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MOTIVES AND METHODS OF SOCIAL MOBILIZATION IN RURAL SENEGAL

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PIM 74

A capstone paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master of Arts in

Intercultural Service, Leadership, and Management at SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro,

Vermont, USA.

August 18th 2016

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Acknowledgements

When women support other women, amazing things happen.

Keep smashing the patriarchy!

Table of Contents

Abstract

Senegal, a predominantly Muslim West African country, has demonstrated political stability, sustained a constitutional democracy, and maintained a pluralistic society since independence in 1960. Amidst this, there are several small groups of social organizers who are engaging in effective social change. Tostan, a regional INGO focusing on community empowerment through nonformal education, has been working in Senegal for more than 25 years and has reached more than three million people in West Africa. After completing Tostan's *Community Empowerment Program* (CEP), the social organizers have decided to travel from village to village educating and sensitizing others on what they have learned. Outside of West Africa, the rich experience of social mobilization and community organization in Senegal is hardly known among academics and social movement theorists.

This research explores how and why Tostan's Social Mobilization Agents (SMA) do their work in rural Senegal. Using a grounded theory approach rooted in feminist epistemology, I participated in field observations and conducted several in-depth interviews with six SMAs, two men and four women. By creating individual portraits of their lives, we see them as whole persons made up of unique experiences. After having a close up look at their lives, we take a step back to look at the larger picture and see several reoccurring themes. From this research, academics, practitioners, and a larger global audience will better understand the motives and methods of social mobilizers in rural Senegal today. With these findings, one can continue the quest for more knowledge and/or attempt to replicate the methods of social mobilization elsewhere.

Introduction

Problem Statement

The continent of Africa has suffered a host of dictators and overall rampant corruption since independence yet remarkably, Senegal is the only West African country that has never experienced a coup. While the world is dealing with circumstances fueled by extremist religious and militant organizations, the Senegalese have managed to maintain a constitutional democracy and pluralistic society that demonstrates political stability and an absence of extremist groups, *mashallah*[1]. This blend of circumstances is rare, especially in Africa, and has been labeled by scholars for years as *Senegalese exceptionalism* (Diouf, 2013). Moreover, a gender parity law that was adopted in 2010 has paved the way for women in the formal governance sector, as it requires that half of political parties' candidates are women in local and national elections. The first time this law was put into action in 2012, 44% of national assembly seats elected were women – an unprecedented amount in the country and region.

Meanwhile, amidst these intertwined factors, Tostan, a regional NGO focusing on community empowerment through nonformal education, has been working for 25 years in Senegal bringing change on a local level. They are a US-registered 501(c)(3) international nongovernmental organization (INGO) with current operations in over 450 communities in Senegal, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Mali, and Mauritania. The name of their organization, *Tostan,* means "breakthrough" in the West African language of Wolof and was inspired by Cheikh Anta Diop, a Senegalese historian, anthropologist, physicist, and politician

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[1] In Arabic *mashallah* means "___ " and is used to ward off any bad spirits or __ that may be jealous or____. As a researcher who spent time in Senegal, I would feel guilty to say such great things about the political climate of Senegal without ending the statement with this word which I believe will protect Senegal.

who was a mentor figure to the founder, Molly Melching. Their mission is to "Empower African communities to bring about sustainable development and positive social transformation based on respect for human rights (Tostan, 2016b)." Through Tostan's original Community Empowerment Program (CEP), which is made up of a three-year nonformal education program in conjunction with its Community Management Committee (CMC), more than 19,000 women have been promoted into leadership positions in Tostan communities and have expanded the dialogue of democracy and human rights to over 100,000 people regionally. They have reached, in total, more than three million people.

The CEP is a three-year holistic nonformal education program in rural villages that uses the human rights-based approach to ensure all of their themes reinforce human rights and responsibilities. The aim is to empower communities to change their own lives. This program has been implemented for over 20 years in eight countries. The CMC is part of the CEP in which Tostan trains up to 17 democratically selected members (at least nine of which are women) in the management skills necessary to implement development projects in their communities.

As part of Tostan's theory of change, participants are encouraged to disseminate the knowledge to others in their village and surrounding communities. This has created of group of dynamic, motivated, and educated Social Mobilization Agents (SMA). They are a type of community activists who are committed to sharing their new understanding and attitudes with others. SMAs are, in essence, social mobilizers and social activists. These SMAs are Tostan community members who have been specifically selected by Tostan for their skills in communication and their dedication to positive social change. After receiving training from Tostan, these SMAs form a team of five members who play an important role in raising

awareness as they visit neighboring and intermarrying villages to facilitate discussions and sensitizations on human rights-focused themes.

These methods of mobilization and activism have had enormous success yet they, nor the experiences and motivation of the mobilizers, are not well known outside of Senegal, or in Tostan for that matter. In the literature on Tostan's CEP program, it suggests that these women (and men) have become more empowered yet little is known about the work of those that continue to mobilize. What social mobilization looks like in the Senegalese and West African context is relatively unknown to academia, governments, and even organizations that are contributing to social change. I have looked into the lives of six social mobilizers and their work in order to illustrate why they have chosen to become SMAs and how they do their job. This research illuminates their stories: their lives, what motivates them, the techniques they use, and their experiences. If we do not understand the experiences of these individual social actors, we will not be able to grasp how and why their work is done nor will we be able to see why and how it has been successful nor will we be able to look at the larger social movement they are a part of. I hope that my research on SMAs will also give practitioners the ability to better monitor and replicate similar mobilization efforts elsewhere.

Research Questions

Main Question: Why and how do Tostan's Social Mobilization Agents do their work?

Sub Questions: What factors motivate them to do this work?
What methods do they use in the field?

Literature Review

Introduction

Although Senegal is not an Islamic state, Islam is the religion of nearly 95% of its population (The World Factbook, 2015) and it is indeed one of the most important social elements woven throughout Senegalese life. In the distant and recent past, as well as in some Senegalese societies today women are, as Sne (2015) describes, "in a second-class position in terms of their rights and privileges in society (p. 365)." Yet, Senegalese women are being elected to municipal and national government positions at record numbers. On the local level, Senegal is seeing an unprecedented number of women being elected into leadership positions.

For my literature review, I drew on three main bodies of literature. The first focused on nonformal education programs in the majority world, also known as the global south or the developing world, so as to inform my research by giving a contextual background. Additionally, this has allowed for a better understanding of the effects of programs like Tostan's CEP, their importance, and the impact they can have. Secondly, I looked at research on social movements around the world and in particular in Africa. This focused primarily on the activists themselves and what motivates them to do the work they do. To conclude, I reviewed Tostan's external and internal documents relevant to my research questions to have a better idea of the context in which the SMAs work and what is already known about their work.

Nonformal Education

Everyone has a right to education, as it is stated in Article 26 of the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). Education is an "indispensable

means of unlocking and protecting other human rights by providing the scaffolding that is required to secure good health, liberty, security, economic well-being, and participation in social and political activity (UNESCO, 2002, p. 14)." When the right to education is guaranteed, people gain a plethora of advantages, including better literacy. Traditionally, formal education has been the preferred method of diffusing knowledge to younger generations. This pedagogical approach has left many gaps throughout the world, predominantly in the majority world.

Formal education is based on clear educational constructs (desks, textbooks, lesson plans), is well structured with defined roles (teachers, students), and usually ends with an exam and certificate. Formal education is typically compulsory, as most countries require education for children up to a certain age. One of the most salient critiques of the formal education system is the standardization of the curriculum, which leaves little or no flexibility for context, student learning styles, or student support (AEGEE, 2011; Romi & Schmida, 2009). Unfortunately, most of the world has been unsuccessful in meeting the global goals for literacy and education. This shortcoming remains true even though education goals have been acknowledged by the United Nations as a universal human right and have been put at the forefront of the both the Millennium Development Goals and the new Sustainable Development Goals. Especially since education is considered obligatory up to a certain age for most countries, it is clear that the current formal education system is not yielding the expected literacy rates across the globe.

On a global scale, according to UNESCO (2013) an average of 84% of the population is 'literate'. In this context, literate is defined as the ability to read and write, and maintain a

primary school enrollment rate of 91%. In West and Central Africa, the literacy rate is

significantly less, at 50% with a 73% primary school enrolment rate. In Senegal, 49% of the

population is literate, and when the data is disaggregated, the literacy rate is only 38% for

women. Furthermore, for women over 65 years of age, the literacy rate plummets to 7%. The

primary school enrollment rate in Senegal is comparatively high at 83%, but more than halves

to 41% for secondary school. Accordingly, in Senegal, 15% of males and only 7.2% of females

have some secondary education (UNESCO, 2015).

This gap in literacy and access to education stems from the fact that little to no

attention is paid to the populations in different contexts, specifically the context of language

and culture (Gadotti, 2011; Kuenzi, 2006a, 2006b; United Nations, 2009). As a result, formal

education programs in these settings are largely ineffective (Clemons & Vogt, 2004; Kuenzi,

2006a, 2006b). The denial of the fundamental human right of education is occurring

predominantly in the majority world, where many communities are responding by developing

more Nonformal Education (NFE) programs. There exists no universal definition for NFE.

Therefore, within the discourse of this capstone, NFE refers to any organized, systematic,

educational activity happening outside the formal education system and institutions (UNESCO-

UNEVOC, 2014). The purpose of NFE is to provide alternative learning opportunities for those

who seek to acquire specific life skills through training, or for those who are not participating in

formal education because of reasons such as access, money, age, etc.

More and more, national governments have been shifting the onus of education gaps

onto non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs). At

the same time, local governments have begun to look at NFE programs as a means of providing

education (Clemons & Vogt, 2004; Kuenzi, 2006b). This paradigm shift towards NFE has been

welcomed and encouraged by governments, councils, NGOs, and IGOs alike. According to

UNESCO (as cited in Kotzé, 2012), "Non-formal education has always been part of the solution

for marginalized and vulnerable population groups (p.4)." Within these groups, the

conversation is moving away from the question of *whether or not* to formally education people,

towards *how* we can find agreed upon learning outcomes and methods (Clemons & Vogt, 2004;

Gadotti, 2011).

      Literacy is the basis of education and learning at all levels beyond simply reading

and writing. According to some advocates of NFE, these types of programs can be a

valuable tool for overcoming barriers presented by the formal education system:

> Literacy is a right in itself – precisely because without it people do not have equal
> chances in life [...]. Those that can use writing and reading to defend and exercise their
> legal rights have significant advantage in relation to those that cannot. Through literacy,
> individuals get the means to political participation in society. (Richmond, Robinson, &
> Sach-Israel M., 2009, p. 19–28)

As a fundamental human right, access to education should be irrespective of age, and not

limited to include only youth. Often, in the majority world, the right to education is denied to

people when they are at the "proper age" for primary education. Then, a second denial occurs

later in their lives when they are adults, this time due to their age. As such, "Youth and adult

illiteracy is an unacceptable social deformation, produced by economic, social, and cultural

inequality (Gadotti, 2011, p. 17)."

      Following this train of thought, it is clear that the right to education cannot be

looked at by itself, as it does not exist in a vacuum. All human rights are interconnected,

and therefore, we cannot discuss and defend the right to education without associating

this discussion with other rights. In many ways, education is a form a power that

enables people to satisfy their other human rights. Reaffirming this idea, UNESCO (2016)

states, "Education is…essential for the exercise of all other human rights (p. 1)."

Statistics show that where there is a lack of education and lack of literacy, there is a lack

of many other things. For example, all Sub-Saharan countries that suffer from a youth

literacy rate below 50% (UNESCO, 2013), are also in the bottom 12% of the Human

Development Index (HDI) ranking (UNDP, 2015), which takes into account life

expectancy, mean and expected years of schooling, and gross national income (GNI) per

capita.

Education does more than make one literate, as it provides people with the ability to be

who they want to be in society. Education in any form also helps people in their social

relationships and networks. With specialized curriculums and participatory methods of

engagement, NFE programs emphasize practice and application of learned skills. In doing so,

these programs have given participants more than just the capacity to read and write. This is

just one of many reasons why NFE is praised for its flexibility, as it is adaptable and can be made

applicable to nearly every context. Expanding on this point, AEGEE (2011) explains:

> Non-formal learning was often seen as the most positive, efficient, and attractive
> counterpart to a largely inefficient and unattractive system of formal education. The
> advantage of non-formal learning lies mainly in its voluntary and often self organized
> nature, its flexibility, the possibilities of participation, the "right to make mistakes," the
> closer link to young people's interests and aspirations. (p. 11)

These techniques in NFE have reportedly increased feelings of efficacy among participants.

Additionally, these techniques have also inspired participants to act in their civil and political

lives. In doing so, NFE has allowed participants to gain confidence and develop positive

attitudes about both themselves and their role(s) in the community (Kuenzi, 2006a, 2006b).

