Broadcasting Change: Radio Talk Shows, Education and Women’s Empowerment in Senegal

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This dissertation titled

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Abstract

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Broadcasting Change: Talk Shows, Education and Women's Empowerment

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This study examined radio talk shows as a platform for Senegalese women to debate social issues and identifies new directions and alternative avenues for their lives. Radio talk show in Senegal is a dynamic, flexible, and interactive tool for communication while highlighting the way women relate to and use this medium to voice their opinions in a broader world of information and ultimately effect social change.

Utilizing a hermeneutic phenomenological approach grounded in an African centered paradigm, this study uses from forty (34) in-depth interviews, three focus groups, document analysis and more than 120 hours of participant observation. Moreover, this study integrated a mix of, paradigms and approaches to provide insights into the dialogues and listening practices that women are engaged in while seeking to understand the avenues that radio talk shows provide for women’s empowerment and education in Senegal.

This study found that the talk shows were a remarkable empowering and educational forum for women to negotiate, articulate and re-invent themselves. Through their interaction on the talk shows, women realized that they were more than just receivers of knowledge. Their constant quest for answers produced knowledge that fostered their humanity and led them to new meanings, which in turn became the catalyst for personal transformation and conscious actions.
The study further challenged the persistent and exclusive emphasis on formal education’s ability in Senegal to educate women and transform them into critical thinkers. I argue that the failure of formal education to grant a holistic transformation for women requires a diversification of solutions and perspectives from various institutions and platforms. These platforms must be willing to incorporate critical significant socio-political issues such as social inequality, imbalanced power relations, and economic inequity and gender discrimination, which are often left out in the formal education system.

This study highlighted the immense potential the media offers to educate and transform Senegalese women lives and contributes to our understanding of the under-studies alternatives model of education for African women by illuminating important aspects of Senegalese women’s education and agency that have been barely studied. It calls for the expansion of models/platforms that provide holistic and relevant education to African women’s lives.
Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to:

My Wonderful husband Seydina Ousmane Sene

My Inspiring father Mamadou Diamanka

My Loving mother Aissata Sow

And my Lovely daughter Marieme Sene
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. 3  
Dedication ................................................................................................................................. 5  
Acknowledgments ................................................................................................................... 6  
Table of Contents ................................................................................................................... 9  
List of Figures .......................................................................................................................... 13  
Chapter One: Setting the Stage ............................................................................................. 14  
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 14  
  Background of the Study ..................................................................................................... 19  
  Problem Statement ............................................................................................................. 27  
  Purpose of the Study .......................................................................................................... 29  
  Research Questions ............................................................................................................ 30  
  Significance of the Study .................................................................................................... 30  
  Delimitations and Limitations of the Study ....................................................................... 32  
  Definition of Terms ........................................................................................................... 33  
  Organization of the Study ................................................................................................... 34  
Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework ........................................... 36  
  Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 36  
  Literature Review ............................................................................................................... 37  
    Women, Education and Development ............................................................................. 37  
      Women, Education and Development in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Senegal ......... 37  
      Women, Education and Development in Post-Colonial Senegal ......................... 46  
    Development Communication ......................................................................................... 56  
    The Modernization or Dominant Paradigm ................................................................. 57  
    Dependency/Critical Paradigm ....................................................................................... 67  
    The Participatory Paradigm ......................................................................................... 70  
    Radio Broadcast in Senegal ............................................................................................ 74  
    Research on Radio .......................................................................................................... 80  
  Theoretical Framework ....................................................................................................... 86  
  Africana Womanism .......................................................................................................... 87
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Theory</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersectionality: Africana Womanism and Critical Theory</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Methodology</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for a Qualitative Inquiry</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretive Paradigm</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An African-Centered Paradigm</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging African-centered Paradigm and Hermeneutic Phenomenology</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Site</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale for Research Site: Why Dakar?</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Fieldwork</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of Participants</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection Methods and Procedures</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Observation</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Document Analysis</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Institutions</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Agencies, NGO’s and Women’s Rights Organization</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media Centers</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positionality: The Research and the Researcher</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Issues</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility and Trustworthiness</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation and Crystallization</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prolonged engagement in the field</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member checks</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Debriefing</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

1. Map of Senegal.........................................................................................130
2. Participants levels’ of education...............................................................210
3. Radio talk shows genre THEMES distribution........................................230
4. Radio talk shows preference...................................................................231
Chapter One: Setting the Stage

