and threaten the survival of Islam (Stowasser 21). According to this new way of thinking (which has persisted to some degree ever since), women must be put under the guardianship of men who will provide for them financially and ensure that they remain true to the principles of Islam. There is some debate about whether the Qur'an's advocacy of men as the guardian of women and as the recipient of twice as much inheritance as women is unjust to women or, in fact, reflects a burden on the men who are obligated to provide for all of the female members of their family (Dangor 113).

There are three major schools of thought about the role that Muslim women should play in society and in the family. Modernists support *ijtihad*, or individual interpretation of the Qur'an, and believe that there should be sociopolitical equality of the genders (Stowasser 5). Conservatives/traditionalists support gender inequality as laid out in classical Muslim law based on the belief that women are naturally inferior to men. The third group, Fundamentalists, believe that they are the soldiers of Islam and must fight to ensure that Islam is not corrupted by outside influences. In this fight, they see women as crucial actors who have the power to transfer pure Islam teachings to their children. For this reason, they believe that it is especially important for Muslim women to comport themselves according to the traditional teachings so as to perpetuate a pure form of Muslim culture (Stowasser 6).

Throughout Muslim history, the position of women in society and in the family was a key component of traditional Islam structure which allowed the religion to traverse continents while remaining intact. Women's roles at once symbolized an important aspect of Islamic order and helped to preserve this order by teaching children traditional values and modeling gender roles in the family (Stowasser 7). The women's role of caring for the family is extremely important because the family is the heart of Muslim society (Sherif 1). A good Muslim woman is faithful, virtuous, obedient to God and to her husband (if he is righteous), modest and loving towards her family (Stowasser 20). By modeling the ideal Muslim values in her daily contact and by being submissive to her husband, a Muslim mother can teach her children these values and also teach them to always be obedient to God.

Although there have been many recent changes in the roles of women in Muslim countries, women are still generally thought of as inferior to men. Women in South Africa hypothesized that they are treated unequally because people are socialized to think of women as

lesser than men and many also justify this belief using Islam (whether or not the Qur'an supports this interpretation). The financial dependence of women on their husbands also supports the idea that women are naturally intended to be submissive to men (Dangor 113). Other differences between the genders that perpetuate the idea that they are meant to be treated differently include a man's right to engage in polygamy, a man's right to divorce his wife without her consent (and her limited options for recourse in some Muslim countries) and the tradition of a husband maintaining his wife and requiring her subordination in return (Dangor 119). However, the different roles for the two genders set out in the Qur'an are not intended to mean that the genders should be treated unequally (Wild 11). Women and men have different positions to fill in society according to Islam but there is value in both of them.

Traditional understandings of Islam must be adapted to the contemporary reality in which women often work outside of the home in order to supplement the husband's income and provide a better life for their family (Sherif 1). Economic crises have forced more women to seek work outside of the home, a move which inherently disrupts the traditional gender roles (Wild 23). Women's shift from the domestic sphere into the work force can create tension between spouses because men expect their wives to maintain the house and the family as well as their mothers did even though their wives, unlike their mothers, have jobs (Sherif 4). Many traditionalists oppose women's employment because they fear that it will distract them from their duty to teach their children Muslim values and maintain the strength of their family ties (Dangor 120).

Women's employment outside the home can also disrupt traditional power dynamics between husbands and wives. According to the Islamic religious-legal marital model, women should occupy themselves with the work in the home while the men bring in the income.

Because the men support the family financially, they unquestionably occupy the role of authority figure of the family. However, when the wife begins to bring in income, the man's absolute authority is challenged. Although women are not legally required to contribute their income to the family, many do, and in doing so, they threaten the man's public monopoly of power in the family (Sherif 3).

This threat to traditional gender roles can cause husbands and other family members to criticize women who hold a job instead of spending all of their time taking care of their family. They complain that these women do not spend enough time keeping up their family or their house because they spend too much time at work. Women are torn between an obligation to their family and the realization that they can create a better life for themselves and their family if they bring in more income. For example, many upper-middle class women in Egypt have entered the workforce in order to supplement the family's income and allow their children access to private education and more opportunities. However, this shift towards women working outside of the home has created tensions between couples because the husband is often resentful of or shamed by his loss of control. At the same time, the wife expects the husband to take on new, nontraditional family obligations because she is contributing to the family income (Sherif 6). Because it is the job of the mother to educate the children, any shortcomings in the children's comportment are blamed on the mother even if she spends no more time with the children than does the father (Holt 19).

Some men want their wives to hold a job outside of the house, but this is generally because they like the idea of having a secondary income not because they believe in gender equality or want their wives to have more autonomy (Holt 24). According to the young Senegalese women in SIT student Natalie Holt's focus group, the men who support the idea of

their wives having a profession tend to be more educated while less educated men are threatened by the idea because they do not want to lose their authority over their wives (Holt 23).

Modernization has created more opportunities for women to gain an education and have a career outside of the home, but it has also created a disjunction between women's daily contemporary lives and the traditional expectations levied upon them by Islam (Sherif 10). By pursuing work outside of the home, women are pushing traditional gender boundaries and improving the quality of life of their family and of themselves. Education of women is the key to improving their mental health, broadening their horizons, allowing them to better contribute to their nation and to the education of their children, and giving them the tools needed to better protect Muslim values (Dangor 123). According to SIT student Sara Wild's Senegalese informants, women must educate themselves so that they can be more self-sufficient and ensure that their husbands do not take advantage of them (Wild 13). Muslim women must continue to try to find a balance between being true to their religious traditions and advancing their place in society and in the family.

METHODOLOGY

My goal for this project was to give voice to the opinions of Muslim mothers about their role in the family. As such, my main methodologies were interviews, observation, limited participant observation and secondary research. Interviews were my primary method of learning about Muslim mothers' experiences because they offer the best insight into their thoughts and feelings and can carry more power because they give the women a chance to express themselves in their own words. Interviews also proved an effective methodology for allowing my non-mother informants to give detailed descriptions of the Muslim mother's role. I spent time in almost all of my informants' houses and so was able to observe their family dynamics and interactions with other family members. In my homestay, I employed both observation of the role of my mother and pseudo participant observation by performing the tasks of an older daughter. I grounded my experiential primary research by doing secondary research on the role of Muslim women through history, the role of Muslim women in the family, specifically in Senegal, and previous case studies of Muslim women which convey their thoughts and feelings.