These programs have the "ability to transform lives not only by improving the knowledge base

of people but in terms of skills development and increased ability to respond to changes in

society (Kotzé, 2012, p. 5)."

Following this line of thinking, Romi and Schmida, (2009) detail levels of the rewards of

inherent within NFE activities:

> On the macro level, the activities serve as agents of change of the formal educational
> system…whereas on the micro level they are vehicles of improving the participants'
> individual feelings, raising their self-esteem, strengthening their ego and granting them
> positive, individual experiences. (p. 258)

With the knowledge and skills gained in NFE, participants have enhanced active social

involvement, which benefits their families, their communities, and their countries.

Through NFE, participants are able to better express their needs and wants and have an

increased level of self-esteem (Romi & Schmida, 2009). In some cases, participants

develop civil skills such as management, organizing, and public speaking; all of which

have led to the exchange and implementation of knowledge in unprecedented ways. In

this way, NFE furthers the development of both its participants and their communities.

The literacy levels and access to education stand in complete contradiction to the UN

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as to Article 8 of Senegal's Constitution (The

Republic of Senegal, 2011) which, "…guarantees to all citizens their individual fundamental

freedoms, economic and social rights as well as group rights. These freedoms and rights

are…the right to education, the right to literacy…(p. 2.)." Like many Sub-Saharan African

countries, Senegal's formal educational system resembles its colonial counterpart. In the case

of Senegal, this colonial counterpart is France. Although French is the national language of

Senegal, it is usually a second or third language for the Senegalese population. According to

Fagerberg-Diallo (1993) "…roughly 75% of the population in Senegal is not capable of using

French as a language through which they have access to information, whether it be written or

oral (p. 4)." This language barrier poses significant problems not only for education, but also for

the development of the country, for civil engagement, and for the quality and access to

adequate health care, along with many other things. According to the United Nations (2013):

> …youth should have the right to receive education in their mother tongue and determine their curricula in line with their time-tested cultures and customs, rather than be obliged to assimilate into a mainstream educational system virtually unresponsive to their way of life. (p. 1)

Even for those fortunate enough to have French language skills, learning in a second

language can still obstruct cognitive development and can create a split between the schooled

and unschooled (Kuenzi, 2006b; Sine, 1979). As Kuenzi (2006b) explains, in Sub-Saharan Africa

and countries like Senegal, "NFE is often considered a more culturally relevant form of

education than formal education…since it is usually conducted in African languages and

informed by the culture and exigencies of the learners (p. 4)." What we are seeing in Senegal

and in many other parts of the majority world, is an emphasis put on the importance of

education with little to zero consideration of what will be taught and how.

The role of education and literacy play a crucial role in improving the lives of girls and

women. There are countless ways in which education can enhance the quality of a women's

life. For example, they have more opportunities in the labor market, they marry later and,

therefore, have children later. They also have access to improved nutrition, sanitation, and

contraceptive practices (Kabeer, 1994). However, women and girls are often excluded from

formal education systems for a variety of reasons. Along similar lines, this gender demographic

has benefited extraordinarily from participating in NFE programs. Research has found that NFE

is particularly beneficial for women and girls as many programs are mainly comprised of and

focus on women (Kuenzi, 2006a, 2006b). Research has shown that women who participate in

NFE classes are more likely to attend village meetings, know their human rights, hold leadership

positions, have access to land, join associations, be politically active, and have increased

feelings of both self-esteem and autonomy (Badu-Nyarko & Zumapkeh, 2014; Kuenzi, 2006a,

2006b). The augmentation of self-esteem and autonomy results from several aspects of the

program, including: 1) the simple idea of being 'educated'; 2) exposure to new and different

social situations; and 3) being in a group with shared interests and goals. With a raised level of

self-esteem, people are more likely to try new things. Kuenzi (2006b) highlights noticeable

benefits in an interview with the president of a women's association:

> …Women who had participated in an NFE literacy programme to be more aware of that
> going on in the world around them and to be more likely to speak in meetings.
> Moreover, she found that NFE women ran their homes differently, took their children to
> the clinic more often, had a greater proclivity to teach their children and were more
> likely to engage in family planning. (p. 220)

As previously mentioned, the purpose of NFE is much greater than simply teaching

literacy skills to women, as "the ability to write and read does not necessarily correlate with a

greater understanding of their conditions of subordination and disadvantage in a larger social

context (Stromquist, 2015, p.62)." Essentially, NFE settings provide women with a 'safe space'

that allows for critical reflection and thinking in the presence of other women who are in

similarly disadvantaged situations. In fact, as there is a deepening of understanding and

research on collective feminist or women's group in the majority world, more of their successes

are being attributed to NFE (Stromquist, 2015). All of these newfound skills, both tangible and intangible, create a spiraling positive impact on women and girls in NFE programs.

For the last several decades, we have seen forms of traditional or formal schooling fall short of universal standards and objectives. As a result, the international community is searching for solutions. Throughout the world, and largely in the majority world, NGOs and governments have turned to NFE, which has been successful in providing participants with basic literacy and with several skills that are specific and useful for everyday life. These NFE programs are making a profound impact on the lives of women around the world, and have had the successes of some women's organizations attributed to their efforts. These programs are more accessible to populations because they generally are instructed in the participants' local language and they are attended voluntarily. In addition, NFE programs cater to contextual needs, as they are both respectful of culture and participatory.

Social Movements

From African nations' fight for independence in the 1950's and 60's, to the South African anti-Apartheid struggle, to the Arab Spring, the continent has seen numerous social movements. As such, some of these movements have been more effective than others. Some argue that certain protest tactics, like the 'walk to work' transportation boycotts, carelessly express discontent and are backed by no significant plan of action or to support a real movement (de Waal & Ibreck, 2013). At times, these types of tactics are oppressed by national governments and/or end in violence including the loss of lives (BBC, 2000, 2001, 2011). The frequency in which we see these two previously mentioned factors allows for the common short-lived social movements that can result in casualties and/or public demoralization. As de

Waal and Ibreck (2013) note, "In Africa it seems that while protests are frequent, broad-based popular movements are weak and especially vulnerable to co-option or collapse (p. 305)." These authors attribute the lack of broad-based social movements to the country's 'hybrid' political order. In this context, the hybridity refers to every state, both north and south of the Sahara, having a blend of formal and informal institutions, as well as some degree of patrimonial rule and remnants of pre-colonial and colonial traditions (de Waal & Ibreck, 2013). Furthermore, Africanist social movement research has seemingly ignored the sub-Saharan African social movements and neglected non-violent struggles like the Arab Spring (de Waal & Ibreck, 2013).

Bevington and Dixon (2005), as well as Rodgers (2010) remark that factors such as motivation, emotions, and commitment are often ignored in academic research on social movements. The reason for this exclusion is because the focus has largely been on the movement itself, as opposed to individual actors within it. Without activists, social movements would cease to exist, thus making this body of research critical to the process of affecting social change. Volumes more can be written detailing the motives behind the involvement of social activists in social movements. For the purpose of my literature review, I will explore what I found to be the two most significant sources of motivation: an individual's experience and an individual's surroundings. Mobilizers often speak of their engagement in social activism as if it is part of their personality, or a moral principal that allowed them to fulfill their core purpose (Borshuk, 2004; Ryan, 2016). Individual factors such as this are "essential to the prospects of retention (Bunnage, 2014, p.434)." in social movements. These individual factors illuminate why so many people engage in this sort of work. In other words, these feelings and emotions

are part of a person's core identity, which is developed throughout a person's life via individual

experiences and the context in which they have grown up.

Supporting the importance of these individual factors, Rodgers (2010) argues, "The

emotions involved in social activism are central factors in the recruitment to, motivation for,

and sustainability of social movements (p. 273)." Illustrating this idea, one's empathy and sense

of social responsibility both play a large role in determining who participates as an activist in

social movements and who does not (Borshuk, 2004; Rodgers, 2010). Once these passionate

mobilizers have begun their work, there are other factors that *keep* them working towards

social change. The work itself is rewarding (Borshuk, 2004; Rodgers, 2010) and these rewards

are reportedly intangibale in nature (sense of purpose and social connections), as opposed to

the mentioned costs which were often tangible (time and money).

Activists enjoy the social interactions with other activists, which segways nicely into the

second level of motivation, the society. Discussing this source of motivation, Bunnage (2014)

explicitly describes it as follows:

> Social relationships within a movement and collective experiences can link individual
> members together into a cohesive community. Social networks promote the creation of
> group identity and joint vision, which reinforce the persistence of activists. The
> development of a common worldview can be perpetually bolstered within and outside
> their organizations through regular activist communication. These bonds are self-
> reinforcing and offer powerful ongoing motivations for sustaining activism, as well as
> shared rhetoric, to give the work collective significance. (p. 435)

These very same relationships can pressure members to stay involved in the movement

(Borshuk, 2004) and increase their levels of commitment (Kanter, 1968). When activists work

together, there is a bond that is formed. This bond creates a type of 'togetherness', which

nurtures social identity within the movement itself (Borshuk, 2004; Bunnage, 2014; Kanter,

1968). This notion of identity is created by shared values and priorities, and serves to stregthen

solidarity. Identitiy within social movements also helps to facilitate ongoing involvement, and at

times, it can even help mitigate stresses endured from participation in the movement

(Bunnage, 2014; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987).

     Although Tostan has made headlines (Guinee7, 2015; Melching, 2016; Spinella, 2015;

Veneman, 2013) and has been a case study for research in many academic articles (Cislaghi,

Gillespie, & Mackie, 2014; Nafissatou J. Diop, Moreau, & Benga, 2008; Nafissatou Jocelyne Diop

et al., 2004; Easton, Monkman, & Miles, 2003; Gillespie & Melching, 2010; Gutierrez, 2013), the

grassroots mobilization efforts of the social mobilizers have been undocumented, as the focus

is always on the organization's work towards the abandonment of female genital cutting (FGC)[2]

or on Tostan's approach to nonformal education. After conducting the literature reviews, the

motivations and methods behind the successful mobilizing teams, specifically in rural Senegal,

are still unknown. Little is known about the context in which these mobilizers live and work. The

individuals' lives within social movements are underappreciated in academic literature. What I

will do as part of my research is uncover what motivates social mobilizers in rural Senegal to do

their work and the methods that are implored in the field.

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[2] For the purpose of this capstone, FGC is will be used interchangeably with *the tradition* and refers to "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (World Health Organization, 2016)."

Research Methodology

Theoretical Framework

For my research, I used a theoretical framework that is based on the Capabilities Approach, a Postcolonial/Global Feminist lens, and a Grounded Theory approach. These three theories formed the foundation of my research and guided me through data collection and analysis. I find that the Capabilities Approach is most fitting as it is a framework used in the international development field that focuses on human agency. As a researcher I believe one must acknowledge the domination of patriarchy and how men have, for centuries, used their positions of power to define issues, structure, language, and develop theories that promote their own interests therefore marginalizing the experiences and knowledge of women. Lastly, grounded theory has provided me with a more holistic and complete collection and analysis of data because all theories and conclusions in my research were grounded in the data I collected.

Capabilities Approach

Amartya Sen, an Indian economist and philosopher, coined the *Capabilities Approach* in the 1980's. Although this theory remains most closely associated with him, American philosopher Martha Nussbaum has one of the most circulated revisions/updates of his work. In order to fully understand Nussbaum's updates, we must first understand the basis of the Capabilities Approach. Many discontents guided Sen who decided to stray from the traditional thought in international development that focused on increasing Gross National Product (GNP), income levels, and industrialization. The 'conventional wisdom' of economics told us that that there could not be development without growth. This growth, they said, would come in a 'trickle down' manner and individual freedoms would not be realized until this growth took

place. This is where the world saw a takeover of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) from the World Bank and other similar programs. The sheer failure of this mentality and these programs formed the basis of Sen's Capabilities Approach, which stems from four major concerns:

1) The way in which existing literature was obsessed with ranking countries in social status with too much emphasis on income;

2) A person who lives in poverty may have "adaptive preferences" which is when one internalizes, or becomes oblivious to the true harshness of their situation. As such, they do not desire what they have never seen nor what they can never expect;

3) Although some people may seize every opportunity they have, it is important that evaluations on development are sensitive to both "functioning" (actual achievements) and "capability" (effective freedom);

4) Evaluations tend to shortcut around the complexities of life. This need not be done and instead, evaluations need to remain as open minded as possible in order to reflect differences amongst people and populations (Wells, n.d.).

It is necessary to be clear, while Sen's Capability Approach rejects the normative evaluations and rankings of people and countries based on income, material wealth, and commodities, he does not deny the contribution these can make to a person's well-being (Robeyns, 2003). Sen's (1999) approach places an emphasis on freedoms, which he argues "are not only the primary ends of development, they are also among its principal means (p. 10)." Here again we see this word "development" which is intrinsically connected to freedom and is, as Sen (1999) has defined it, "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy (p. 3)." This holistic

outlook that places freedom as both the primary ends and the principal means of development

is the cornerstone of the Capabilities Approach. As such, Sen (1999) lists five distinct types of

freedom: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees,

and protective security. Not only do each of these freedoms strengthen one another, but also

"(e)ach of these distinct types of rights and opportunities helps to advance the general

capability of a person (Sen, 1999, p. 10)."