Introduction

Maymuna\(^1\), a woman from the small village of Saare Yero in the Kolda region of southern Senegal, was circumcised as a child, just as all young girls in her village had been for as long as anyone could remember. This procedure resulted in health complications for Maymuna, as it has for countless other Senegalese women whose culture requires them to be circumcised as a form of spiritual cleansing. The infibulations which follow the cutting of clitoris in many instances to preserve the virginity of the girl-child have the tendency of narrowing the birth passage and thereby making it much difficult, painful and risky for the child to be delivered. Maymuna, like many such women was unable to deliver her first child normally as result of complications arising from such operations. As such, she was forced to have a C-section which in some developing countries is risky due to the lack of adequate equipment and trained nurses.

Later, the radio talk show on the health implications of Female Genital Excision (FGE) created a sense of awareness in Maymuna which gave her the courage not only to resist but also challenge the age-old tradition that has had severe impact on the lives of many like her, leading to fatal consequences in many instances. As Maymuna began to listen to the radio talk show for women on FGE, the memories of her own ordeal in childbirth began to unfold before her own eyes reminding her of the immense blood loss she experienced while trying to give birth to her first child. Maymuna’s own painful

\(^1\) Maymouna’s story is a narrative recounted in Ousmane Sembene’s film Mooladé
experience and her memories of those who bled to death or died in childbirth made her
determine to put an end to a practice that had damaged the physical and psychological
health of so many women in her village. She became resolved to join the voice of
awareness that was coming from the radio talk shows and contribute her quarter to
salvage her fellow women, especially younger girls, in her community from the dangers
of FGE. Although she was unsure initially what the consequences of embarking on such a
campaign in a purely conservative society would be for her the radio talk shows increased
her awareness so high that she began to perceive the task as duty rather than a mere
adventure.

Maymuna therefore began to mobilize the women and younger girls and
encouraged them to listen to the program which came on Radio Soxna Yi every Monday
and Thursday evening. She created discussion groups that met regularly after listening to
the radio program to further discuss the salient issues on FGE and propose solutions to
the problems that were posed in the program around the subject. In this way, a new
consciousness began to dawn on the women and girls of Saare Yero that made them resist
the harmful practice of FGE, as the messages of these radio talk show, reminded the
female listeners about their own painful experiences of FGE and the lessons learnt from
some of their colleagues who succumbed to premature death as a result of the fatal
consequences of FGE. Under the leadership of Maymuna, the women of the village
decided to challenge the practice of FGE by speaking against and refusing to subject their
girl-child to this nefarious practice. The radio program taught them that the practice was
not sanctioned by Islam but tradition and that men used it to maintain their control over the sexuality of the women as a way of ensuring their loyalty to their husbands.

Radio broadcasts informed the women of Saare Yero that the tradition of genital excision is not condoned or even encouraged by Islam, as so many adherents had believed. As a result, the women mobilized and began to rethink the role of the power structures often associated with Islam in their adherence to this practice.

As the ranks of the conscious women allied to the cause of liberation initiated by Maymuna began to swell, the men of Saare Yero started fearing an imminent revolution from their women folk. The men held a meeting one day under the auspices of the village head with an agenda to curb the rising tide of female rebellion against what they considered culture and tradition nodded down to them by their ancestors. They decided to act immediately to avoid the situation from growing to uncontrollable dimensions. The all-male meeting ended with the unanimous decision to confiscate all the radio transistors of women and burning them in the village center as a mark traditional intolerance to the “evil effects of modernity” in the village brought to the village by the agents of so-called civilization.

But they were too late – change had already begun. With the perseverance of emerging women, leaders in the community such as Maymuna and her lieutenants, the youth and the educated among the male inhabitants had given their support to the cause of fighting against such harmful traditions. The embers of the fire that consumed the village women’s medium of awareness creation – their transistor radios – had hardly died out when progressive forces from among the women and young and educated youths
began to turn on their radio which transmitted the messages of radio that reinforced the education of the women along the lines of consciousness building. Some of the most influential elderly men of the village too began to join the bandwagon of fighting against harmful practices as they listened to educational programs on their own radios. Thus, the conviction that was validated by radio broadcasts that encouraged women to rise up and transform their village and their lives as result of Maymuna’s newly found courage and the knowledge from the radio broadcast, became the basis of social transformation and empowerment. Maymouna’s story is the story of thousands of African women from villages and cities across the continent where harmful practices like FGE have been perceived as part of tradition in general and Islam in particular. However, radio talk shows are contributing significantly in the campaigns for raising the awareness of the people on such practices. Hence, radio talk shows provide an alternative to the inadequate and insufficient formal education for women in Senegal by offering them a platform to more effectively address the structural and institutional challenges that they encounter in their daily lives in the country.