So as to not overextend the scope of my study, I did a case study of Muslim mothers in my suburban Dakar neighborhood of Ouakam. My informants were women and men I befriended on the streets of Ouakam or through my host family. Although I would like to be able to make statements about the general experience of Muslim women in Dakar (and Senegal), my study portrays only the experiences of my limited informant pool. I offer a summary of the unique experiences and opinions of individual Muslim mothers told by the mothers themselves or by other members of their families. Any broader statements contained herein about Muslim Senegalese mothers come from statements that my informants made.

I had 10 informants – three Muslim mothers; one Muslim father; one young, unmarried Muslim man; an Imam (religious leader) of the neighborhood of Ouakam; and four young, unmarried Muslim women with whom I had an impromptu focus group. My informants do not represent a balanced sample because they do not represent all sections of Senegalese Muslim society. Their selection was serendipitous – they are the friends that I happened to make in my neighborhood who were kind enough to answer my questions. Also, six of my informants belong to the same family which created an interesting opportunity to compare different family members' perspectives on the same issue but also further limits the scope of my results.

One of the mothers has seven children, the second has two children and the third has one child and one more on the way. All of the women have been married for at least three years; two of the mothers are in their 30's and the other is in her 50's. All of the mothers have worked at some time since being married and having children. The young man and young women are all between ages 15 and 30. The father has been married for over 25 years.

Confidentiality was a concern with my study because some of my informants did not want to be associated with their responses. In the end, I decided to give all of my informants a pseudonym in order to ensure their complete anonymity. I worried that the language and cultural barrier could have created ethical issues because although I did my best to clearly explain how I would use their statements, it is difficult to know if they fully understood what they were getting themselves into. However, I went over the consent form thoroughly with each of them and made it clear that their responses would be kept strictly confidential and that they could rescind any of their statements at any time.

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

THE MOTHER'S DAILY TASKS

The mother is expected to do all of the work at the house. She cooks all of the meals, takes care of her husband and her children and does all of the cleaning and other housework. Each morning, she wakes up early, does the 5:00 am prayer (the first of the five daily prayers) and then begins to attend to the needs of her children and husband. She makes breakfast for the children and her husband and gets the children ready for school. Often she also helps her husband get himself ready for work. If she does not work outside of the home, she starts the daily cleaning of the entire house once the children have left for school.¹

During the day, the women who stay at home spend all of their time cleaning the house, cooking or doing laundry (which involves washing clothes by hand and then ironing them after they have dried on the clothesline). She is also responsible for doing most of the shopping for the family, so she makes almost daily trips to the market for food and other necessary supplies. The father earns the money for the family and then it is the responsibility of the wife to use the allotted amount of money that the father gives her to buy groceries and household supplies.

When the children get home from school, it is the mother who gives them their baths and perhaps feeds them a snack. Also, the mother is responsible for the scholarly and social education of the children. In addition to helping them with their homework, the mother must socialize the children to comport themselves well in public. With the young girls, for example, she must teach them how to become good wives in the future.

¹ All of the women with whom I spoke implied that they clean the entire house every day. I know that this is true in my host stay family and is perhaps partly a result of the large amounts of dust and dirt that get tracked into the house from the dirt streets. Also, though, in my experience, Senegalese people have very high standards for cleanliness.

Each evening, she makes dinner and attends to any needs of her husband. For example, she might draw his bath for him. She is the last one to go to sleep every night because after everyone else retires to their rooms, she straightens up the house and checks that everything is in good order. For example, she checks that the doors are locked and that the gas on the stove is turned off.

The mother's most important task is to take care of her family's every need. "You also manage the needs of the whole family – from the father to the children," explains Maya. "You manage their needs because you have to know what goes on, what is happening. If someone is late returning (to the house), you have to worry about the situation. You are always stressed in some sort or another."²

The main responsibility of the father is to earn money in order to support the family. "And me, my preoccupation is to go find money in order to educate the children and create security for them – build a house, pay for their education, etc.," says Ibou.³ According to Islam, the father is obligated to take care of his family financially – to nourish them, clothe them, etc. The mother must also take care of the family, but in a non-financial way. "It is the father who gives that which nourishes the child, the money necessary," says Maya.⁴ Therefore, when the father gets home from work, he does not have tasks to do at the house and can instead relax while his wife takes care of the children and makes dinner. Occasionally, he may have to do household repairs or other household tasks that are too physically strenuous for the woman, but, in general, his work is finished as soon as he gets off work.

² « Tu gères aussi les besoins de toute la famille, du papa au plus petits. Tu les gères parce que tu dois savoir ce qui se passe, qu'est-ce qu'il y a. Si quelqu'un vient en retard, il faut s'inquiéter de la situation. Tu es tout le temps stressée en quelque sorte. »

³ « Et moi, ma préoccupation, c'est aller chercher l'argent pour éduquer les enfants et pour les sécuriser – construire la maison, payer l'éducation des enfants, etc. »

⁴ « C'est le papa qui donne de quoi nourrir l'enfant, l'argent nécessaire. »

The presence of a maid can appreciably change the work that the mother must do at the house. Many families in Dakar have maids who either come during the day to help with the housework, the laundry and the cooking or else live with the family full-time. The traditional Senegalese role of women is being altered to some extent because of the prevalence of maids, but there are many aspects which remain the same. The maid relieves the mother of the burden of much of the housework and can also do the household tasks that the mother does not like or those that are especially strenuous (for example, laundry). Maids make it possible for women to have a profession and still be able to fulfill their obligation of keeping a neat house. Also, maids can play the crucial role of daycare provider for the children while the mother is at work.