This approach focuses on the quality of life that individuals are actually able to achieve

which is analyzed in terms of two core concepts: 'functionings' and 'capability'. A person's

'functionings' (beings and doings) are directly influenced by their 'capabilities' (real freedoms or

opportunities to achieve something). The difference between a capability and a function is like

the difference between an accomplishment and the freedom/ability to achieve that

accomplishment. As Drèze and Sen (2002) explain:

> The approach...is essentially a 'people-centered' approach, which puts human agency
> (rather than organizations such as markets or governments) at the center of the stage.
> The crucial role of social opportunities is to expand the realm of human agency and
> freedom, both as an end in itself and as a means of further expansion of freedom. (p. 6)

It is important to note that poverty is described as the deprivation of a basic capability that

therefore limits an individual's realm of achievable functionings.

Additionally, Sen (1999) stresses the inequalities between women and men and

highlights the key role women play in development. He states that, "No longer the passive

recipients of welfare-enhancing help, women are increasingly seen, by men as well as women,

as active agents in change: the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the

lives of both women and men (Sen, 1999, p. 189)." He goes on to emphasize the importance of

paying particularly close attention to the sufferings and deprivations of women as their limited

role seriously affects the lives of all people. In short, Sen's Capability Approach is a moral

framework that suggests that social activities should be evaluated according to the extent of a

person's freedom (capability) to be or do (functioning).

Since capabilities refer to a range of things a person is able to do and be, without proper

education, achieving these ends would be impossible. Using this approach, "the means" consist

of education that is conducive to each individual and their diverse contexts. These means bring

about "the ends," which consist of a higher quality of life, and more freedom to live the kind of

life one finds valuable and fulfilling. For both Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000), people do best

when they focus on what they know best. In other words, the focus of education must be on

what people are effectively able to do, highlighting their capabilities.

The principal differences between Sen and Nussbaum's approach to capabilities arise

due to the fact that they are rooted in different fields (economics and philosophy respectively)

and have different uses. As Nussbaum (2006) explains:

> Sen's use of the approach focuses on the comparative measurement of quality of life,
> although he is also interested in issues of social justice. I, [Nussbaum] by contrast, have
> used the approach to provide the philosophical underpinning for an account of core
> human entitlements that should be respected and implemented by the governments of
> all nations, as a bare minimum of what respect for human dignity requires. (p. 70)

In addition, one of Nussbaum's major critique's of Sen's work was that he did not have a well-

defined list of capabilities (M. Nussbaum, 2011; Robeyns, 2003). Nussbaum has built onto Sen's

theory by adding a list of ten capabilities that she defends as universally valid and necessary for

all human beings in order to live a life of dignity. Her list is comprehensive and recognizes

embodiment, relationships, and the importance of affect (see Appendix A for full list). This list,

as Nussbaum argues (2000, 2006), is a general and open-ended list that can later be used in a

more context specific and detailed manor when and if need be. Although numbered, the

contents of this list are not in hierarchical order, "All are of central importance and all are

distinct in quality (Nussbaum, 2000, pg. 81)." As humans, we are entitled to these capabilities,

which Sen and Nussbaum both acknowledge are indeed similar to human rights (M. Nussbaum,

2011). For Nussbaum (2011) one of the main differences between human rights and the

Capabilities Approach is that these capabilities are able to exist with no political organization

keeping them intact.

Nussbaum (2000) also acknowledges the importance of women in development and as a

feminist, goes into greater detail as to how her rectified version of the Capabilities Approach

will benefit women around the world. Like many feminist scholars, she argues that:

> International political and economic thought should be feminist, attentive (among other
> things) to the special problems women face because of sex in more or less every nation
> in the world, problems without an understanding of which general issues of poverty and
> development cannot be well confronted. (Nussbaum, 2000, p. 4)

By focusing on feminist theory and scholarship and recognizing the problems disproportionately

facing girls and women around the world, one will be better able to make recommendations to

solutions to global issues.

Postcolonial/Global Feminism

When it comes to poverty and health care, women and girls around the world

disproportionately suffer at higher rates than their male counterparts. This is true in times of

war and when natural disasters strike (Foundation, 2013). For these reasons and more, I self-

identify as a feminist recognizing that the very terms, *feminist* and *feminism,* have been

continually contested. I root my research in Postcolonial/Global Feminist (PGF) epistemology,

which is sometimes referred to as Third World Feminism. What sets this type of feminism away

from others is its recognition of the difference between women, the way they are oppressed, and their goals.

First and second wave feminism has been critiqued for their exclusivity and focus on white women (Tong, 2009). Earlier forms of feminism (e.g.: social, liberal, radical) focused on 'sameness' or 'differentness' between genders (Tong, 2009). Leading feminist academics such as Audre Lorde (1983) have strongly discouraged the idea of 'oneness' and 'sameness' between women. She refers to an instinct that some women may feel when entering a room full of women from around the world to clump everyone together as 'women' before looking at each as an individual. PGF emphasizes that each women has come from a different background and has different experiences, which are just as valid as anyone else's. In addition, PGF does not separate personal and public affairs, since private behavior behind closed doors inherently affects the larger social context.

Moreover, PGF critiques "the world's division of nations into so-called First World nations on the one hand and so-called Third World nations on the other…[and] examine[s] how this state of affairs disempowers and disadvantages Third World women in particular (Tong, 2009, p. 215)." This means that we, PGF scholars, must not ignore the complexities that intertwine women from the majority world and women from the non-majority world. For example some scholars point out that the economy and international trade policies which have a profound effect on the lives of women in all countries (Mohanty, 1991b). It should be made clear that that there is no hierarchy of values and there is not one issue that is more important than another, nor are there boundaries between them (Tong, 2009). For example, global feminist Angela Gillian (1991) commented that for many women, their concern is not so much

the way in which men oppress women but how unjust the international labor system force men and women to build their family relations in detrimental ways.

Nevertheless, PGF discourages the idea of 'otherness' as is referred to in Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" (1991b). Here, Mohanty highlights the negative effects and limitations that arise when authors (usually from the west or the non-majority world) codify all who are 'non-western' (from the majority world) as a singular, powerless, and monolithic 'other'. It is vital that we acknowledge that the oppression of women in one part of the world is directly linked to what is happening in another part of the world. I firmly believe that there will be no emancipation for any women anywhere until all systems of power, privilege, and oppression have been dismantled for everyone everywhere.

PGF evolved from these and other critiques of mainstream feminism to argue that a universal definition may generalize or homogenize diverse struggles and histories throughout the world (Mohanty, 1991). Nonetheless, author and feminist advocate bell hooks, while standing firm on the belief that *Feminism is for Everybody*, the title of one of her 30+ books she has published, has developed a simple definition. hooks defines feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression (hooks, 2014, p. 1)." I believe that sexism is neither the only nor the most important form of oppression that women as a whole experience. I believe it is vital to acknowledge that even though all of us who identify as a woman will share that commonality, not all of us will experience what it means to be a woman in the same way. It is not only until after we acknowledge and understand to the best of our abilities the lived experiences of others that we will be able to unite to dismantle all patriarchal social structures

that perpetuate the multiple forms of oppression holding down women, and in many cases

men we well.

In this effort to work with the insights of Postcolonial and Global Feminism, I have also

been supported by the work of the movement-relevant theory. Movement-relevant theory

emerged from the need for a dynamic approach to studying social movements (Bevington &

Dixon, 2005). As opposed to Political Process Theory (PPT) with its assumption that

"movements must target states and center on formal institutional politics with the goal of

social inclusion (Bracey 2016 p. 16)," movement-relevant theory focuses on the needs of the

activists in the movement being researched. In essence, this theory seeks to bridge the gap

between social movement scholarship and the movements themselves. In order to conduct

movement-relevant research, Bevington and Dixon (2005) suggest that the researcher needs to

be part of the social movement. In such a situation, the researcher claims a stake in the game,

and therefore wants to provide the best possible information for the betterment of the

movement. Participants in a movement need to be directly involved with the research process,

and researchers need to stay away from too much second hand data and research, otherwise

the inquiry does not produce new ideas to advance the movement or serve as the basis for

research. As Bevington and Dixon (2005) explain:

> These activist discussions offer crucial insights into the issues of greatest concern to the
> movements, and they thus provide an important starting point for developing
> movement-relevant research topics. From this foundation researchers can identify the
> particular questions and issues that may be most pertinent for specific movements or
> segments of those movements. (p. 198)

Considering this perspective on the role of research within social movements, it is clear that

one purpose of this type of research can also serve to identify and address areas of weakness

within a movement. In this context, research should focus on issues that concern the

movement's participants. These issues often include questions and research around the

movement's strategies, structure, effectiveness, and accomplishments. Lastly, it is crucial for

researchers and academics to determine how activists in the movements want to explore their

work, as the purpose of the research is to be useful. By documenting the successes and failures

of past movements, the movement-relevant approach guides future social mobilization efforts.

As a result of grounding my research in PGF epistemology, together with the

participatory-action commitments of movement-relevant theory, I sought access to knowledge

based in the experiences of Senegalese women and men. Furthermore, this framework values

both authorized (academic) and experiential (everyday experiences) knowledge, as it is

"research for women to be used in transforming their sexist society (Letherby, 2003, p. 72)."

During my fieldwork, I was therefore able to focus on giving women access and ability to

produce knowledge throughout this research.

Grounded Theory

As previously mentioned, this research has sought to tell the stories of Senegalese

women and men and grounded theory is the only approach I saw fit to do so. Ackerly and True

(2010) described the link between a feminist research theory and grounded theory here:

> Grounded theory is a form of structured inquiry that is useful for studying questions that themselves have been concealed by dominant discourses, conceptualization, and notions of what questions are important. By design, then, grounded theory is a research design that enacts a feminist research ethic. (p. 204)

According to Charmaz (2008), the basis of grounded theory is: "(1) minimizing preconceived

ideas about the research problem and data, (2) using simultaneous data collection and analysis

to inform each other, (3) remaining open to varied explanations and/or understandings of the

data, and (4) focusing data analysis to construct middle-range theories (p. 155)." The emphasis

here is put on the data in which one collects as opposed to any preconceived theories so that

"he [or she] is more likely to develop new analytic categories and original theories from his data

(Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 172)." Although it is true that a researcher will always come

in with pre-existing paradigms, this method helps in the correction of misconceptions and

assumptions the researcher may make during the research process.

By exercising this method, I stayed close to my data so that I was able to constantly test

out any ideas or themes I had throughout my research. Furthermore, it is very important to

note that this method was not just used in the data collection period but throughout the entire

span of the research process. In fact, "analysis pervades all phases of the research enterprise-as

the researcher makes observations, writes field notes, codes these notes in analytic categories,

and finally develops explicit theoretical propositions (Emerson et al., 2011, p. 173)." The end

result is this capstone, which to the best of my abilities, faithful to the reality of the participants

that were part of my research.

Data Collection

My approach to answer my research questions was through a qualitative collection of

data. In order to ensure triangulation, I used three research methods including semi-structured

in-depth interviews (creating a portrait of each participant), document analysis of literature on

Tostan, and field observations.

1. *Semi-structured in-depth interviews:* By first using the portraiture approach for the

   SMAs, I was able to focus on each individual's concerns and issues around their life and

   their work. This was non-critical and therefore helped to foster trust with the

participants. I used the *life-history approach* looking back in detail across their entire life

up until the present to better understand their experiences before Tostan, during

Tostan's programs, and now as SMAs. Additionally, this provided "individuals with the

non-judgmental space to reflect upon themselves and their performance (Bottery,

Wong, Wright, & Ngai, 2009, p. 83)." I chose this approach because it attempts to

remove space between the voice of the researcher and the researched and is often used

as a reflective tool (Waterhouse, 2007). Originally, I believed this method would focus

on *why* SMA do their work, but I was also able to learn a lot about *how* they did their

work as well.

    a.   The primary research participants were six Senegalese social mobilizers from two

        different regions in Senegal: Kaolack and Fatick. Four of the SMAs were female

        and two were men. They are all from the Bambara or Peul ethnic group and

        speak several languages including Wolof, which was the language the interviews

        were conducted in. These SMAs were chosen by Tostan to participate on the

        SMA teams, which is a volunteer position. They had no obligation to participate

        in this study. If participants traveled to participate in the interviews, their

        transportation costs were paid for.

    b.   These interviews were done in the field either at the participant's house or at a

        team member's house. I traveled to the villages with an older male Wolof

        interpreter and interviewed each participant for two to three hours depending

        on their responses. Please see Appendix B for a list of initial interview questions.