In Senegal, radio programs have been central forces for raising awareness and informing women about deeply private issues, such as women’s rights in Islam, divorce, health issues and FGE. A multitude of radio talk shows address issues of marriage, healthcare, and religion that are neglected by the formal education system. These broadcasts explain legal issues, provide public services and challenge dominant ideologies. The programs create spaces and action where social transformation can occur. How do they help transformation occur? As this study shows, the radio talk shows create
a public sphere where educative ideas are diffused to audiences of mixed socio-economic, political and cultural backgrounds. In this way, the consumption of ideas is not limited to any specific social class or category. Thus, women have been involved in the dissemination of the ideas against FGE both as discussants on radio talk show panels and listeners of the programs to whom they are primarily targeted. Women associations are created in many communities with a view to disseminating information passed onto the women through such programs. Consequently, women become the agents of change in their own communities through the diffusion of such messages as those of the anti-FGE campaign.

What is fascinating, furthermore, is how these deeply private issues undergo a shift in being made public via the airwaves. It is imperative to also recognize the important role popular media plays in shaping grassroots awareness and social movements. Radio talk shows based on social and religious issues have become a popular program for many Dakaroises. According to PANO S Institute West Africa (2010) more than 80% of urban residents own a radio and spend a considerable amount of their time listening to talk shows and programs centered around people’s daily issues. Because of their widespread reach and accessibility radio talk shows are among the most important sources of information in informal settings and domestic spaces. This phenomenological case study is intended to contribute to literature on Senegalese female education and empowerment. A complete understanding of women’s educational possibilities in Senegal cannot be accomplished without an examination of the information media, radio in particular, provides for its audience.
Background of the Study

International conferences on women and gender issues held in Mexico in 1975 and Beijing in 2009 have provided platforms for the articulation of gender inequalities. Such conferences, forums, workshops, policy initiatives all over the globe have fueled debates and discussions that both spread and accelerate women’s education and empowerment (Byrne, 1990; Diaw 2005, Stromquist, 1998). These forums have created a sensitization that has resulted in the creation of various gender movements in the developing world such as women’s bureaus, Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD). The movements resulted to a steadily growing international awareness for the need to advocate for women’s emancipation. As a result of the rising international sensitization on women’s issues that have been culminating in the creation of both international and national NGOs and grassroots organizations great strides have been made over the past two decades to boost girls’ education and promote women’s issues worldwide. Important social changes have occurred as a result of a fusion of local and global initiatives to advocate for the improvement of women’s rights and conditions. These efforts include an impetus provided by the Beijing Conference, UN Decade for Women (1975–1985), as well as the formation and development of women’s local groups and associations from the 1970’s onwards to fight for women’s rights associated with education, civic and political participation and preventing violence against women. The women’s groups and associations have stimulated socio-economic and legal transformations that have deeply changed the way women are perceived, represented and treated. Women have started enjoying greater access to education, the job markets,
divorce rights and access to career and financial advice, as well as legal services with less discrimination. The commitment to move women’s emancipation agendas forward translated into an explosion of new and innovative scholarship and knowledge produced by and about women. In addition, the struggle for the emancipation of women also requires enormous financial commitment and investment to move forward women’s status in developing countries. According to the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), in 2006, $38.3 billion was allocated in bilateral aid to support women’s issues in developing countries by the United States and a dozen other countries (ICRW, 2008). Financial support geared to fight gender inequalities and promote female education and empowerment helped reform policies, implement laws and improve lives (World Bank, 2007).