However, even if a maid lives in the house, the mother is still expected to do much of the work around the house and to take care of the whole family. According to the young Senegalese women I talked to, some husbands do not like for the maid to do the cooking. The husbands will accept the fact that the maid does much of the housework and that she helps in the kitchen, but when it comes to meals, they want to eat something that their wives made. In my homestay family, our maid, Mame Diarra, stays at our house the whole day doing the cleaning, cooking the meat and sauce for dinner and taking care of my paternal grandmother who is currently living at our house.⁵

⁵ When my mom returns home from work, she finishes what still needs to be done for dinner like cooking the French fries or preparing the vegetable garnish. She cooks all of the meals on weekends, though, and my dad often comments on how much he likes my mom's cooking. My mother cleans the living room after dinner but leaves the dishes for Mame Diarra to do the next day. Almost every weekend, though, my mother does a full cleaning of the house even though Mame Diarra cleans every day.

THE CHILDREN

“The mother and the father have the same role – to take care of the family,” says Ibou.⁶ Both parents do all that they can in order to take good care of their family. “We work very hard to ensure that the child is happy,” says Mamy Fatou.⁷

The mother takes care of everything for the children at the house – their meals, their clothing, their baths --- while the father worries about earning the money necessary to pay for the children’s education and for their other needs. “It is the mother who manages everything. The father, he knows nothing practically speaking about the children,” says Fatima.⁸

Because they do all of the work for the children, Senegalese Muslim mothers are often exhausted. “The mother plays a very big role in the family but unfortunately many mothers don’t know it. Mothers are very tired, really, because they do all of the work. They do all of the work for the children, and that is normal, too... There is nothing wrong with that because it is very good to take care of your children. It gives me a lot of pleasure,” says Awa.⁹

Mothers accept their work and their fatigue because they know that it is by fulfilling their role of caretaker of the family that they will be able to go to Paradise after death and will be blessed with good children. “We can accept all of that because we want to have our entry into Paradise.... We accept all of that in order to ensure our Paradise and the good life for our

⁶ « La mère et le père ont le même rôle – se d’occuper de la famille. »

⁷ « On se casse la tête pour que l’enfant soit heureux. »

⁸ « C’est la maman qui gère tout. Le père, il ne sait rien pratiquement de ses enfants. »

⁹ « La mère joue un très grand rôle dans la famille mais malheureusement, beaucoup ne le savent pas. Les mères sont très fatiguées, vraiment, parce que tout le travail c’est les mamans qui le font. Elles font tout le travail pour les enfants et c’est normal aussi.... Il n’y a pas de mal avec cela parce que c’est très bien de s’occuper de ses enfants. Ça me fait beaucoup de plaisir. »

children. We tend to say that mothers who derail, who do not behave correctly, they have children who are not correct,” says Fifi*.¹⁰

In order to create a good example for their children, mothers must accept their work in the family without complaining. They are not forced to fulfill this role; rather they are motivated to want to fulfill it because it is the role that Islam has imbued with respect. In order to ensure that she will have a good family, a mother accepts and fulfills her role in the family.

According to Islam, the wife must first and foremost take care of her husband and after that look after the house and the children. Sometimes, though, the mother ends up paying more attention to the needs of her children than to the needs of her husband, and this can make the husband jealous. “When you have children, you begin to worry more about your children, you take care of your children and you leave your husband a little bit. And when the husband is also a baby, he comports himself like a baby – he is jealous. Most of all the Muslim and African men, they have a tendency to be jealous of their children,” argues Fatima.¹¹ If this gets to such a point that the husband feels like his wife does not take good enough care of him, he can look for a second wife to attend to his needs.

The fact that the mother does everything for the children at the house does not mean that the father spends no time with his children. Even though the father does not attend to the physical needs of the children at the house, he often plays or talks with his children while he is relaxing at home after work. Also, it is the responsibility of the father to take the children out on excursions. “It also happens sometimes that the men also take care of the children. In different

¹⁰ « Tous cela on peut accepter lorsqu'on veut avoir notre entré au paradis... On accepte tout cela pour assurer notre paradis et la bonne vie de nos enfants. On a tendance à dire que les mères qui déraillent, qui ne font pas correctement, elles ont des enfants vraiment pas correcte. »

¹¹ « Quand tu as des enfants, tu commences à plus t'inquiéter des enfants, t'occuper de tes enfants et tu laisses un petit peu ton mari. Et quand le mari aussi c'est un bébé, il se comporte comme un bébé. Il est jaloux. Surtout les hommes musulmans et Africains, ils ont une tendance à être jaloux par rapport aux enfants. »

ways, yes. Like when the children want to leave the house, for example, go to (the grocery store) or take a walk, it is the responsibility of the dad to take them out, to go with them,” says Awa.¹² And if the mother is busy and the children need something, the father is obligated to do whatever they need, including changing dirty diapers.

THE MOTHER’S PROFESSION AND ITS EFFECTS

If the woman has a job, she can use the money that she earns to buy things that the children need without having to ask her husband for money. “Sometimes, I don’t wait for him to come. Because I have a job at the house, I am a tailor. Sometimes, I have the money; I see that my child needs that, so I buy it. Financially, I don’t wait to do something for my child. It makes me happy to give my child pleasure. Because I searched for work for my kids, in order to share with my family and my husband,” says Mamy Fatou.¹³

Awa also likes the fact that she can buy things for her children without having to wait for husband. “Because you can’t spend the whole day waiting while the father isn’t there, and as for me, I have money now. I prefer to buy that. Sometimes when my husband knows that I did that, he’ll say, ‘no, no, no I am going to reimburse you.’ Here, in general, it is the men who take care of the children’s (financial) needs,” says Awa.¹⁴ If a woman works, she is able to better attend to the needs of her children and can gain increased financial independence. “I got an education and

¹² « Il arrive aussi que parfois les hommes aussi ils s’occupent des enfants. Des façons différents, oui. Comme quand les enfants veulent sortir, par exemple, aller au Casino ou se promener, c’est au papa de les sortir, de partir avec eux. »

¹³ « Des fois, je n’attends pas qu’il vient. Parce que moi aussi, j’ai un boulot à la maison, je suis couturière. Des fois, j’ai de l’argent, je vois que mon enfant a besoin de ça, je l’achète. Financièrement, je ne l’attends pas pour faire quelque chose pour mon enfant. Ce me plaît de faire plaisir à mon enfant. Parce que j’ai cherché le travail pour les enfants, pour partager ça avec ma famille, avec mon mari. »