        I recorded the interviews using an audio-only recorder, uploaded them to my

computer, and had them professionally transcribed from Wolof to English. I used

the same interpreter and translator for all interviews and transcriptions.

c. The second round of in-depth interviews, or follow-up interviews, was

conducted over the telephone. Please see Appendix C for follow-up interview

questions. All interviews were conducted through a translator and audio-

recorded but not transcribed. Instead of transcribing, the briefness of the follow-

up interview allowed for me to take more notes as my translator detailed what

the participant was saying.

d. I created an assent document (Appendix D) in lieu of an informed consent letter

because the participants had varying levels of education. The interpreter verbally

read this document in Wolof to ensure full understanding. The participants

agreed to what was stated in the document and signed their name or wrote their

initials.

2. *Document Analysis:* Tostan is an international non-governmental organization (INGO)

operating in six countries in West Africa. I gathered publicly available and internal

documents related to the Community Empowerment Program (CEP), Community

Management Committee (CMC), "Organized Diffusion", and their theory of change from

their website, www.tostan.org and their private network of documents on their

Intranet.

3. _Observation:_ I went into the field with Tostan employees to attend meetings with the

   "Organized Diffusion" teams (SMAs and _réalisateurs[3]_). During this field visit I also

   attended a social mobilization _sensitization[4]_ in a village in the region of Kolda. In

   addition, I attended parts of a training on Tostan's pedagogy that was centered around

   "Organized Diffusion" and the SMA teams. This allowed me to gather more notes about

   how the organization (Tostan) works and how the SMAs facilitate the "Organized

   Diffusion" in theory and practice.

The various ways of gathering data ensured the safety of the participants and triangulation,

therefore validity of results. The combination of these methods maximizes the utility of the

research while minimizing unintended harm/consequences.

Data Analysis Methods

After conducting my initial in-depth interviews with the participants through the

translator, I had them professionally transcribed by a Senegalese man. I spoke with the

transcriber and emphasized the importance of verbatim transcription for the authenticity of

this research and the results. After my data was prepared, I moved through the data

exploration phase and the data reduction phase as is explained by Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2011).

It was during this process where I familiarized myself with my data, namely my interviews, by

reading, coding, categorizing, underlining, and making memos where I felt necessary.

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[3] _Réalisateur_ directly translates from French as "film director" but that does not accurately describe what it is that they do in the field. These people sometimes coordinate and work with the SMAs (they do not do sensitizations with them) to organize where they will do their outreach so that it is in the same villages and areas that the SMAs are doing their sensitizations. They have radio programs informing populations about the same themes the SMAs sensitize on. They also do outreach in villages and bring special guests to discuss topics of relevance.
[4] The sensitization is the actual act of the SMAs going into different villages to teach on certain themes from the CEP program.

I gained better understanding of my data and picked out what I believed to be the most telling quotes. Throughout this process I would jot down memos of what I was pulling together in the bigger picture from my research and any subjective thoughts I was having. After line-by-line literal coding all of the interviews, I put them onto NVivo, a qualitative data analysis (QDA) computer program. At this point I wrote a short life-history of all six participants documenting their life from birth to present day with all of the information they shared with me that I found pertinent. This allowed me to not only see their lives in chronological order but to also assess if there were any major gaps in what the participants had recounted to me. I then went back to my participants and conducted a follow-up interview to make sure the life histories were complete and true.

After this, I created an excel document with all of my line-by-line codes which I used to create more focused and relevant codes on NVivo. Here I was able to see themes start to develop, some of which did not support my research questions and were therefore discarded. Relevant themes included motivators (health, peace/ harmony, and human rights, life experiences) and methods (working in teams, targeting certain villages, working with village chiefs, etc.).

Subjectivity and Limitations

In qualitative research one will never be completely objective and immune to limitations in the field. It is therefore imperative to share with the reader both my personal subjectivity, which in and of itself can be a limitation, and also additional limitations experienced in the field.

I am a 27-year old white American woman who identifies as a feminist advocating for social justice in all realms of life. I was born and raised in a small town in Northern Wisconsin,

did my undergraduate studies in a liberal area of Northern California, and have spent nearly four years in Sub-Saharan Africa. I am not only inquisitive and opinionated, but also very pro-active and optimistic. I recognize that my feminist identity came with many biases while conducting research in a patriarchal dominated West African society.

In addition, I have limited use of the most widespread local language, Wolof, and zero use of the other local languages spoken here. Because of this, all interviews were conducted through a translator and all interviews were transcriber by someone else. Both of these were done from Wolof directly to my native language, English. This adds a degree of separation between the data collected and the researcher, myself, as it is possible that things were wrongly conveyed or mistranslation. Also, there may have been a certain degree of interpreter/translation bias. The interpreter who was hired to go into the field with me and helped conduct all interviews was recommended by Tostan and therefore may have had a conflict of interest and motivation to ask biased questions or lead participants in a certain direction during the interviews.

This research was conducted over a five-month period with a small budget that did not allow for as much exploration as the research had originally intended. Budget constraints restricted me to only six participants from two different regions in Senegal and limited face-to-face time with each other them.

Tostan: "Organized Diffusion" and Social Mobilization Agents

According to their Theory of Change (2015), Tostan's mission is to inspire and empower African communities to achieve their vision for sustainable development. Tostan aims to

achieve these goals through their unique three-year nonformal education program, the CEP, which is based on three principals:

1. Human rights-based approach, including knowledge of human rights and responsibilities as the foundation for learning;

2. Respect and inclusion, including the sharing of information in a non-judgmental way;

3. Holistic and sustainable, including five key impact areas ensuring sustainability.

Instead of the traditional of development, such as classical, neoclassical, and Keynesian economics, neoliberalism, and development as modernization (Peet & Hartwick, 2009), Tostan relies on a different approach. The process begins with 'value deliberation' where community members gain the skills needed to deeply and critically reflect upon existing social norms and practices in their community and how they detract from or contribute to each person's human rights. Tostan does not go in with an objective of changing these practices or the community's mentality; it simply wants to provide opportunities for a process that will help community members meet goals that they themselves have set.

After assessing that a community is ripe or ready, Tostan begins their CEP, which includes a three-year nonformal education curriculum and a CMC. These units help fulfill Tostan's vision, dignity for all, through transformed communities and through both the deliberation of values and collective action. Tostan's empowerment technique is built upon four components:

- *Approach*: Human rights based, derived from international covenants and universally agreed-upon values;

- *Methodology*: Encourages problem solving (promotes deliberation, dissonance and assumption questioning), integrates a variety of culturally relevant learning techniques (theater, song, etc.);

- *Strategy*: Facilitated by Community Management Committees (CMCs), locally-recruited facilitators, based on classroom learning, "Organized Diffusion" of new knowledge to other community members and social networks;

- *Content*: Specialized learning models (Kobi, Aawde, and Post-CEP) developed over 25-years of program implementation. These courses are culturally appropriate, facilitate group learning, and lead to increased self-efficacy, increased collective action, and beneficial social practices (Tostan, 2015).

Embedded in Tostan's strategy is what they call "Organized Diffusion", which helps the organization to maximize their impact. Essentially, "Organized Diffusion" is a process used to help spread information through connected communities and social networks. It is used to increase the impact of their CEP while also spreading new ideas organically from person to person and community to community. The various methods of "Organized Diffusion", which is a small yet pivotal part of the grand scheme, include adopt-a-learner, awareness-raising events, inter-village meetings, radio programs, public declarations, and social mobilization teams comprised of Social Mobilization Agents (SMA) (Tostan, 2016a). Tostan chooses these mobilizers based on their specialization, passion, and dedication in the field. They then receive training from Tostan staff and go on to play a key role in raising awareness as they visit neighboring and intermarrying villages, and facilitate discussions on human rights-focused themes.

This group, comprised of mostly women, is committed to helping themselves, their communities, their nation, and the region take control over their future and realize human rights and responsibilities, improve their education, health, environment, and increase their economic prosperity. To date, these teams have helped bring about the abandonment of FGC in over 7,500 communities, and have lead to the election of nearly 20,000 women in leadership positions across West Africa. Since 2012, the teams have reached over 30,000 people in over 500 villages, all who were assessed as to their readiness to abandon FGC (Tostan, 2016b). As previously mentioned, these social mobilization efforts have been under-documented and under-researched, leaving large gaps in the scholarship around social movements. Tostan has begun to give training courses on their pedagogy with participants from all over the world. This has allowed for the spreading their methods of nonformal education and "Organized Diffusion" in the form of social mobilization.

Portraits and Findings

Before diving into reoccurring and persistent themes in the data collected, I will first

take a look into the lives of each of the six Social Mobilization Agents (SMAs) that participated

in this research study. These SMAs have all been working on teams together for more than ten

years and are very successful in their work. This snapshot of their lives will allow us to better

understand their experiences and therefore shed light on why and how they do their work.

Following the individual portraits, this capstone will delve into the themes surrounding

the motives and methods of these mobilization agents. First looking at what it means to be a

SMA, including the qualities and personality traits believed necessary to be successful and the

overall purpose of the work. Ensuing, the findings will discuss, health, peace/harmony, and

human rights, three major intertwined themes that were brought up in nearly every aspect of

the interviews. Next, we will explore traumatic life experiences and how the importance of

community and unity was prevalent in the interviews. Lastly, the participants, always working in

teams, discussed their plan of action and the methods they use to mobilize in villages in rural

Senegal.

Individual Portraitures

Amadou Diop

Amadou Diop was born in the growing town of Malicounda Bambara in 1960.

Malicounda, as it's often referred to, is about 87 kilometers (54 miles) from the capital Dakar

and located in the M'bour Department of the Thiès Region in western Senegal. This village is

internationally known as the first village in Senegal to publicly abandon the traditional practice

of FGC in 1997[5]. Both of Amadou's parents are from the Bambara ethnic group and his ancestors migrated from Mali to Senegal. He was raised in Malicounda with his family, including his father, mother, aunt (father's sisters), and siblings. He had two brothers (one of them died) and 6 sisters who are all still alive, *alhamdulillah*[6].

At the age of three, he and his family moved to Dakar where he attended school until grade three when his grandfather died. Because his father was the eldest son in their family, it was expected that he and his family moved back to Malicounda, their home village, to take care of the family, as his father became the new patriarch.

Growing up, Amadou loved playing football, also known as soccer in the United States. Whenever he talked about it, his face would light up and he would become animated with his facial expressions and hand gestures. Even to this day he is still known for and recognized by others for his talents as a youth. In 1983, in seventh grade, he decided, "I am joining the army, maybe with the football I can succeed there..." After some unforeseen setbacks and regulations in the Army he explained, "That's when I realized that I should have stayed in school."

In the army he traveled to the Gambia, Lebanon and finally to the Casamance (the south of Senegal). After the army he moved back to Samba Diallo, his maternal village[7] in 1988. Here he began cultivating plots of land that people lent him and soon he was married. Amadou and his wife stayed in Samba Diallo, a rural area where the only real occupation was farming. They had two children together, one boy and one girl. The boy eventually passed away and they are

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[5] On July 31st, 1997 Malicounda Bambara was the first village in Senegal to make a public declaration to end FGC. They are internationally known and have now become a milestone and reference point in Tostan's history. This is known as "The Malicounda Declaration".
[6] Arabic for "Thank God/Allah", commonly used phrase in Senegal.
[7] Maternal village is the village of a person's mother before she was married and moved to be with her husband in his village.

now left with only one daughter. Amadou was working for a Bambara agricultural association called Yirinafa focusing on reforestation. At first he was just a basic member but later, "when the president resigned, they asked me to take over." He was in charge for over 10 years.

Around the age of 37, Amadou's relatives from Malicounda contacted him regarding Tostan and the idea of abandoning FGC. "After the declaration, Tostan opened up centers so that people could learn literacy." Even though Amadou had previously went to school to what is considered a high level, he attended Tostan's classes because he felt that things were missing and he would benefit from going. "After we attended the classes, we [SMAs] were chosen because of the high interest we had showed…Tostan identified the people whom they knew could do the job, that's why they chose us in the different places." Amadou has been a SMA on the Fatick team ever since and is proud of his job and the work he and his team do in the region.

Ramatoulaye Fall

The life of Ramatoulaye Fall started with a tragedy in her native village of Kobongoye in the Fatick region of Senegal. The day before her Ngante[8], her father died. After this, their family moved to Soudjane Balla where she spent half of her childhood eventually moving to Sorobougou where she would later be married. Ramatoulaye gleefully exclaimed, "That's why I am proud to say that I have three communities that are Kobongoye, Soudiane, and Sorobougou."

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[8] A baby naming ceremony that many people, including Muslims, call a "baptism". Traditionally, this was a family event organized, run, and attended by mostly women (with the exception of very closely associated men, like a father or brother) but now, they are more open to men. This is especially true in Dakar where culture and tradition changes faster than other places.