As the international community advocates advocated for more women’s rights and gender equity, the Senegalese parliament signed and ratified many international conventions and laws promoting the welfare of women, including the Millennium Development Goal 3, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. But ratification is not enough; Senegal, like many African nations, has tried “to move those resolutions off the shelves and into the fields” (Fonjong, 2001, p.12) and has since initiated various changes through the passage of laws and policy implementation to affirm its commitment to gender equity, such as the National Strategy on Equity and Gender Equality (NSEGE) in 2003. The passed laws and policies were enshrined by the ratification of a new constitution which banned all forms of gender discrimination. The
Senegalese constitution in its article 7 further declared the “equality of all human beings before the law and of equality between men and women in law” (La Constitution du Sénégal, 2001). Similar measures were initiated with regard to female education, including the Education For All (EFA) policy. This legislation attempted to achieve parity in primary schools, while also promoting adult literacy programs. These initiatives demonstrated the Senegalese government’s increasing attention and concern for the problems of its daughters, mothers, wives and sisters. The agenda and discourse of the Senegalese government suggest the recognition of education as a vital element in the overall strategy for female empowerment as well as sustainable development.

As a result of the newly adopted policies, gains were achieved and more opportunities opened up for Senegalese women while practices like sexual harassment and violence against women have also been banned. The number of women in local and national government bodies significantly increased in the last decade, as women in the national parliament saw their numbers almost double from 12.1% in 1995 to 23.02 in 2009 (Direction de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2009). Further gains were noticeable in the educational sector where the reforms improved with a 24.8% increase in girl’s enrollment in primary school to 76% in 2008 from 51.2% in 2000 (UNESCO, 2009).

But many questions remain unanswered: have the reforms transformed gender relations, and to what extent, if any, have these changes trickled down to affect the majority of Senegalese women? What needs to be done to ensure more effective changes that would filter down to the average Senegalese female’s benefit in terms of
equality in the socio-economic, political and cultural arenas? Even in light of increased attention regarding female issues, statistics show that Senegal has yet to succeed in improving girls’ school retention (UNESCO, 2009). A 2009 UNESCO Report reveals that while 71% of Senegalese girls attend primary school but by the time they reach secondary school only 22% of them remain. The same report found that almost half of Senegal’s women aged 15 and above are illiterate (UNESCO, 2009). A similar situation is found in the capital city of Dakar, where one would expect higher levels of education for women due to its cosmopolitan location and high concentration of symbols of modernity such as schools and other social facilities, yet forty percent of women in Dakar have never attended school (World Bank, 2007).

The Senegalese government emphasis on literacy programs placed on formal education and literacy programs over the last three decades seemingly has not removed the obstacles that hinder female’s lives (Diaw, 2005). While formal education is one of the ways women can be empowered and liberated, a critical analysis of the state of educated women reveals that relying on formal education to transform women’s lives is problematic at best (Kambarami, 2006). Social institutions, such as schools, play an important role not only in reproducing the interests and values of the dominant group, but also in framing reality in such a way that it fits the interests of those who hold power (Gramsci, 1971, Mayo, 1999, Apple, 1996). Formal education has the ability to facilitate or hinder students’ capacity to question. Therefore, it may alter their experiences by expanding or obstructing their understanding of societal rules and values (Shor, 1992). Thus, enrollment and retention in school does not guarantee that females will be equipped
with the critical thinking skills needed to reflect upon and engage in transformative changes. Educators formulate curriculums which “often reflect the perspectives and beliefs of powerful segments of our social collectivity” (Apple, 1990, p. 8). For many, education involves formal schooling and therefore the major function is to help learners acquire skills that will enable them to enter the job market. There is evidence that suggests that attending school has not been proven to change gender relations worldwide (Leach, 1998; Moshi, 1998; Diaw, 2005). School settings are often sites where female are socialized to internalize and accept their inferior status (Longwe 1998, Moshi, 1998). In Senegal, as in most African countries, formal education is not adequately structured to address women’s daily social realities and emotional needs (Diaw, 2005). As Moshi (1998) argued:

There is the assumption that formal education is the ultimate liberator of women in Africa. However, we need to bear in mind that much of what is taught in formal education is like a double-edged sword- for the most part it is foreign and sometimes has affected societal values for the worse. Although formal education can be used to raise women from the shackles of poverty and inequality, it can also make the same women victims of continuous criticism for abandoning cultural and traditional values. (p xi)

The failure of formal education to grant a holistic transformation for women requires a diversification of solutions and perspectives from various institutions and platforms that are willing to incorporate the critical issues left out by formal education in their agenda such as social inequality, imbalanced power relations, economic inequity and gender discrimination The synergy between formal education, literacy programs, and informal education through the media can be a powerful medium to reach a wider female population and facilitate gender equity and women’s empowerment. Information education through media should be used to supplement formal education Thus, the
coalition of several elements must work together to effectively educate all the segments of the female population.