¹⁴ « Parce que tu ne peux pas rester toute la journée en attendant alors que le papa n’est pas là alors que moi, j’ai de l’argent maintenant. Je préfère acheter ça. Parfois même quand papa sait que j’ai fait ça il dit, « non, non, non je vais te rembourser. » Ici d’habitude c’est les hommes qui font tout pour leurs enfants. »

you can't do all of that and then wait for your husband to give you something," explains Awa.¹⁵

Women who have finished a higher level of education tend to want increased independence from their husbands. They want to be able to take care of their own needs instead of relying on their husbands for everything. "I prefer to work, too, in order to attend to my needs, the needs of my children, of my family, of my parents, of my brothers and sisters. One must work," says Awa.¹⁶

Inevitably, though, there is an opportunity cost for working outside of the home, and women with professions end up making sacrifices in their families. For example, if the mother leaves for work early in the morning when the children are still sleeping and does not return home until the evening, only a few hours before they go to bed, she does not get to spend much time with her children. Because she does not spend much time at the house with the children, she ends up missing a large part of her children's lives. Maya worked when her older children were young but she stopped working in the 1980's and has been a stay-at-home mom ever since. "Now, I don't have any desire to have a job because I saw that I prefer to stay at the house. Because when I worked, there were many things that passed behind me that I didn't see. For example, my children, when they began to walk, I got up one fine morning and I saw them walking (like adults). That astonished me. Now everything passes in front of me," explains Maya.¹⁷

It would be impossible for a mother to spend the whole day at work and also take care of her children during the day unless she could bring her children with her to work. Generally, if the mother works outside of the home, she needs someone to provide daycare for her children, like a

¹⁵ « J'ai fait mes études alors tu ne peux pas faire tout ça et puis attendre pour ton mari de te donner quelque chose. »

¹⁶ « Je préfère moi aussi travailler pour soutenir à mes besoins, aux besoins de mes enfants, de ma famille, de mes parents, de mes frères et sœurs. Il faut travailler. »

¹⁷ « Maintenant, je n'ai plus envie de travailler parce que j'ai vu que je préfère rester à la maison quand même. Parce que quand je travaillais, il y avait beaucoup de choses qui se passaient derrière moi que je ne voyais pas. Par exemple, mes enfants, quand ils ont commencé à marcher, je me lève un bon jour et je les vois marchant comme (des grandes personnes). Ça m'étonnait. Maintenant tout se passe devant moi. »

maid or a family member. For example, when Awa goes to work each day, she leaves her two-year-old daughter, Amina, at her parents' house where Awa's sisters or cousin take care of her.

After her daughter, Aisha, was born, Mamy Fatou found a job downtown that allowed her to bring the baby with her every day. Each day, Mamy Fatou would tie her baby to her back and go to work. When Aisha got a little bigger, though, Mamy Fatou decided that she had to find a job that was more stable so that she could take better care of Aisha. It was this thinking that pushed Mamy Fatou to begin doing her tailor business out of her home. "After that I realized that the baby had begun to get bigger and I couldn't keep taking her into the craziness of the world. I prefer to stay at the house with her so that she is more stable," says Mamy Fatou.¹⁸ Because a woman's main work is to take care of her family and children, she must sometimes make sacrifices with her profession in order to better attend to the needs of her children.

Even if the mother works outside the home, her husband's expectations for what she should do at the house do not change for the most part. "Even though sometimes in our society of today, modern Senegalese society, it happens that the wife has to work a job like the husband. They leave the house together, they return each evening together. Even though she has worked all day, they return to the house and the man relaxes while the woman takes care of him, takes care of the children, makes the meal, draws the baths, and then puts the children to bed. Then the next day, she gets the children up so that they can go to school and then she goes to work," says Maimouna.¹⁹ The father is not expected to work at the house even though the mother spent as

¹⁸ « Après que j'ai réalisé que le bébé a commencé à grandir alors je ne pouvais plus l'amener dans le foule du monde. Je préfère rester à la maison avec elle pour qu'elle soit un peu stable.

¹⁹ « Bien que des fois dans notre société d'aujourd'hui, la société moderne Sénégalaise, il arrive que la femme doit aller travailler comme le mari. Ils quittent la maison ensemble, ils reviennent le soir ensemble. Comme qu'elle a tellement dépensé toute la journée, ils retournent à la maison et l'homme il relaxe en temps que la femme s'occupe de lui, s'occupe de ses enfants, prépare à manger, prépare un bon bain, ensuite amener les enfants aux lits. Ensuite le lendemain, lever ses enfants pour qu'ils aillent à l'école, et aller travailler. »

many hours at work as he did. “She works 20 hours per day. You, (as the husband), you relax, you work six or eight hours maximum and then you relax,” says Fatima.²⁰

At the same time, there are different expectations and obligations for the husband and the wife when it comes to the family’s finances. The woman is not required to share the money that she earns with her husband or her children. According to the Islamic religious-legal marital model, it is the father who must financially support the family (Sherif 3). If the mother works, she has the right and the societal permission to keep her money for herself. Therefore, the fact that a woman has a job outside of the home does not necessarily mean that she helps to support the family. Unlike the father who passes the day at work in order to earn money for the family, the woman could spend the day making money that she will spend on herself and maybe her other family members but not on the house or the utilities. Perhaps it is for this reason that even if the woman works outside the home, she is expected to attend to the needs of the family at the house. Her contribution to the family is to take care of her husband, children and the house while her husband’s contribution is the family’s budget.

Although the men are not required to change their expectations of their wives even if they work outside of the home, they often do. When his wife worked, she and Ibou shared all of the responsibilities of the family. Before her mother-in-law moved in with them and restricted their movements, Awa’s husband used to take her out to dinner when she returned home from work utterly exhausted. Many men like the idea of their wives working outside the home and bringing in a supplemental income for the family. Talking about his future wife in the hypothetical, Souleyemane says, “(if she worked), she could maybe help me with the family, have her money,

²⁰ « Elle carbure 20 heures par jour. Toi, (le mari), tu te reposes, tu fais tes six heures, huit heures maximum et puis tu te reposes. »

participate, maybe think of the family. That would be good for her to work. I would like for her to work.”²¹

THE DECISIONS AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE

In order to have a good dynamic between the wife and the husband, it is important to have mutual respect and to spend quality time together. “(A good relationship) is based on respect of his wife. (The husband) has a lot of respect for his wife. He puts his wife on a pedestal and she, too, she feels loved and respected. And in general, these are the couples that function,” explains Fatima.²² According to Mamy Fatou, it is very important to eat dinner with your husband each night in order to augment the love between you. Maya also noted the necessity of spending time and talking with your husband when you bring him the tea each afternoon.