She explained to me that traditionally in her family, girls waited at least until 15 years of age to get married but because she had so many marriage proposals, 14 to be exact, she was married at the age of 13 and had her first child two years later. Ramatoulaye told me about two types of education. The first form of education in the house (your own house), which was taught by your mother and during the tradition (FGC). The second education is about marriage and moving to your husband's house, which was taught by your mother and other women of the family. Before Ramatoulaye was married, her childhood revolved around the rainy season. During this season, she would go to the field to help with the rice, millet, and groundnuts on her family farm. The main occupation in that area and in the village was and still is farming. In the dry season, she used to help out around the house, always in preparation for the next rainy season.

After 15 years of marriage and seven children, two of whom have since passed away, Ramatoulaye's husband passed also away when she was 28 years old. After the traditional mourning period (in Senegal this is about 40 days), she was remarried to her husband's younger brother. This tradition, marrying a younger brother, is a testimony to the importance and value of family here in Senegal. Marriage is often seen mainly as a tool to ensure security (food, clothing, shelter, etc.) and Ramatoulaye's in-laws took her in to make sure her and the children were taken care of.

Shortly after this, around the age of 30, she started her classes with Tostan. She was keen on oral communication and began to excel in this domain. When the classes first started in her community, they had to have separate classes for men and women because the men were "too proud" to learn alongside the women because it would have been "shameful". She was

happy to explain that as the classes went on, the men were more and more open to being with

the women in such settings and by the end of the three-year program, the classes were held

together. Several years after the classes ended, Ramatoulaye was contacted by Tostan to

become a Social Mobilization Agent on the Fatick regional team.

Aissatou Seck

When I met Aissatou, she was dressed in a colorful boubou[9] and for the ensuing three

hours, never let a smile leave her face. She was born in a small village called Sorobougou where

she lived with an elder brother and sister and two younger sisters. In Senegal, she and her

family are considered Bambara but she explained, "When you go to Mali we are divided in

several ethnic groups. Me I am a Dioula."

There was no school in her village so she didn't have the opportunity to attend. "What I

remember from my childhood, I was a person who didn't like troubles." Aissatou was the only

one in her family who was like that; her mom said that her "body was too soft." Typically

growing up as a child, her life revolved around daily chores. Because she didn't attend school,

she was responsible for many household chores such as cooking, fetching firewood and water,

and grinding cereals from a young age.

She recounted her childhood to me, first sharing with me that she went to do the

tradition, at the age of eight and was then married at the age of 12, against her will. One

Saturday, her uncle came to her and said, "Next Monday you will be married." She explained

that in their culture, the brother of one's father was essentially also one's father and therefore,

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[9] A traditional garment worn by both men and women in much of West Africa. The female version is a pullover robe that, depending on the quality of the fabric used to create it, can be formal or informal attire. The boubou is sometimes called a khaftan (xaaftan in Wolof) and is often paired with a head wrap.

he has the right to *tell*, not ask, about major decisions he has made such as an arranged

marriage.

It is tradition in Senegal that after a marriage, the woman (or girl in some cases) moves

to the husband's village. Very rarely do husbands move to the wife's village. She explained that,

"When you are departing for your husband's home, they put a whip in your luggage; this is your

father's way of telling your husband that if you do anything wrong, he should whip you." She

said this was something more common in the past but is still seen today.

At the age of 12, Aissatou was married to a Marabout[10] and for the next several years

she traveled around Senegal living in several cities as her husband worked. She gave birth to

two boys before she divorced her husband at age 16. One of the children had died and the

husband took the other without her permission and moved him to Mali – she has only seen him

twice since then. She was married again two years after that and had four children (losing one)

with her new husband, who she is still married to.

Aissatou was a natural SMA and began to do the work before she was even asked. After

Tostan came to her village for a sensitization (similar to what she now does in the field), she

enrolled in the nonformal education part of the CEP. Soon, all of the participants had dropped

out of the classes and Tostan was on the verge of leaving the community due to lack of interest.

Having never attended formal school, she was worried about missing an opportunity to finally

get some sort of education. Aissatou took matters into her own hands. She went around door

to door in an attempt to convince and motivate her community members to attend the classes

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[10] A marabout is many things. He (rarely she) is a spiritual leader or guide and teacher who is sometimes believed to have the ability to see events in the future, give prescriptions on how to protect oneself from the evils of the world (known as gris-gris), and help people attain certain goals in their life. They are sometimes seen more as a sort of doctor and less of a spiritual leader and other times they are purely someone who follows and teaches the Quran.

so that Tostan would not leave the community. Needless to say she was very successful and

Tostan stayed to complete the CEP. After this, Tostan chose Aissatou to be one of five Social

Mobilization Agent (SMA) for the Fatick region.

Mamadou Diallo

Hailing from Gandiaye village, but spending his childhood in Suma Mousaa, Mamadou

comes from a massive family and was his father's 20th child. His father had six different wives,

some of which he had divorced but many of which he was married to simultaneously as Senegal

is a polygamous country. When I asked Mamadou how many siblings he had total, it took him

quite some time to count. Finally, he responded with 36, but he wasn't too sure of himself. As a

young boy, he cultivated land for his parents and looked after their cows, sheep, and goats.

Finally, when he was 15 years old he was able to start primary school.

The maximum age for the Secondary School Entrance Exam was 15 years but because of

a fire that burned all of the school's documents, Mamadou was able to have a new birth

certificate made that made him appear younger than he actually was. He then went on to finish

college and become a teacher. He didn't meet his wife, who was divorced with two children,

until he was 32 years old and had already started teaching. They went on to have seven

children and are still married to this day.

As Mamadou shared more with me about the motivations for his work as a Social

Mobilization Agent, he revealed to me a traumatizing story of his childhood. He had been away

at a wrestling match in the village and upon returning home he found one of his sisters, the one

whom he shared a bed with. He states:

I jumped over the wall at the back of the house and stepped on her arm as she was lying
there. They had done the tradition on her and she was bleeding…I went into the room
to   get my flashlight and turned it on and saw that the blood was gushing then I
shouted…and said they killed her.

They did not kill her, but his sister has suffered since that night. She has been pregnant

more than 10 times losing all but one child. The doctor attributes this to the way that they had

performed the tradition. After this, he explained that one of his Aunts had similar problems due

to the tradition as well. As he told these two stories, I saw the pain in his eyes as he recounted

how he had stumbled upon his wounded sister. He admitted that he still became emotional

when discussing the topic, which he sometimes did during village sensitizations.

After he learned about Tostan through the publicity of the Malicounda declaration,

Mamadou was eager to become part of the program. He said, "Yes, it really motivated me, so I

said to Demba Diawara[11], I am going to work with you, even if don't give me a penny, and I

worked with Demba Diawara and his people for three year without receiving a dime. During

three years." Finally, after the classes had ceased in his village he was asked to become a SMA

in 2001.

Mariama Ndiaye

A Peul from the Kolda region of Senegal, Mariama Ndiaye's self-assurance was

immediately palpable as she began telling me about her life. She is presently living in Kabakoto,

in the region of Kaolack, but was borne in Medina Yoro Foula. She was raised in a big

household, which included her two parents, two younger brothers, two younger sisters, and

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[11] Demba Diawara is the village leader and imam of Keur Simbara village in Senegal. He is honored for known for
his leadership in encouraging village communities to abandon the tradition of female genital cutting.[2] He knew of
the first declarations at the Senegalese village of Malicounda Bambara to abandon FGC in 1997 and he led his
village and many more to the first multilateral announcement at Diabougou in 1998.

two older sisters. Although she was gifted and excelled in school, her mother made her stop

schooling around the age of 12 after she had received her Primary School Certificate. Mariama's

mother was very worried about her carefree nature and thought she needed to get married so

that she would not bring shame to the family.

Mariama was the first to admit that she was not like typical young girls. Interrupting

herself with small bursts of laughter, she recounted to me the way in which she used to bring

her grandmother lunch. "You see the mango trees in Yoro Foula, when I would bring lunch to

my grandmother I wouldn't step on the ground. I would be swinging from one mango tree to

another…I would spend the whole day in the bush barefooted."

She also learned from a young age that women needed to defend themselves and make

something of themselves. She was constantly looking up to women who were busy with their

own activities and told herself that she just needed to imitate what they did. After she stopped

formal schooling, her father, who was an intellectual, found her several jobs such as working

with health vaccination projects and the government census.

It was in Medina Yoro Foula that Mariama got married and had her first child. When she

moved to Kabakoto after getting married, her husband had encouraged her to continue her

education and take part in local literacy classes. She then went on to receive her diploma and

went on to be a facilitator for Village Management and Organization Project. It was also at this

time that she decided she would set a good example for other women by joining every single

association that was functioning in her community.

From here, Mariama continued to excel. She was first a "rural information agent" and

then the vice president of vice president of CLCOP, an organization of big producers with 400

local economic interest groups. By this time, she had had another five children bringing the

total to six. Eventually, Tostan heard about Mariama and one of the regional coordinators came

to pay her a visit before the Tostan classes began to see if she might be interested in facilitating

or being involved.

Shortly after the classes started, attendance began to drop and Tostan was thinking

about leaving the village. Baba, the Tostan coordinator who originally approached Mariama,

told her that she should go and try to motivate them. After this, she explains, "When I was not

working I would come to the classes. I observed that two or three days and I started getting less

engaged with the other job." She became less and less interested with her job and eventually

"My eyes were opened then, I attended the classes for two months and my eyes got open like

never before." Mariama left her job to become a Social Mobilization Agent with Tostan.

Nabou Sall

Granddaughter of a traditional cutter, Nabou Sall was being primped and primed to

become a cutter herself. She says she would have went on to do just that had she not taken

part in Tostan's CEP classes. Born and raised in a small community in Kaffrine region called

Nguigui, Nabou's childhood was cut short as she went through the tradition at the age of eight

and got married at the age of 14.

As a child, Nabou was very close with her grandmother who taught her about life and

how to behave with people, especially with one's husband and his family. She didn't know her

husband before her marriage as her parents and the parents of the suitor arranged it. After the

suitor sent kola nuts to the family signifying he wanted to marry her, they accepted. At this

point he wanted to visit Nabou, the purpose being to judge if she would make a good wife or

not. The parents agreed under the condition that he would bring a goat to honor their

daughter.

After the marriage, they went to live in a community called Missirah in the

Tambakounda region of Senegal where she had two children. After a rough patch where the

family lost all of their farmland and animals, they moved to Ablay-Fanta. Here, Nabou had

another eight children, losing one twin that would have made her total ten. Of the nine living

children, she has three girls, all of whom when through the tradition at five or seven years old.

She began moving between two villages to sell milk and sugar, which was profitable and

allowed her to provide for her family. She even trained and helped other women to get into the

business as well. Soon, she was offered a loan to buy and breed sheep. This was especially

lucrative around Tabaski[12].

In 2004, Tostan came to her community and began their CEP. Both her and one of her

sons decided to attend. As a Peul, Nabou learned to speak Wolof after she had married and

moved with her husband. In the class she struggled with the literacy portion but was always

able to answer questions orally. The facilitator counted on her to liven up the class; one of her

fondest memories was singing and dancing during the classes. Although her husband didn't

attend these classes, she would go home every evening and recount to him everything she had

learned. While all of the classes and modules of the CEP were helpful, Nabou admitted that

Module 7, the one that discusses FMC, had the most impact on her and is the reason why she is

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[12] Tabaski is the name used in Senegal and parts of West Africa to refer to Eid al-Adha also known as the Festival of the Sacrifice or the Sacrifice Feast. This is the holiest of the Muslim holidays and is celebrated world wide approximately 70 days after the end of Ramadan. The purpose of the holiday is to honor the willingness of Ibrahim to sacrifice his son, Ismil, as an act of dedication and submission to Allah. Right before his son was to be killed, Allah intervened by replacing his son with a dead ram. Presently, the holiday is celebrated with the sacrifice of a sheep whose meat will be divided into three parts: one part for the family, one part for friends and neighbors, one part for the poor and the needy.

not a cutter today. Before the classes were finished, Tostan asked Nabou to be part of the

Kaolack SMA Team. She would attend classes but also go into the field with the team to do

sensitizations on villages in the region, something she has been doing for over 10 years now.

Ndaw yiy Dajale aka Ñaaxaate: Social Mobilization Agents

Understanding how SMAs see themselves and their work is critical to learning about of

the motives and methods behind their work. During the interviews, each participant was asked

to describe their role as a SMA to a fictitious person who had never head of their work.

Education and discussion were the two common themes mentioned by participants when

defining their roles as SMAs. Nabou said, "It's discussing to educate, when you hear social

mobilization it's about educating people, telling you things you didn't know about, making you

hear things that you had never heard of." Ramatoulaye explained that, "We go to communities

and to educate people… It's up to us, Senegalese people to help each other, educate each

other." In agreement Mariama says, "Whenever I see practices that can harm us in the future, I

go to discuss with people and sensitize them." Mamadou added, "Being a social mobilization is

sort of a commitment that you take, nobody forced you."