Radio is recognized as a vital social space for examining the daily lives of its listeners (Dia, 2002; Diagne, 2005). Increasingly, women are using radio talk shows as a medium to articulate their issues and to diversify the possibilities of implementing alternative discourses on gender (Skalli, 2006). As many studies have shown, radio is a powerful medium for effecting social and political change (Abdulkadir 2000; Carver 2000; Dia, 2002; Skalli, 2006; Spitulnik 2000). In some instances, media such as radio have found to produce better results than traditional forms of formal teaching (Bhola, 1989).

As most Senegalese radio stations broadcast in local languages, radio programs have the ability to better articulate local values and cultures through their own music, language, songs and histories (Dia, 2002; Diagne, 2005). By using listeners’ native languages, radio talk shows are able to effectively communicate with listeners’ on important issues. They also provide forums for ordinary citizens who would otherwise be excluded from public discourses due to language and cultural barriers.

Radio stations offer innovative and vibrant programming in different local languages. In this way, radio has been found to greatly impact development (Onkaetse, 2002). Radio programs are effective in these communities for several reasons: They “are cheap to create and cheap to consume especially in countries with high illiteracy rates and where rural people primarily speak indigenous languages. [And] creators and consumers of radio content do not need to be literate due to the oral nature of the radio”
The emphasis on orality in Senegalese culture due to the high illiteracy rate makes radio programs use of local languages relevant. Using local languages allows people to express themselves with fewer limitations. Even with new forms of media becoming increasingly available, Africans continue to rely heavily upon radio broadcasting for information and entertainment (Dizard, 2000; Olorunnisola, 2000).

Ubiquitous and accessible, radio reaches the widest spectrum of people. Furthermore, in contrast to other types of media such as pre-recorded television shows, radio talk shows are flexible, dynamic, and interactive. Radio allows listeners to multi-task, enabling women to prepare meals, clean their homes, do laundry, care for their families, and socialize while listening to a program.

The emergence of cell phones and landlines has brought a new dimension and relevance to the dynamic possibilities of radio talk shows, allowing for more dialogue between listeners and radio hosts, and making radio a mediating agent and an interactive tool. Approximately 51% of Senegalese people own a cell phone and this statistic does not reflect the number of owners of landlines in the nation (ARTP). The number of cell phone users is even higher in Dakar, the capital city, where 64% of landlines subscribers and 72% of cell phones owners in the nation reside (ARTP, 2008). The proliferation of cell phone companies and emergence of mobile phones as status and modernization symbols has made the use of cell phones a widely practiced social phenomenon with many adults, especially women vying for the most sophisticated mobile phones that they can afford. Cell phones make it even easier for people to call radio stations anonymously.

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² While the internet provides many of the same conditions as radio (flexibility, dynamism, and interactive setting), it has serious limitations in Senegal due to illiteracy and power cuts, along with a lack of accessibility to women in domestic settings.
without having to go to a telecenter, which is a public place where others might be present. Thus, cell phones have both expanded and reinforced power for individuals by giving them a medium, which allows their voices to be heard anonymously. As Dia (2002) writes, “thanks to the telephone (fixed or cellular), listeners moved from being passive consumers to active participants in the new social, cultural and political changes unfolding before them” (pp. 4-5).

Radio can provide anonymity and a venue for network formation. In Senegal, radio talk shows operate in two formats: in the first, the topic of discussion is determined in advance by the producers, while in the second, it is determined by the callers. While both formats can be empowering for listeners, each has its distinctive advantages and structures. The first has the benefit of enfranchising religious, medical and legal experts who discuss the range of possibilities about various subjects. The second format reflects the consciousness of the population by allowing issues from the populace to take center stage, perpetuating and extending their significance for the listening communities.