When it comes to decisions for the family, generally the husband and wife discuss the decision when they are alone in their bedroom at night. The husband asks for the wife’s opinion on the matter at hand, and they discuss the issue to try to reach an agreement. “In general, we have a consultation, we decide together. For the most part, she imposes.... But it is very rare that I do (something) without going to consult her,” says Ibou.²³

Souleyemane also believes that a decision should come from the two members of a couple. “In my opinion, it suffices to discuss between husband and wife. One sole person should

²¹ « (Si elle travaillait,) elle pourrait peut-être m’aider dans la famille, avoir son argent, participer, peut-être pense de la famille. Ça serait bien qu’elle travaille. J’aimerais bien qu’elle travaille. »

²² « (Un bon rapport) est à base du respect avec sa femme. Il a un respect grand comme ça envers sa femme. Il met sa femme sur un piédestal et elle aussi, elle se sentira aimée et respectée. Et en général ils sont les couples qui fonctionnent. »

²³ « En général, on prend une consultation, on décide ensemble. Pour la plupart, elle s’impose.... Mais c’est très rare que je fasse (quelque chose) sans aller la consulter. »

not make the decision without talking with the other. In my opinion, it's the two who must talk together. The decision needs to come from the two people, the husband and the wife."²⁴

The mother is well-placed to give sage advice because she knows everything that happens at the house. "Many of our decisions, sometimes, I'm the one who makes them. Because I am at the house, I'm the one who knows what happens at the house – what my child needs, what I need, what the house needs so that we can be stable and well-organized. My husband makes fewer of the decisions," explains Mamy Fatou.²⁵ It is not true in every family that the woman makes more of the decisions, but it is generally true that her central role in the family affords her knowledge of the needs of all of the family members that enables her to offer informed suggestions to her husband.

At the end, though, it is almost always the man who makes the decisions because in Muslim families, the authority rests with the man. If he agrees, he will follow the advice of his wife, but he has the right to do as he likes and to go against his wife's advice if he wants to. "Even when the father asks the wife's advice it is not imperative that he execute what she said. He asks her, that's all. He asks and if it pleases him, he does it; if it does not please him, he doesn't do it. It is up to him to do it. He is the one who was given the authorization. He does what he wants When he asks for advice, the mother gives it to him and if he does something else, the mother has to execute what the man said. She does it even if it isn't her opinion,"

²⁴ « Selon moi, il suffit seulement de discuter entre mari et femme. Une seule personne ne doit pas prendre la décision sans parler avec l'autre. Selon moi, c'est les deux qui doit parler, quoi. La décision doit venir des deux personnes, le mari et la femme. »

²⁵ « Plusieurs de nos décisions, des fois, c'est moi qui les prends. Parce que je suis à la maison, c'est moi qui sais ce qui se passe ici à la maison – ce dont (ma fille) a besoin, ce dont moi j'ai besoin, ce dont la maison a besoin pour qu'on soit stable et pour qu'on s'organise bien. Il prend moins de décisions. »

explains Fifi.²⁶ Explains Maya, “The woman has her word to say but it isn’t always what counts.”²⁷

“The Muslim man is macho. He is like that. He makes the decisions in public. He says that it’s up to him to do it, it’s my money, but he can’t make good decisions without consulting his wife. It is imperative,” says Fatima.²⁸ Because of her importance in the family, the woman is a crucial advisor for her husband. “Even if one sees the husband as the one who gives the decisions, he only does so publically, but he consults the woman first. He talks with the mother, they make the decision together. The mother says this is good, this is not good, we need to avoid that. She is the brain. The man goes out and gives his opinion and everything,” says Fatima.²⁹

According to Islam, the father is the authority of the family and as the authority he must financially support his wife and children. Interestingly, though, my informants more frequently cited his role as breadwinner of the family as the reason for his authority than they did his position in the eyes of Islam. Says Mamy Fatou, “yes, he is the authority of the family because he is my husband who pays for my room, he is the one who feeds me, practically speaking, all of the materials here in my room he’s the one who bought them. He made an effort... He is my husband, he is the authority at the house, I obey him, I listen to him and accept his decisions but overall, we discuss things in order to be in agreement on all of the decisions.”³⁰

²⁶ « Même lorsque le père demande conseille à la femme ce n’est pas impérativement que le père doit exécuter ce que la maman a dit. Il vient demander seulement. Il demande et si ça lui plait, il le fait ; si ça ne lui plait pas, il ne le fait pas. C’est à lui de le faire. C’est à lui qu’on a donné l’autorisation. Il fait ce qu’il veut faire ... Lorsque qu’il demande conseille, la maman lui donne et qu’il fait d’autres choses, la maman doit exécuter ce que l’homme a dit. Elle le fait même si ce n’est pas son avis. »

²⁷ « La femme a son mot à dire mais ce n’est pas tout le temps ce qu’il compte, quoi. »

²⁸ « L’homme musulman il est macho. Il est comme ça. Il prend les décisions en publique. Il dit c’est à lui de le faire, c’est mon argent, mais au pare avant, il ne peut pas prendre des bonne décisions sans avoir consulté sa femme. C’est impératif. »

²⁹ « Même si on voit le mari comme celui qui donne les décisions, il ne le fait que publiquement, mais il consulte la femme d’abord. Il parle à la maman, ils prennent la décision ensemble. La mère dit que ça c’est bonne, ça ce n’est pas bonne, il faut éviter ça. C’est le cerveau. L’homme il sort, il donne son avis et tout. »

³⁰ « Oui, il est l’autorité de la famille parce qu’il est mon mari qui paie ma chambre, c’est lui qui me donne à manger, pratiquement, tous les matérielles qui sont ici c’est lui qui a acheté. Il a fait un effort... Il est mon mari, il est l’autorité de la

According to Islam and Senegalese society, the wife must be submissive to her husband. “In our culture, we say that the wife is completely submissive to her husband. It is said in the religion and now the culture... The Muslim woman cannot be raised to the same degree, to the same title as the Muslim man. Because for us, according to our religion, in fact we say the man and after him the woman. You cannot say the woman before the man. The wife can have a degree, she can be educated, she can be learned, she can have a good salary, but she always rests behind the husband. That is the Muslim woman,” explains Fatima.³¹ And the Muslim mother’s reward for being submissive to her husband is the chance to have good children and a good family.