Qualities and Traits of SMA

When participants were asked to give advice to a new SMA as if they were going to be

training someone, the answers revolved around respect, patience, and openness as key

qualities one must hold in order to be a social mobilizer. One participant said, "You have to

keep your mouth shut, open your eyes, be active. Be someone who doesn't get angry easily,

open, patient. If you are a sensitization agent, you need to have those." Ramatoulaye

explained, "First of all, when you go on the field, you have to be disciplined, reserved, and

respectful…. If you don't have these three, you have lost everything in life." Mamadou put

things simply and stated, "Be respectful, be patient, don't rush things…don't shock people with

your words or behavior."

Goal and Purpose of Work

In response to questions about the overarching and long-term goal of their work, many

participants either mentioned Tostan in their response or saw the goal of the SMAs and Tostan

as if it were one single entity. Health, peace and/or harmony, and to a lesser extent human

rights, are all major goals of their work.

**Figure 1: Word Cloud of most commonly used words in participants' responses
to questions on the purpose and goal of their work.**

Mariama does this work "For people to be healthy, live in peace. Because if people are not healthy there can be no peace." Ramatoulaye believes that, "Tostan's purpose is to help people. It's up to us, Senegalese people to help each other, educate each other." As Amadou explained, "You know our purpose is to take them out of the darkness."

Additionally, another salient theme was the hope of universal or continental abandonment of the tradition and forced/early marriage. Aissatou states:

> My main goal in what I am doing is to have everybody abandon at the same time. If I can put it like this, that it no longer exists in Africa, that's my main goal…It would be a declaration, if everybody declared that genital mutilation and forced marriage are banned in Africa.

Wér gu Yaram: Health

"Health" was a prominent theme of which participants discussed repeatedly throughout the interviews in response to a number of different questions. As previously mentioned, health was most notably declared as a major purpose of their work. Mariama, who is in charge of the health component of the sensitizations her team conducts, learned about a person's right to health in the CEP and now believes that "health is fundamental." She also explained it as a major difference between those who had abandoned the tradition and those who had not. "A big difference, a big difference, they [the community members] say it themselves. All the children who didn't go through it [the tradition] are healthier than the others… they are healthier, stronger and prouder."

Mamadou did not directly use the word "health" but he alluded to it when asked about changes in communities that had been sensitized by his team or Tostan's CEP. "The fight against malaria, at that time people wouldn't use impregnated mosquito nets, now wherever you go you will find impregnated mosquito nets… And pregnant women, they are all taking their

vaccination." Aissatou explain the significance of a meeting she had with a doctor and how the

discussion had changed her entire outlook on a very ingrained social belief and practice:

> When we went to Diabougou, there was a doctor from Thiès, he explained something
> very important, that's when I said, I am done with this [the tradition], I will never do it to
> my daughter. When we came back, we reported to the village. That's when Tostan
> brought an educator who educated us and went in depth in the issue and...you could
> see a healthy and good-looking person come out of the tradition completely changed,
> you wouldn't even recognize her. We would believe that it was because of the voodoo
> or mystic practices. After that [the discussion with the doctor], I said I would never do it
> to my daughter.

Aissatou went on to temporarily leave her village for six months to be trained and open

a health post in a different village. Aissatou stated two separate times that children's health

was her motivation for working as a SMA. She also named health to be the second largest

factor, after cleanliness, between communities that had been sensitized by her team or

Tostan's CEP and those who hadn't been involved with Tostan in anyway.

Jamm ak Bennoo: Peace and Harmony

Each participant mentioned "peace" and/or "harmony" multiple times during his or her

initial interview. The contexts varied from the purpose or overall goal of their work to changes

brought to communities who have went through Tostan's programs. Aissatou stated:

> I know that the work I am doing is all about peace...When you are in peace here, while
> somebody else is not in peace there, you have to get in the field get to him...going to
> discuss with them so we all abandon it at the same time is what is going to bring peace.

On the same note, she believes that her very work as a SMA brings peace, "All the children to

whom pain is being inflicted are innocent; so being able to get between them and the person

who does that to them, that is how I know that the work I am doing is all about peace."

A major difference noted by most participants between communities who had been part of the SMA's sensitization or Tostan's CEP programs and those who had not was the omnipresent feeling of peace and harmony in the village. In fact, many of the participants told stories about how they had stepped outside of their job description while in the field doing sensitizations. Sometimes they would come to villages and communities where not everyone was at peace. There may have been a family or neighbors who were fighting and the SMAs would mediate these tensions and stay in the village until everyone was in peace.

Nabou told the story of a time they had to bring peace in a community where the chief of the village was drinking alcohol, committing adultery, and fighting with the community members. "We went to a community where we had planned to spend one day and we ended up staying four days. We thought that we would get the job done easily but we found a situation we needed to discuss in depth to bring peace."

Mamadou recounted a similar story, "We have once faced a situation, if I told you about it you would have goose bumps. I swear by the prophet Muhammad. That family was so broken that we were there until 3 am, and finally God brought peace, so that's important." Finally he ended his response with, "Every time we leave, we leave them in peace."

Ramatoulaye prefers her job as a SMA because of the outcomes it brings. She says "It [the Tostan program] has brought back harmony in lots of marriages." Similarly, Aissatou states, "There is harmony…between men and women." Ramatoulaye talked about how she was able to build better peace and harmony in her family between herself and her husband as well as in her community. "There is harmony in the community now…Harmony between husbands and

wives." she stated. This is why one participant stressed that even between SMA team members there must be harmony and trust in order to be effective.

Sañ Sañi Doomu Adama: Human Rights

As previously mentioned, the Tostan CEP curriculum is based on human rights and responsibilities. In many cases, people, especially women, are unaware of their rights and are subjected to oppressive situations because they don't know that they have a choice not to deal with it. Nabou shared with me her thoughts, "If you don't know your rights and duties it will harm you. Tostan is here to teach you about your rights."

Mariama says, "I had learnt my rights and duties. It's not only men. Women have to defend a lot of things. I used to believe that a woman had just to stay quiet but when I attended the classes I said this is what I am talking about." Learning about these rights was a pivotal moment in her life, "I started being a Social Mobilization Agent because we had learnt about our right to health." Similarly, Mamadou says that:

> The reason why I wanted to join Tostan is that I am just a single person, and also, although human rights existed, they were not much developed in our community. If you look at it…human rights were almost inexistent…I read their [Tostan's] program and how they explain human rights to people using posters, it's extraordinary…Yes, it really motivated me.

Li leen ci soññ: Motives

Traumatizing Event

Although the prevalence rate of FGC in Senegal is much lower than many of its continental and regional neighbors at only 26% (World Health Organization, 2008), the practice is much more widespread in the southern and northeastern regions of the country. For

example, in the region of Kolda, the rate is 94%. The tradition itself and the type[13] that is

performed is often linked to your ethnic group (28 Too Many, 2015). Although never explicitly

asked about the tradition, five of the participants had expressed some degree of trauma related

to the procedure. All four of the women had undergone the tradition at some point in their

adolescence (between the age of 8-14) and one man shared his own story.

Some of the women were taught that their suffering, due to the tradition and larger

patriarchal structures, was normal and just part of life as a woman. Aissatou said:

> I got married at the age of 12. You know when you do the tradition they cut you, after
> they will sew you. Some people sew their children. Now imagine the tradition is a pain,
> after you get married you go back to it so that they can open you, which is also pain.
> Intercourse with your husband is a pain. Giving birth is a pain. What I can say is that it
> looks like you are married to feel pain. Some people are happy to be in marriage but
> you, even when you see your husband you start freaking out…No matter how painful it
> is you have to accept it.

Growing up, women seemed to be taught in two domains: how to behave and live in the house

(including tasks such as cooking and cleaning) and their behavior once they are married and

move to their in-law's house. Ramatoulaye shares life advice that she was given growing up:

> The happiness in marriage ends the day following the night you join your husband's
> house. The rest will only be bitterness but you will have to accept your fate. You will be
> sad, but you have to be strong. When your husband does you wrong, you should
> apologize, when you do your husband you should apologize… So it's all pain and
> grievance, and being patient is all you can do.

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[13] "Type 1: Often referred to as clitoridectomy, this is the partial or total removal of the clitoris (a small, sensitive and erectile part of the female genitals), and in very rare cases, only the prepuce (the fold of skin surrounding the clitoris).Type 2: Often referred to as excision, this is the partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora (the inner folds of the vulva), with or without excision of the labia majora (the outer folds of skin of the vulva).Type 3: Often referred to as infibulation, this is the narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the labia minora, or labia majora, sometimes through stitching, with or without removal of the clitoris (clitoridectomy).Type 4: This includes all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes, e.g. pricking, piercing, incising, scraping and cauterizing the genital area (World Health Organization, 2016)

As previously mentioned, Mamadou was deeply affected by the tradition when he came home as a child to find his sister bleeding after being cut. To this day, his sister has become pregnant more than ten times and has lost all but one of her children due to complications the gynecologist has said were caused by the tradition.

Mariama was passionate about child marriage as she was also a victim of the practice. "Early marriages, don't you think that early marriage ruined my schooling?" She continued, "If it was today do you think someone would have me get married? Wouldn't I go to school? Isn't it because I got educated later that I have all this? Know all these people? Didn't it ruin my schooling?" She paused and concluded by saying, "It [child marriage] did ruin my schooling." She also discussed her sentiments before Tostan's programs and becoming a SMA, "I have been through it [the tradition] and it hurt me and I didn't have the right to get involved." She explained how she realized her interests through Tostan, "I saw that I was really concerned about this. To abandon women excision was a subject of great concern to me. It's hard when you see all this pain inflicted to children."

Unity and Community

It is clear that the work of the Social Mobilization Agents touches more than just the mobilizers themselves. All of the participants referred to a larger motivation of community and national well-being. Aissatou made that clear when she stated, "When you are in peace here, while somebody else is not in peace there, you have to get on the field get to him." Likewise, Ramatoulaye says "It's up to *us*, Senegalese people to *help each other, educate each other*."

Earlier it was mentioned that the SMAs have many times stepped outside of their job description to bring peace and harmony into families and villages who are having problems.

This want and need to be sure that everyone is doing well, is part of the a larger communal

sentiment possessed by every SMA. Nabou elaborated:

> I got to a certain point in my life where I realized that I had to go on the field and educate *my people*, because I could be in peace here but see things coming and that were going to do a lot of harm. That's why I went on the field to sensitize people…That's why I went to educate *my fellow Muslims, my relatives and humans in general* on their rights and what they stand for, which I have learnt and mastered with Tostan. I learnt all that with Tostan, Tostan is for the humans, it's here for you.

Even though the SMAs may have peace in their home and even in their larger

community, they have a yearning to make sure there is peace *everywhere*. Amadou says that,

"When I see somebody who is going through a tough time it makes me feel really sad. I want

everybody, wherever they are in the world, to be in peace." Mamadou and Amadou both

believe their purpose as SMAs is to bring good information to those who don't have it in other

villages. Sometimes there appears to be a motive of helping others as Mariama says,

"Whenever I see practices that can harm us in the future, I go to discuss with people and

sensitize them…" Nabou also added that, "When you are clean and your relative is not, or when

you have peace and your relative doesn't have any, it's like you don't have any. When you have

peace and your relatives also have peace it's always better."

Doxalin yi: Methods

Step by Step

Members from the two teams of Social Mobilization Agents that I interviewed all stated

that they only work and sensitize in villages that practice FGC while a couple of them

mentioned that they also worked in villages that practice child marriage. Each SMA recounted

to me in their own words the entire process of sensitizing communities from start to finish.

When compared with each other, they all described a similar process.

1. Identify Communities: The SMA Teams speak with *le President de la Communauté*[14] and

   introduce themselves, Tostan, and the purpose of their work. The President would

   identify which communities are still performing FGC and to a lesser extent child

   marriage, which was sometimes determined based on the ethnicity of the community

   inhabitants. After looking at all of the communities and where they are located, the

   team would choose a number of villages that were somehow close to each other to

   bring to the Tostan office for approval. This number of villages depended on how long

   the team would be sensitizing in the field because each village usually takes two days.

2. Make Action Plan: After visiting the Tostan office and receiving approval and an order of

   mission to sensitize the identified communities, the team of SMAs will sit and discuss

   with one another to create a plan. Everyone will have a chance to speak and share their

   ideas about how they believe the plan should be executed. It is also during this time that

   each person will be delegated his or her task/topic for the sensitization. Each of the

   members has usually specialized in a topic and knows how to best go about bringing it

   up with the community. They also discuss how they will get from one village to another,

   will it be by a horse cart, maybe a bush taxi or even on foot.