It is widely acknowledged that mass media has the potential to remarkably affect people’s lives around the world, especially in developing countries (Abu-Lughod, 2005; Ilboudo, 1999). Both globally and locally community, radio stations have flourished in diverse political circumstances among people originating from a wide range of backgrounds (Dia, 2002; Diagne, 2005). Radio stations are playing a key function in the process of local development. In addition to creating listening communities (Anderson, 1983) radio stations enable people to share their knowledge and experiences through educational programs (Ilboudo, 2001; Dia, 2002, Diagne, 2005).
In Senegal, the emergence of private radio stations in the late 1990s significantly changed the media landscape. Today, radio broadcast stations are educating people and providing a forum for marginalized groups to gain greater access to information and more opportunities to participate through radio talk shows and phone-in programs. The phone-in programs provide women with a venue to voice their opinions. As Patel (1998) argues, “radio provides the platform for debates in communities that formerly relied on media which seldom bothered to present their views or ask questions which plagued them” (pp.3-4). Today in Senegal, the exposition, accessibility and affordability of radio stations make them a unique mechanism through which one can hope to bring about positive change.

**Problem Statement**

Radio remains by far the dominant mass medium for the majority of people in developing countries. As West and Fair (1998), state, “in Africa, radio is not simply a modern medium; it is the locus of communicative action” (p.5). Despite the widespread recognition of radio’s importance, little scholarship addresses this medium in relation to women, education, and empowerment. There is a wealth of scholarship on media studies and women that focuses on women’s negative portrayals in the media. While the literature reveals many gaps regarding media and women in African contexts, I am not leaning toward investigating women’s representations in the media, as I am more interested in what works and can work for African women. Therefore, among the gaps I found in the literature, I choose to investigate strategies and possibilities that have
worked positively for women, namely radio, as a medium that has the ability to transcend literacy barriers

In Senegal, radio has become a powerful force in transforming the political, social, and economic lives of the people. Senegalese women are utilizing radio ingeniously and assertively to produce knowledge that not only challenges patriarchy and male hegemony but also as a medium to empower and restore justice for women. Women are using mass media programs such as radio talk shows to “create alternative discursive spaces where it is possible to redefine patriarchal gender roles while questioning the socio-cultural, economic, political, and legal institutions constraining them” (Skalli, 2006, p. 36). While the phenomenon cannot be attributed to only one driving force, media in general and radio in particular have been enabling instruments in this process (Skalli, 2006). The dialogic exchange that takes place during talk shows provides not only a possibility for the dissemination of women’s voices but, more importantly, offers alternative knowledge. While extensive research has been published on entertainment education and community radio, there is virtually no scholarship on the relationship between radio talk shows, women’s education and empowerment. There is also a dearth of research on commercial radio in developing countries. Most, if not all, of the focus of development resources and scholarly research is directed towards community radio. Similarly, commercial radios provide vital services, especially in the Senegalese cases where “commercial radio seems to enjoy greater popularity than community-based radio stations” (Dia, 2001, p.14). The commercial radios have been in the forefront in the crusade against social injustice in Senegal
Furthermore, research has been focused on Asia, Latin America, and a few Anglophone African countries such as South Africa and Kenya but has virtually excluded Francophone countries such as Senegal. My study addresses this lacuna by investigating the ways in which radio has been or could be used to educate and empower women while improving their lives. My study focuses on radio as a dynamic, flexible, and interactive tool for communication while highlighting the way women relate to and use this medium to voice their opinions in a broader world of information and ultimately effect social change. This research explores both the dialogues and listening practices that women engage in while seeking to understand the avenues that radio talk shows provide for women’s empowerment and education in Senegal. Using an Africana Womanism centered framework together with critical theory, I examine Senegalese urban women as change agents who utilize radio to articulate their views and produce knowledge about personal body politics and social justice issues.

**Purpose of the Study**

As mentioned, scholarly research on radio talk shows in Senegal has been sparse, with little or no systematic inquiry into how and the extent to which radio talk shows can and do fulfill educational and empowering functions for women. The present study sought to understand and analyze the avenues and possibilities radio talk shows provide for urban women while exploring the educational, personal and social implications of radio talk shows on their lives. The study further seeks to understand whether empowerment occurs in the process. Specifically, this study focuses on understanding:

- The reasons for listening and participating in radio talk shows.
• The agendas, structures and dynamics of the interactions
• Themes and contextual factors
• Personal and social implications of listening and participating in radio talk shows.

Research Questions

The four main questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the characteristics of radio listeners?
2. What are the characteristics and the content of the radio talk shows?
3. What factors prompt or motivate women to engage in talk shows?
4. What roles does the radio play in the everyday life of the listeners?