But the submission to her husband does not undercut her central position in the family. She can be at once a submissive charge of her husband and the central caretaker for her husband and her children. “The wife, she is submissive, she depends on her husband, she must do everything in order to give her husband pleasure, the volitions of her husband are obligations for her but nevertheless she is like a mother for her husband because without the woman, the man is nothing, most of all at the house. The man says, ‘I am the man, I am the chief of the family’ and all that but he knows that he will always have the woman behind him. If the woman isn’t there, it is like a void. He is completely disoriented. The man is like a big child. It is up to the woman to encircle him,” says Maimouna.³²

maison, je lui obéis, je l’écoute et j’accepte ses décisions mais partout, on se discute pour être d’accord pour toutes les décisions. »

³¹ « Dans notre culture, on dit que si la femme est complètement soumise à son mari. C’est dit dans la religion, maintenant la culture..... La femme musulmane ne peut pas se lever au même degré, au même titre que l’homme musulman. Parce que nous, selon notre religion, en fait on dit l’homme et après la femme. On ne dit pas la femme avant l’homme. La femme peut avoir un degré, elle peut être éduquée, elle peut être instruite, elle peut avoir un bon salaire, mais elle reste toujours derrière le mari. Ça c’est la femme musulmane. »

³² « La femme, elle est soumise, elle dépend de son mari, elle doit faire tous pour faire plaisir à son mari, les volontés de son mari sont comme des devoirs pour elle mais n’empêche qu’elle est comme une mère pour son mari parce que sans la femme, l’homme n’est rien, surtout dans la maison. L’homme dit, « je suis l’homme, je suis le chef de famille » et tout mais il sait qu’il aura

The woman must present an air of submission in public according to Senegalese society and Islam. “The submission, what one sees, it is what everyone sees, what the children must see, what the public must see, everyone must see that the mother is submissive. And the mother must set a good example for her children. She listens to the father, her children listen to the father and everyone listens to the father. On the contrary, when we say that she is the brain and the father consults her first, she gives sage decisions and then the father gives them in public,” explains Fifi*.³³

“Publically you (stay submissive) like that. But sometimes, in the bedroom, you have problems that other people don’t know about,” adds Maimouna.³⁴ However, even in the privacy of the bedroom, when the woman gives her husband advice, she should do so in a submissive, respectful manner.

According to Maimouna, the wife can be sincerely submissive to her husband at the same time that she is the center of the family. Her influence is less overt but arguably more pervasive. In some ways, the woman is like a child for her husband (he pays for all of her needs), but in other ways the husband is like a child for the wife (she manages all of his needs). “But the mother must be submissive even if we see that this submission must be superficial so that other people can see that she is submissive. No, she must be sincere, too. She must be sincere in her submission. Nevertheless that she is submissive, she is there for everyone. She puts herself behind her husband but when the man is hungry, he comes to the woman, when he is dirty, he

toujours la femme derrière lui. S’il n’y a pas la femme c’est comme un vide. Il est complètement désorienté. L’homme est comme un grand enfant. C’est à la femme de le cerner. »

³³ « La soumission, ce qu’on voit, c’est ce que tout le monde voit, ce que les enfants doivent voir, ce que le publique doit voir, tout le monde il doit voir que la mère est soumise. Et la mère doit donner l’exemple donc aux enfants. Elle écoute (le père), les enfants ils lui écoutent et tout le monde lui écoute. Par contre, lorsqu’on dit que c’est elle le cerveau et le père la consulte d’abord, elle donne des sages décisions et puis le père les donne au publique. »

³⁴ « Publiquement, tu (reste soumise) comme ça. Mais des fois, dans la chambre, tu as des problèmes sans que les gens sachent. »

comes to the woman, when he is tired, he comes to the woman, when he is stressed, he comes to the woman, despite the fact that she is submissive,” says Maimouna.³⁵

When husband and wife disagree about an issue, in general the man has the final decision power because he is the authority figure in the family and he pays for (almost) everything for the family. But there are always exceptions. In Mamy Fatou’s marriage, sometimes when she and her husband do not agree on an issue that she finds urgent, she makes the decision without her husband’s approval. For example, she went against her husband’s will and bought a new fan during the hot season because she was worried that their new baby could die from the heat. “So I made my decision. I want and bought a new fan. And now we had to discuss that because the decision was not well made because he did not agree,” says Mamy Fatou.³⁶

At Ibou’s house, Ibou usually ends up regretting the decisions he makes without his wife’s approval. “Afterwards I say, you were right and I was wrong. That happens often,” says Ibou. “And for me, too, it sometimes happens that she is not in agreement at first but in the end, she agrees with me.”³⁷ Maya explains, “(My husband) tells me, ‘you need to tell me to listen to you.’”³⁸

According to Souleyemane, if his future wife does not agree with something that he wants to do, he will try to convince her, and if he does not succeed, he will not do it. Similarly, if his wife wants to do something that he does not agree with, he will try to convince her not to do

³⁵ « Mais la maman doit être soumise même si on ne le voit pas. Cette soumission ne doit pas être juste superficielle pour que les gens puissent voir qu’elle est soumise. Non, elle doit être sincère aussi. Elle doit être sincère dans sa soumission. N’empêche qu’elle est soumise, elle est là, elle est là pour tout le monde. Elle se met derrière son mari mais quand l’homme a faim, il vient vers la femme, quand l’homme est sale, il vient vers la femme, quand il est fatigué, il vient vers la femme, quand il est stressé, il vient vers la femme n’empêche qu’elle est soumise. »

³⁶ « Alors j’ai pris ma décision. Je suis allée acheter le ventilateur. Et maintenant on discutait de ça parce que la décision était mal prise puis que lui il n’avait pas accepté. »

³⁷ « Après je lui dis : tu as eu raison sur moi. Ça arrive souvent, » dit Ibou. « Et moi aussi, ça arrive que des fois elle ne soit pas d’accord mais au finish, elle est d’accord. »

³⁸ « Il me dit, « il faut me dire de t’écouter. »

it. “If she insists and insists, well, if I’m the one who has to get out the money, I won’t get it out. Because if it is not good for her, I am not going to do it. But if it is something that I can understand, I will try to do it for her,” says Souleyemane.³⁹ The position of the man as the one who makes the money allows him to have more power over decisions that have a monetary cost.