3. Sensitization: Finally, the day of the sensitization arrives and the team is ready to put

   the plan into action. Aissatou explains that first:

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[14] President of Rural Community is like a mayor but at a smaller, village level. Said person is in charge of the interworking and activities in a grouping of villages. Recently the name has been changed to *Monsieur le Maire*, or Mister the Mayor.

> We go to the house of the chief of village, because we think that the chief of village is the Macky Sall[15] of every village. So when we visit a community, we go to the house of the chief of village. We summon the Imam. We tell chief of village, the Imam and the local women's leader and the boys' leader the purpose of our visit. To all the leaders in the village we introduce ourselves and also to all ethnic groups we will say what the purpose of our visit is.

After speaking with all of the people of influence, also including the matron[16] and the headmaster of the school[17] if there is one, they assemble the community members. Next, they begin discussing going from one theme to the next. It is made clear several times throughout the sensitization that this is a discussion and that the SMAs want the village members to ask questions, answer questions, and to participate as much as they would like. Amadou states:

> …first there needs to be harmony. We respect each other. Each one has his part to play. When we go to a community, I don't interrupt people. When we arrive, one will open the discussion and then give the floor to another one, when that person finishes, we introduce another topic and we say that this person is going to discuss it. Every time we do it that way, we are successful.

The themes begin with topics such as hand washing and how to properly use a latrine. These are subjects that are not taboo and ones that the community will feel more at ease talking about. Slowly as the SMAs begin to gain the trust of community members, they will start to discuss other topics such as HIV/AIDS and eventually the topic of FGC and child marriage will be brought up. This part of the sensitization can often times get very emotional and difficult. Sometimes, the SMAs will share their stories with the community. This can lead to community members having larger

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[15] The President of The Republic of Senegal
[16] The leader of the public/community health post, usually a woman.
[17] Similar to a Principal of a school.

realizations about the dangers of some traditional practices and the villagers themselves

will share their stories. Amadou recalls:

> After the discussion she [a community member] cried and said: I lost my child
> because of early marriage and early pregnancy. If I had known, I wouldn't have
> let my daughter get married. She was crying and people were comforting her.

Amadou then explained the effects of such emotional moments, "You know if other

people see that, they will be very careful." This is also when it becomes very important to have

the support of the community leaders. During a village sensitization in the Kolda region, the

matron shared her experiences at the local health post. In reference to the tradition, the

matron stood and stated "*Dafa baaxul*[18]!" She continued to explain to the village that

whenever she sees problems with women giving birth or carrying their children to full term, it is

usually those who have went through the tradition. At one point, the Imam also stood to

reaffirm that nowhere in the Koran[19] does it state a woman must undergo FGC.

During this sensitization, the topics of child marriage and FGC were also brought to the

surface in a delicate manner. For example, instead of blatantly asking if the community they

practice forced or child marriage, one of the SMAs asked, "How do people marry here? Are

children taken out of school when the time comes?" On this note, several of the participants

had also mentioned the importance of showing respect when discussing taboo topics such as

FGC. It is not all ethnic groups that practice FGC and it can be uncomfortable and humiliating to

both groups if it is discussed in front of one another. That is why, as Aissatou puts it:

> If the community has different ethnic groups including some that do not do the
> tradition, we have separate discussions, we go to those who do the tradition and talk to

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[18] In Wolof it means "This is not good" and stated in a manner that puts emphasis on the verb. In this case, the verb is '*baaxul*' meaning 'to not be good'.
[19] Holy book of Islam.

them, and we tell them, because we are not children, if we get on the field and walk from one community to another, it's because what we are doing is important to us. Because children's health is our motivation.

At the end of the sensitization, the ultimate goal is to have the community agree to abandon the tradition and child marriage. If all of the community leaders are there and in agreement with the message that the SMAs have brought, then it is usually easy for the team to get the entire village to make a declaration. SMAs have also discussed times where one or two community members were not in support of the abandonment but the community was in full support. In the end, the community went along with the declaration anyways.

Teamwork

The team of Social Mobilization Agents working together is not a coincidence. Having already shown the prevalent feelings and of unity and solidarity, it is no surprise that in a communal culture such as the Senegalese, people would choose to do this work in teams. Each member comes from a diverse background with unique experiences and will therefore have a different role to play in the sensitization. Aissatou states:

> You know it's not like one person says everything. One will speak until a certain point and then another one will take over until another point, and another one will take the floor. One will talk about excision, one will talk about early marriage…we help each other because I believe that being united as one is more useful than going on our own.

Mamadou explains a little more about discussing the topic of FGC, "This is a women's issue. It's up to the women to say what problems it is causing them…Because we men, when we talk about excision, we cannot go too deep." Senegal is comprised of a multitude of different ethnic groups and languages; consequently it is important that during the sensitizations

communities feel at ease with the SMAs and the languages they are speaking. Mamadou makes

this clear when stating:

> Because me I speak Soce, Serere, and Bambara. But I don't speak Pulaar, I don't speak
> Sarakhole and my Peul is not that good. So we need to gather all those members so that
> when you go to a Soce community the Soce member can talk to the Soce people, for
> more clarity. When you go to a Bambara community the Bambara member can talk to
> the Bambara people, for more clarity. When you go to a Al Pular community the Al
> Pulars members can talk to the Al Pular people, for more clarity.

Not only is the language important but also who is talking about which subjects. Nabou

reinforces the importance of speaking different languages but also sheds light on its importance

when discussing sensitive issues. She says, "If you have to discuss somebody's tradition you

must speak his language, so that you can agree. The Wolof don't practice the tradition…so if

you go there and you speak Wolof you can upset them."

There is also the practicality of having a team to split the work. "There are too many

topics so it cannot be done by one person. So one will cover excision, another one will cover

early marriage…then we tackle education until people understand it." Nabou says.

When asked why the SMAs work in teams, Mariama responded with an old Wolof proverb,

"Benn baaraam mënul yëkëti doj" which loosely translates to "one finger alone cannot lift a

stone." Amadou described the team members as "complimentary" to each other and

Mamadou summed it up by saying, "Social mobilization agents cannot go alone, because when

you say mobilize, it means gathering people. So if you want to gather people, you need to be a

group of people." For the SMAs it was as though working as a team was the most logical and

possibly the only option if they wanted to succeed in the field.

The social mobilizers that I worked with believe their work boils down to two main

components: discussion and education. In order to be successful in this line of work, one needs

to be respectful, patient, and open. The interlocking themes of health, peace/harmony, and human rights also play a dual role as the main motivators for the social mobilizers in the field and the three most discussed topics during the interviews. The participants showed a deep want and need to share their knowledge with others and most expressed a level of discontent thinking about those who had not yet been educated by their teams. The overall sense of community was very strong and extensive; they wanted to share the information with *everyone*. Furthermore, all of the SMAs had talked about one or more painful and traumatic experiences they had went through growing up.

Because of the seriousness of the topics they discussed, notably child marriage and FGC, and the inherent taboo that surrounds them, the SMAs were fully prepared with a plan. This plan included working with government and local officials in the identification of villages, creating a plan of action with Tostan, and finally a two-day sensitization. Lastly, working as a team of mobilizers is an indispensible part of their methods. Each team member has their specific roles and they would not be as successful without each other.

Interpretation

First of all, the personal feelings of empowerment are what motivate mobilizers to bring education and peace through dialogue to as many villages as humanly possible. The Social Mobilization Agents that were part of this research truly believe in the positive effects of the work they are doing. Their dedication to and success of their work is a testament to power of education and teamwork. Many of the participants had either never been formally educated or if they were, it had not been to a high level. After completing the CEP program with Tostan,

many of the participants became in some ways, a new person with new beliefs, new

characteristics, and most importantly, a newfound sense of purpose.

In the past, these participants were complacent with harmful traditional practices that,

often times disregarded the voice of women and endangered their well-being. It was taboo for

a woman to voice her opinion and it was shameful for a man to listen to a woman's opinion.

After learning about their rights and responsibilities as human beings, both the men and

women felt more comfortable stepping outside of the traditions they grew up with and

reassessed them. Now, the women are more confident in sharing their opinions and the men

are more open to accepting their new roles. More so, the opinions of women are even valued

and sought after, something that was unheard of in the past. This process of self-realization and

self-actualization has given birth to a new generation of Senegalese women who are driven by

human rights, education, and their own life experiences.

Secondly, the uniting of three elements has allowed for the empowerment of SMAs,

notably the women, to take root. The themes that the participants repeatedly highlighted in

the interviews are in many ways interconnected. Health, peace/harmony, and human rights

have very different definitions yet rely on each other in order to be perpetuated.

**Figure 2: Connection between the key themes of Human Rights,
Peace/Harmony, and Health**

The purpose of Figure 2 is to show the relationship between the three themes. It is

awareness and education on one's own human rights that makes health and peace/harmony

possible. After these participants learned about their human rights, including the right to health

and peace, they implored their rights to secure these two things in their families and

communities. If, for example, one does not know their human rights, they do not know that

they had the right to health and peace. Additionally, if someone who is aware of their human

rights is not healthy, then they know their human rights are being infringed upon and the entire

mechanism in Figure 2 stops working. Without health, one will not be in peace and vice versa.

Above all, without the background knowledge of human rights, one will not be aware of their

right peace and health and therefore cannot demand that it be fulfilled.

Seeing the connectedness and importance of these three themes, it comes as no

surprise that they are the main goals of the SMAs teams. Once these SMAs begin to live a life

where their human rights are respected and they live a healthy and peaceful life, they want to

share this with others. They know first-hand the struggles of rural Senegal and what people,

especially women, have had to endure. The SMAs were not satisfied with only their family and

communities being healthy and in peace; this is why they have chosen to continue teaching

these themes in other villages. Because they have experienced these things, they see it as their

duty and responsibility to teach others.

Thirdly, I see this motivation to educate others, notably on health, peace/harmony, and

human rights, as a product of two larger personality traits. The first of these traits I believe is

the possession of empathetic feelings and secondly, a general sense of and value of community.

Life is not always easy, especially in rural Senegal, and these social mobilizers have undergone

the same challenges of many of their fellow Senegalese. They have now learned certain things

that have helped them improve their quality of life and they want to share this so that others

can also improve their well-being. Additionally, after learning about the intricate details of each

person's life, I found it shocking to see the difficulties and traumatic instances that all of them

had overcome throughout their lifetime.

Although prior to Tostan, some of them may have not categorized their suffering as just

unjustified or preventable, the CEP program validated the experiences and the feelings of the

SMAs. Many of them had expressed that deep down they knew things were not good, but they

did not speak out about it because they didn't think they had the right to. However, after Tostan's programs, the mobilizers began to realize that they were not the only ones who had these experiences, nor were they a necessary part of life.

Fourth, knowing how much pain, both physically and mentally, is caused by some traditional practices such as child marriage and FGC, the mobilizers are now prepared to try their best to make sure no one else has to endure what they themselves had to go through. These were experiences, feelings, and motives that were inside of them all along, but it was Tostan which validated them and gave them the tools to educate others in an attempt to end the pain and suffering elsewhere. As previously mentioned, Senegal is a very communal culture and this is another reason why it is important to work in teams when doing social mobilization. This sense of community that is mentioned means that one cannot rest unless everyone in their community, which may not have a tangible boundary, is resting at ease.

The social mobilizers that I interviewed see everyone in their ethnic group, in Senegal, in Africa, and around the world, as their brothers and sisters and will therefore do all that they can do to reduce suffering by sensitizing on the aforementioned themes. There is an old Wolof proverb that supports the idea of the importance of family and community. *Nit, nit ay garabam*, which means "A human being is the remedy for another human being". This means the most precious treasure on earth is not riches but relations with other people and when you have others, there should not be any suffering.

Conclusion

The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948) grants the right to education to every living human being. This right is also part of Senegalese constitution. However, we have seen forms of traditional or formal school systems, which are often built upon colonial foundations and lack many resources, fall short of universal standards and objectives. Specifically in Senegal, formal school systems are taught in a language that is inaccessible to the majority of its citizens. On the other hand, nonformal education (NFE) responds to the culture of the population (using local languages and a curriculum that is culturally sensitive) and there is evidence that NFE is filling the gaps of formal education. Throughout the world, and largely in the majority world, governments have turned to INGOs and NGOs who fund NFE programs to help meet international standards.

These programs overcome barriers presented by the formal education system and are accessible to everyone, including girls and the elderly who are often left out of formal education. Additionally, access to and participation in NFE can enable people to satisfy their other human rights and enhance their social engagement. Research has found that NFE is particularly beneficial for women and girls. Tostan's CEP program, in particular nonformal education classes, has been successful in providing participants with basic literacy skills, promotion of grassroots democracy including local female leadership, awareness of human rights, and other significant intangible skills that are useful for everyday life. Nonformal education programs such as the CEP are more accessible to local populations because they are instructed in the participants' local language, attended voluntarily, and cater to contextual needs.