Significance of the Study

This study offers the first in-depth examination of talk shows in relation to women’s education and empowerment in Dakar, Senegal. Through this dissertation, I strive to provide some understanding of how the use of radio talk shows can transform women’s lives. In so doing, I seek to contribute to the existing literature about non formal education, media studies and women’s studies. This study further calls attention to the crucial role mass media and new media could play in empowering women rather than stereotyping them. This phenomenological case study provides insights into how women can take a medium that has been mainly used for patriarchal ideology to turn it into a catalyst for social change and empowerment. In this study, I hope to make women’s case public and draw attention to a medium which has had a critical connection to domains beyond the Senegalese household.
In highlighting the positive effects radio has had on female listeners and callers, it is hoped that radio stations and programs could be encouraged to continue to broadcast shows that would lead to their empowerment and ability to bring about positive changes. If stations are cognizant of the effects radio programs have on citizens, perhaps stations would make efforts to improve their programming by investing more resources and time to research the information they are sharing with the public. These investments could include higher profile guest speakers and ordinary citizens. This would allow for discussions of more diverse and controversial issues which, in turn, could enhance and enrich women listeners’ knowledge while giving them access to typically out-of-reach scholars, political figures, and religious leaders whose positions in the society give them the important role of impacting their lives through laws, policies, sermons and curriculum design and development.

By increasing awareness of the importance of interactive radio talk programs, findings could influence government policy makers and NGOs could pay more attention to radio’s potential to involve underrepresented groups in social change activities. This could translate into greater investment in radio programming and pave the road for investment in other non-formal means of education. The findings of this research could inform the kind of material that is broadcast or the way talk shows are structured and prove to NGOs that they should be investing in commercial radio not only community radio programs.
Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

This study was situated in an urban area in Dakar, the capital city of Senegal. I focused on female listeners and callers to radio talk shows to examine the phenomenon of talk shows and its effects on women as they listen, interact, engage in dialogue and construct meanings. Radio was chosen because in Senegal radio has been “established over time as not only the most popular means of communication and of disseminating information, but also, due to the oral tradition of the society, the preferred medium of cultural expression among the people” (Dia, 2002, p.4). Although the number of community radios has greatly increased in Senegal in the past two decades, this study focuses particularly on private, commercial radio stations since they are more popular than community-based radio stations and state-owned radio (Dia, 2005). By including talk show programs in local languages, “the private radio stations have introduced a new approach to radio production by inaugurating a truly local form of communication, due to the systematic use of national languages.” (Dia, 2002, p.13). While these radio stations broadcast primarily from the capital city Dakar, they also broadcast from various cities nationwide and reach a large area of the country. As a qualitative investigation, this phenomenological case study does not seek to generalize its findings. The experiences of this limited number of urban Senegalese women cannot be representative of the experiences of all urban Senegalese women. Another limitation of this study is translation since all but one of my interviews were conducted in Wolof. On many occasions, I found it sometimes difficult if not impossible to translate the words of the participants precisely into English. The cultural background differences limit the precision of translation of
some expression, as some Wolof words and sayings used do not have a cultural
equivalent in English. Moreover, the women’s use of body language, proverbs, idioms
and their various meaning according to the contexts, posed serious challenges in the
exercise of rendering them both in written forms and in translating them in a different
language in many instances. As a result, I recognize that these constraints might have
affected the interpretations of the findings. In addition, as a Senegalese woman who spent
ten years in Dakar, the setting of this research, I went to the field with an insiders’
knowledge of the experiences of urban Senegalese women. Consequently, my pre-
constructed knowledge influenced the whole process of this dissertation ranging from
data collection to the end product – the right up – of this research.

**Definition of Terms**

The key terms used in this dissertation are defined as below. A more
comprehensive discussion of these terms is provided in chapter two:

- **Audience**: listeners of radio programs

- **Commercial radio station**: A radio owned by an individual or by a private
  company and whose primary goal is to generate profit.

- **Community radio station**: a radio station that broadcast to small segment of a
  population [the community]. The main goal of a community radio station is to
  promote development by addressing issues that relate to the community in
  question.