If the wife does not work, she has less influence on the decisions for the family. “When you stay at home, you don’t do anything, you depend on your husband, you are at his mercy. Because I worked before and during those years it was not like it is now. During that time, I had a word to say. But now that I do nothing, the opposite happens. Now my husband pays for everything. Me, I’m at the house in order to manage, so it’s a little difficult in fact for the women who stay at the house,” says Maya.⁴⁰

THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER

“For me, the role of the Muslim woman in the Senegalese family is too important because according to us, the woman is a pillar, the base that supports the family. She is important because she is the one who educates the children, she is the one who instills Muslim values in the children. She is the one who supports her husband. She is the one who is there for her children and her husband. She is the one who nourishes them. She is the one who clothes them. She is the

³⁹ « Si elle insiste et insiste, bon, si c’est moi qui dois sortir l’argent, je ne vais pas le sortir. Parce que si ce n’est pas bon pour elle, je ne vais pas le faire. Mais si c’est quelque chose que je peux comprendre, je vais essayer de le faire pour elle. »

⁴⁰ « Quand tu es femme au foyer, tu ne fais rien, tu dépends de lui, tu es à sa merci. Parce que moi je travaillais avant et pendant des années, ce n’était pas comme maintenant. Pendant ce temps j’avais même un mot à dire. Mais maintenant que je ne fais rien c’est le contraire qui se passe. Maintenant c’est papa qui paie tout. Moi je suis à la maison pour gérer donc c’est un peu difficile quand même pour les femmes qui sont à la maison. »

one who supports them physically, morally and even intellectually if she had the chance to go to school,” says Maimouna.⁴¹

“When the mother is not there, one concedes that the family falls apart. But when the mother is still there and the father, even if he leaves, one concedes that the family is still joined. The mother is there to support, to comfort, she is everywhere. She is the center of gravity for the family. She is there – she makes the food, she gives advice, she heals, she comforts, she does everything. She is the pillar, as Maimouna said. She is the center of the family. When the mother is not there, there is no family,” says Fifi.⁴²

According to Mamy Fatou, the role of the mother is to first and foremost “be open, to listen to everyone.”⁴³ She listens to the needs and the desires of all of the members of her family, and she does her best to satisfy them. “The mother manages the needs of the whole family,” explains Maya.⁴⁴

For Awa and Souleyemane, their ideas about the role of the mother and the ideal mother come from their experiences with their mothers. “She takes very good care of us My ideas come from her. A mother should be like her. Yes, I would like to have a wife like my

⁴¹ « Pour moi le rôle de la femme musulmane dans la famille Sénégalaise est trop important parce que selon nous la femme c’est un pilier, c’est le socle qui soutient la famille. Elle est importante parce que c’est à elle d’éduquer les enfants, c’est à elle d’inculquer aux enfants les valeurs musulmanes. C’est à elle de soutenir son mari. C’est à elle d’être là pour ses enfants et pour son mari. C’est à elle de les nourrir. C’est à elle de les habiller. C’est à elle de les soutenir physiquement, moralement, et même intellectuellement si elle a la chance d’avoir été à l’école. »

⁴² « Lorsque la maman n’est plus là, on concède que la famille se disloque. Mais lorsque la mère est toujours là et que le père, même s’il part, on concède que la famille est toujours soudée, la maman est là pour soutenir, pour reconforter, elle est là partout. Elle est le centre de gravité dans la famille. Elle est là – elle prépare le manger, elle conseille, elle soigne, elle reconforte, elle fait tout. Elle est le pilier, comme dit Maimouna. Elle est le centre de la famille. Lorsque la mère n’est pas là, il n’y a pas de famille. »

⁴³ « D’être ouverte, d’être à l’écoute de tout le monde. »

⁴⁴ « La mère gère les besoins de toute la famille. »

mother because she educated us well and everything.... I would like for my wife to be like her,” says Souleyemane.⁴⁵

The consequences of a bad woman demonstrate the woman’s importance in the family and in society at large. Maimouna explains, “It is the woman who gives (the man) good decisions, if she is a ‘good’ woman. Because we’re going to return to the role of the woman. If she is not a ‘good’ woman, if she is a ‘bad’ woman, ohhhhhh (collective intake of breath by all of the young women). It is like a pest epidemic.... A ‘bad’ woman, the consequences that she can bring to the family are truly catastrophic....”⁴⁶

A ‘bad’ woman, or one who does not comport herself in accordance with Muslim and societal values (like, for instance, the values of faithfulness, obedience to God and her husband, love towards her family, modesty, etc.) can have serious consequences for her family and for others on a larger scale. “Total dislocation of the family,” adds Fifi. “And not just her own family – the family of her husband, the society, her environment.”⁴⁷

Due to the power of the mother and her influence on all of the members of the family (especially the children), it is very important that she comports herself well and in accordance with Muslim ideas so that she sets a good example for everyone who is influenced by her. “I think that her role is even more important than what I do because without her, the children would not be educated,” says Ibou.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ « Elle s’occupe très bien de nous.... C’est d’elles que viennent mes idées. Une mère doit être comme elle, quoi. Oui, j’aimerais bien avoir une femme comme ma mère parce qu’elle nous a bien éduqués et tout.... J’aimerais bien que ma femme soit comme elle. »