Many aspects of my research have confirmed the previously mentioned points around

NFE. For example, all of the research participants accredited their social mobilization efforts to

Tostan and the knowledge that was brought to them through their NFE programs. For many,

these programs were a pivotal life changing experience that allowed them to realize their true

potential. The majority of those who attend the CEP classes are women and the majority of

those elected to be part of the CMC are women. As I previously mentioned, the teams of SMAs

are made of five team members, four of which are women. Throughout my research, especially

in the interviews with women, I noted a profound distinction between their lives before and

after their participation in the NFE programs. Their lives dramatically improved after their

participation in the NFE programs provided by Tostan.

Social activism and social mobilization take many different forms around the world,

some more successful than others. In the past, academics have tended to focus on the social

movement as a whole as opposed to the individuals that make up the movement although this

information is critical in recruitment, motivation, and sustainability of the movement itself.

Research showed that the largest motivators to be part of a social movement an individual's

experience and an individual's surroundings. Many researchers noted a bond that was formed

between the individuals that collaborated together for a larger social cause. Feelings of

empathy and social responsibly play a large role in the motivations of being a social activist as

well as their relationships, which can sometimes even put pressure on an individual to be part

of a social movement.

Similarly, my research showed that the participants, who were part of a larger social

movement, were all influenced by their environment. Aspects in the environment that most

notably influenced them were a traumatic experience in their childhood and feelings of

community and unity. They all possessed the emotion of empathy as they often expressed how

they did not want any other child to have to go through the same terrible experiences that they

themselves had went though. Additionally, they spoke about their work as though it was

something that they *needed* to do, something that came from deep down inside of them. They

wanted to make their community, their country, and the entire world a better place. A bond

between team members was definitely present. Participants described their team members as

part of their family and sometimes an extension of themselves. However, my research showed

no signs of pressure from others to be a SMA or Tostan staff members to be part of this social

movement.

Sen's Capabilities Approach is a people-centered approach that focuses on the quality of

life that individuals are actually able to achieve which is analyzed in terms of 'functionings' and

'capability'. Nussbaum contributed to this theory by adding ten capabilities (see Appendix A)

that she defends as universally valid and necessary for all human beings in order to live a life of

dignity. Tostan's theory of change revolves around providing the skills needed to empower

African communities in a holistic, human rights centered, and sustainable manner. In many

ways, Tostan's nonformal education programs, much like the idea behind the Capabilities

Approach, places freedom as both the primary ends and the principal means of development.

The CEP program is the means in which its participants are able to learn about many

different conductive topics, giving them the freedom/ability to achieve something

(functionings). The end results are achievements in many shapes and forms, including the

abandonment of child marriage and FGC, better health, knowledge of and access to human

rights, and peace. The focus of this program is to educate participants on what they are effectively able to do, which in turn highlights their capabilities. NFE programs such as the CEP have given their participants the tools, or the means, that a person needs so that they can reach they full capacity as humans beings. The focus of Tostan's program is centered around human rights, but it includes so much more. These programs are a means to an end, the end being a higher quality of life.

Postcolonial/Global Feminism (PGF) is a theory that acknowledges that patriarchy is omnipresent and comes in many different forms and effects women (and men) differently. The oppression that a woman experiences in one part of the world is directly affected by what is happening in another part of the world because we are all connected. The problems of Senegalese women and girls are much different than that of my own as an American.

Through the in-depth interviews and life histories of each participants, I was able to get a better sense of how deeply ingrained some forms of oppression are in some communities. There are many situations where people have normalized several forms of oppression, acts that many don't even recognize as unfair treatment, and they have written it off part of daily life. There are many things that I view as marginalization, sexism, and/or oppression that someone else may view as part of life and something that they are supposed to live with because it cannot be changed. As previously mentioned, the majority of SMAs and participants of the CEP and CMC are women confirming that NFE, in this case, are beneficial to women and increases their social engagement.

By using Grounded Theory I was able to anchor my data and findings in the research I myself collected in the field without a predetermined hypothesis. I constantly compared all of

the data I had collected to see if there were any salient themes appearing. The process of

coding allowed me to profoundly absorb and digest my interviews and the lives of my

participants. Although this process was extremely time consuming, I believe it was the best way

to learn and understand my research while getting the most accurate findings for my research

questions. Although there is a lot more that needs to be research on this front, this research

begins to shed light on the methods and motivations of social mobilizers who are combating

harmful traditional practices by educating and discussing with others at the grassroots level,

one village at a time.

Ndánk ndánk mooy jàpp golo ci ñaay
Literal translation: 'Little by little one catches the monkey in the wild'
Metaphorical meaning: 'You need patience to reach your goal'

Yàlla, Yàlla bey sa tool
Literal translation: 'Invoke God, but cultivate your own field'
Metaphorical meaning: 'Help yourself, God will help you'

Dég-dég amul i tank, waaye jàll nam ndox
Literal translation: 'The news do not have legs, but they cross water'
Metaphorical meaning: 'You cannot stop the information flow, truth is universally shared'

Practical Applicability

First and foremost I believe that Tostan will benefit from this research, as it has been an

in-depth look at some of their most successful Social Mobilization Agents. If Tostan wants to

continue the arguably most effective practices of their programs, "Organized Diffusion" though

teams of SMAs, it is critical to have an understanding of the motives and methods of their work.

Additionally, this is important to Tostan as an organization because they conduct several

trainings where people from around the world come to learn about their pedagogy and model. This means that other organizations from around the world may be using a similar model of "Organized Diffusion".

As part of Tostan's programs, the SMAs I worked with are specifically targeting communities that practice child or forced marriage and FGC. In Sub-Saharan Africa alone there are countless organizations that are working to end these two harmful practices. UNICEF, for example, is currently working in 22 countries to eliminate the practice of FGC (UNICEF, 2016). Girls Not Brides (GNB) is another organization that could benefit from this research. This organization is looking to strengthen the capacity of organizations working with a mission to end child/forced marriages. GNB and their partners would profit from learning more about the motives and methods behind successful grassroots social movements.

Lastly, I believe this would be useful to any think-tank and academics in the fields including but not limited to: international studies, international relations, development studies, African studies, community organization, social mobilization, harmful social norms and practices, female genital cutting, early/children marriage, and grassroots change.

Recommendations for further research

Conducting a long-term (one to three years) Participatory Action Research (PAR) project in all regions where SMAs are working would allow for more thorough findings. PAR methodology emphasizes planning and conducting research *with* participants/communities as opposed to the traditional methods, which conduct research *on* subjects. In doing so, the power disparity between the researcher and the participants would be lowered and the generation of co-knowledge will be more easily cultivated therefore leading to truer and more

accurate results. This would also allow for Tostan and their mobilizers to apprehend, anticipate, and heighten positive potential in their work by linking the produced knowledge of the research to Tostan and the mobilizers' agenda. If done correctly, a research project such as this could train the participants on how to conduct research themselves.

It is important to look deeper into how programs such as this method of "Organized Diffusion" can be replicated in different parts of the world to effectively combat persistent harmful traditional practices. This would mean the research questions would transform more towards "How can we replicate this program" and "Would SMAs work in XYZ context". This research would allow for practitioners and academics to better understand questions surrounding social action, community organization, and social mobilization in the majority world which may, in the future, aid in a better understanding and addressing of the pressing daily needs of societies and how women can be active participants in society.

Lastly, it is important to understand the impact of the sensitization activities on the communities themselves. When the mobilizers move from village to village teaching about different themes, what happens in the villages once they leave? Are conversations continued amongst villagers or do they carry on like the mobilizers had never come? Does the community see and/or feel a difference after they have been sensitized on these themes? We need to know what their impact is on the ground in the communities they work in.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Nussbaum's Capabilities List

1. Life. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

2. Bodily Health. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter.

3. Bodily Integrity. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction.

4. Senses, Imagination, and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason-- and to do these things in a "truly human" way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid non-beneficial pain.

5. Emotions. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development.)

6. Practical Reason. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience and religious observance.)

7. Affiliation. A. Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (Protecting this capability means protecting institutions that constitute and nourish such forms of affiliation, and also protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech). B. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of non-discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

8. Other Species. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.

9. Play. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.

10. Control over one's Environment. A. Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. *B. Material. Being* able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure. In work, being able to work as a human being, exercising practical reason and entering into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers. (M. C. Nussbaum, 2000, p. 78-80)

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your family?

2. How were decision made in your family growing up and presently in your own family?

3. What did you learn about being a woman/man and who taught it to you?

4. What was your life like before Tostan?

5. How did you get involved with Tostan?

6. How do you describe your role as a social mobilization agent (SMA)?

7. Why do the mobilizers work together?

8. What else would you like me to know about your work?

9. If you were to meet a new SMA, what advice would you give to them?

10. What are you teaching your daughter about her future? What are your hopes for her?

Appendix C: Follow up Interview Questions

1. When did you feel that you could change something? When you could you make

   decision and choices in your life?

2. When did you feel like you yourself and your opinions were valued? In your family, your

   community, etc.?

3. Have you ever felt that you were silenced? Do you still ever feel this way?

4. A life changing moment in your life. (how/why)

5. Have you ever had questions from the villagers you sensitize that are not about the

   Tostan curriculum?

6. Have you ever had questions from the villagers you sensitize that you are unable to

   answer?

7. How can you improve your team? What are you guys missing?

8. If you could have a 6th member – what would his/her role be?

9. How do you feel supported by your family, friends, community, and Tostan?

10. What can Tostan do better/to help you more?

Appendix D: Assent Document: Individual Interviews

Project Title: The Social Mobilization Agents of Tostan's Community Empowerment Program in Senegal: Motives and Methods of "Organized Diffusion"
Researcher: Antonia Morzenti

We are doing a research study about the Social Mobilization Agents (SMA) that have emerged as part of Tostan's Community Empowerment Program (CEP) and/or the Community Management Committee (CMC). The researcher is interested in understanding the experiences of the SMA including their history, successes and failures, motivations behind their work, any barriers they have experienced, and how they work together. This research study is a way to learn more about SMAs. If you decide that you want to be part of this study, you will be asked to participate in one or more interview sessions that will last up to one hour. If at anytime during the interview you need or want a break, please tell us.

There are some things about this study you should know. A benefit of your participation in this study is the opportunity to contribute to the body of knowledge around nonformal education initiatives in Senegal and West Africa as well as studies on social activism and social mobilization. This is an appreciative inquiry and there will be no criticisms or evaluations made on your work. The purpose is to hear your experiences and perceptions. Your story will be shared with the SIT Graduate Institute community, the translator/interpreter, Tostan, and other academics if the report is published.

The interview will be audio recorded for the purposes of clarity in transcription only. The audio recording will not be presented within the final study and will be destroyed when the research is complete. Your responses will be used exclusively for the purposes of the researcher's study.

If you do not want to be in this research study, you will not be in trouble. You are not required to answer the questions. You may pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. You may withdraw your consent or stop the interview at any time. There is no penalty for discontinuing participation after you have consented.

When we are finished with this study we will write a report about what was learned. This report, and any report written there after, will not include your name or any identifying factors.

If you decide you want to be in this study, please sign your name.

I, _____, want to be in this research study.

_____   _____
            (Sign your name here)   (Date)

Appendix E: Definitions and Acronyms

<u>Community Empowerment Program (CEP):</u> A three-year holistic nonformal education program in rural villages that uses the human rights-based approach to ensure everything reinforces human rights and responsibilities. The aim is to empower communities to change their own lives. This program has been implemented for over 20 years in eight countries.

<u>Community Management Committees (CMC):</u> A part of the CEP in which Tostan trains up to 17 democratically selected members (at least nine of which are women) in the management skills necessary to implement development projects in their communities.

<u>Female Genital Cutting (FGC)</u> used interchangeably with <u>the tradition:</u> refers to "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The World Health Organization (2008) states:

> FGM/C is a violation of girls' and women's human rights and is condemned by many international treaties and conventions, as well as by national legislation in many countries. Yet, where it is practiced, FGM/C is performed in line with tradition and social norms to ensure that girls are socially accepted and marriageable, and to uphold their status and honor and that of the entire family.

<u>"Organized Diffusion":</u> A process used to help spread information through connected communities and social networks. It is used to increase the impact of their CEP and CMC while also spreading new ideas organically from person to person and community to community.

<u>Social Mobilization Agents (SMA)</u> also referred to ask <u>social mobilizer</u> or <u>social activist</u>: A Tostan community member who has been specifically selected for their skills in communication and their dedication to positive social change by Tostan. After receiving training from Tostan, these SMAs form a team of five members who play an important role in raising awareness as they visit neighboring and intermarrying villages to facilitate discussions and sensitizations on human rights-focused themes.

<u>Tostan:</u> A US-registered 501(c)(3) international nongovernmental organization with current operations in over 450 communities in Senegal, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Mali, and Mauritania. Their mission is to empower African communities to bring about sustainable development and positive social transformation based on respect for human rights.