⁴⁶ « C’est la femme qui lui donne de bonnes décisions, si c’est une bonne femme. Parce qu’on va revenir sur le rôle de la femme. Si ce n’est pas une bonne femme, si c’est une mauvaise femme, ohhhhh. C’est comme la peste dans la population.... Une mauvaise femme, les conséquences qu’elle peut apporter à la famille sont tellement catastrophiques.... »

⁴⁷ « Dislocation totale de la famille. Et pas seulement sa propre famille – la famille du mari, la société, son environnement. »

⁴⁸ « Je pense que ce rôle est même plus important que ce que je fais parce que sans elle, les enfants ne sont pas éduqués. »

And in order to ensure that she takes good care of her family and upholds her responsibility to educate her children, the mother must stay at the house almost all of the time. An Imam of Ouakam, Amadou, explains, “It is an obligation in Islam for the man to take good care of his wife, to feed her, clothe her, give her gifts and anything else that she needs, even if she gets sick. For this reason the wife does not need to work, she needs to do nothing more than stay at the house and take care of it. Because she does not need anything outside of the house, she must educate the children and take care of the house and her husband.”⁴⁹

⁴⁹ « C’est une obligation dans l’Islam pour l’homme de bien s’occuper de sa femme, la nourrir, l’habiller, lui faire des cadeaux et tout ce dont elle a besoin, même si elle tombe malade. Raison pour laquelle la femme n’a pas besoin de travailler, elle ne doit que rester à la maison et s’en occuper. Puisqu’elle n’aura besoin de rien dehors, elle doit éduquer ses enfants, s’occuper de la maison et de son mari. »

CONCLUSIONS

The Muslim Senegalese woman occupies a central role in the family. She attends to the needs of every family member and acts as the center of gravity that holds the family together. Simultaneously, though, she is the submissive member of the couple and must respect the authority bestowed upon the man by Islam and Senegalese society. Generally, the wife has a strong influence on her husband's decisions and, as even my married male informant told me, couples make decisions together. The fact that the man brings in the money for the family gives him the final authority on decisions because he can always take action without consulting his wife or can refuse to finance something that she wants to do if he does not think that it is a good idea. The husband generally follows the advice of his wife because she is well-placed to know what the family needs, but he must pretend publically that she has no power over him so as to maintain his image as the autonomous head of the household. And, as my informants told me, although the man is not obligated to take the wife's advice, he generally regrets the decisions he takes without her approval.

If the woman works outside of the home, she gains not only a degree of financial independence but also increased ability to tend to the needs of her children. However, because she is not obligated to contribute her money to the family's bank account, the fact that she puts in the same number of hours at work as her husband does not guarantee that she will have more power in the family or that she will be expected to do less work around the house. Since Islam requires the man and not the woman to financially support the family, the woman can guard her money for herself. So, unlike the man who works for his family, there are cases where the woman works in order to finance her desires/needs and then must fulfill her responsibility to the family by doing all of the work at the house after getting off work.

The women I talked to seem to enjoy their role as the center of the family. They are respected and honored as the educators of the next generation of good Muslims and as the glue that holds together the family, an entity of central importance in Senegalese society. The question that I am left with, though, is: are Muslim Senegalese women satisfied with their overall role in the family? My informants told me that they like many parts of their role – they like cooking and taking care of their children and their husband. Although they are expected to be submissive to their husbands, they have an appreciable amount of influence in the family because they are the family's center, its brain. At the same time though, they appreciate the increased financial independence that can be found by having a profession outside of the home, and they do not like the idea of having to wait for their husbands to fulfill their needs and the needs of their children.

If Muslim Senegalese women were to gain more authority in the family, could this threaten their central position and all of the aspects that they like about it? Is it enough for them to have a profession which allows them to buy things for their children and families? Is it enough for them to discuss decisions with their husbands, give the men wise advice and then simply hope that they follow it? Could they possibly be the co-breadwinner, the co-authority, and the center of the family all at the same time? Would they even want this parity with their husbands? Where would this leave the men? What important functions does the woman's submission serve in Senegalese society and how ingrained are societal and religious understandings of gender in Senegal? I will be very interested to see how gender roles in Senegal change in upcoming years.

APPENDIX

Interview questions IN ENGLISH (all questions were translated into French by the author)

1. What tasks do you do around the house on a daily basis? (Please describe an average day around the house)
2. Which household or family tasks can only be done by women? Which can only be done by men?
3. In your family, what is the process how are decisions concerning the finances, the children and the house made? (Who makes the decisions, but, more so, what is the process?) What avenues do you have for giving your opinion and influencing decisions?
4. Which aspects of your role in the family do you value/like? Is there anything that frustrates you about your role in the family? What avenues do you have to address this frustration?
5. Do you have a job (do you work outside of the home?)? Did you have a job before you got married? How or why did you decide to have a job outside of the home? How does your husband feel about you having a job? What impact does your job have on your role and tasks within the family?
6. According to you, what should be the role of the mother in the family? What are the sources of your ideas about the role of women in the family (parents' relationship, society, the Qur'an, media – Western ideas, Senegalese law, etc.)?

INTERVIEWS

All informants' names were changed in order to protect confidentiality.

All interviews were conducted by the author except the interview with Amadou in which informant Maimouna translated between my French and his Wolof.

Amadou. Ouakam Imam. 2012. November 27, Dakar. Transcription by translator, Maimouna.

Ouakam Mosque, Dakar.

Awa. Mother. 2012. November 25, Dakar. Digital recording. Interviewee's House, Dakar.

Ibou. Father. 2012. November 27, Dakar. Digital recording. Interviewee's House, Dakar.

Mamy Fatou. Mother. November 21, Dakar. Digital recording. Interviewee's House, Dakar.

Maimouna, Fatima, Fifi, Nancy. Young Unmarried Women Focus Group. 2012. November 23,

Dakar. Digital recording. Interviewees' House, Dakar.

Maya. Mother. 2012. November 26, Dakar. Digital recording. Interviewee's House, Dakar.

Souleyemane. Young Unmarried Man. 2012. November 27, Dakar. Digital recording.

Interviewee's House, Dakar.

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