- **Dialogue**: participatory engagement in discussion as equal partners in relation to
  knowledge and power
• **Dakaroise**: female residents of Dakar

• **Education**: the outcome of experiential interaction with enlightened and rich socio-cultural environment

• **Empowerment**: the mental attitude that springs from of the process of awareness or conscientization

• **Formal Education**: schooling

• **Local language**: the native language of different ethnic groups of Senegal

• **Public radio station**: government-owned radios

• **Non-formal education**: forms of education outside of the school curriculum

• **Wolof**: a local language spoken by more than 80% of Senegalese

### Organization of the Study

This dissertation is organized into eight chapters. Chapter one sets the stage and gives an overview of the research. It provides the background for the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the limitations and delimitations of the study and the definitions of the operational terms. Chapter two consists of a review of the literature that pertains to this study as well as the theoretical frameworks that guide this research. I stress the significance of both critical theory and Africana Womanism as lenses through which to capture, understand and analyze the realities, contradictions and complexities of Senegalese urban women. In chapter three, I present a comprehensive description of the research design, selection of participants, sources of data, data collection and data analysis procedure of the study. This chapter also discusses issues of reflexivity and positionality while offering a
reflection on the limitations of the fieldwork experience. Chapter four introduced the 30 women who participated in this study and offered a detailed description of the contexts in which I met each of them. Chapter five describes and categorizes the radio talk shows the participants were involved in, based on their content and format. Chapter six addresses the reasons behind the women’s participation/involvement in the talk shows, while chapter seven addresses the impacts the radio talk shows have made in the lives of the participants. Finally, chapter eight synthesizes this dissertation. In this last chapter, I discuss the implications of the findings and I present a summary conclusion and suggestions for further study.
Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter is divided in two parts which offer an analytical review of the relevant literature and the theoretical frameworks that guide this study. The first constitutes the literature review is organized into five sections. It begins with an examination of women, education and development in Senegal. The second section examines at the evolution of the development communication field. A historical development of Senegalese radio is addressed in the third section. The fourth section presents an overview of the research on radio in Africa. The literature review ends with a reflection on the major gaps and how this study contributes to addressing them. The second part of this chapter deals with the theoretical foundation of this study. In this part, I first present and discuss how Critical theory and Africana Womanism helped me to tease out issues about Dakaroises daily experiences vis-à-vis radio talk shows. I then discuss the intersectionality of Critical theory and Africana Womanism and how a fusion of the two theories offers a unique ways of interrogating the perspective Dakaroises’ experiences vis-à-vis radio talk shows. The chapter ends with a reflection on how this study contributes to filling some of the gaps that emerged from the literature review while contributing to our understanding of the important of radio in the lives of women.
Literature Review

**Women, Education and Development**

In order to understand the impact of radio talk show on women’s education and empowerment we need to explore how the roles and status of Senegalese women evolved and changed over time through the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. Such an investigation reveals how and whether or not women have been accommodated and accepted into educational, social, cultural and political institutions.

**Women, Education and Development in Pre-Colonial and Colonial Senegal**

To thoroughly understand the current state of Senegalese women it becomes necessary to investigate and trace back their educational, social, political and economic experiences during the pre-colonial period. In Senegal, like in many African societies, a strong emphasis is put on the community in which each group member carries a significant role in the education of children (Bray, Clarke, & Stephens, 1998; Egbo, 2000). Education, in most traditional African societies including Senegal, aimed at training children for responsibilities in the community. The form of knowledge that was transmitted was not found in books and laboratories, but was rather part of the daily experiences in people’s lives (Maurial, 1999, Mumford, 1970), therefore establishing a connection between people and their everyday environment. George (1999) argues that indigenous knowledge is generated by common people, when trying to find solutions to day to day problem scenarios. This approach of making sense of the world and one’s place in it through trial and error inquiry is contrary to school knowledge which follows
more dogmatic rules and procedures (Mkosi, 2005, p. 88). George’s ideas concerning traditional African education and knowledge systems are echoed by Zulu (2001) who sees a pressing need for “understanding education as: a means to an end; social responsibility; spiritual and moral values; participation in ceremonies, rituals; imitation; recitation; demonstration; sport; poetry; reasoning; riddles; praise; songs; story-telling; proverbs, folktales; word games; puzzles; tongue-twisters; dance; music; plant biology; environmental education, and other education centered activity that can be acknowledged and examined (p. 36).

It is important to recognize, however, “that …there is no one, single indigenous form of education [or culture] in Africa,” but rather an assorted mixture of dynamic ethnic, historical and social factors that often make generalizations problematic or simply inadequate (Bray 2000, p. 27). With that in mind, one can nevertheless argue that many African ethnic groups and cultures share a wide range of similar beliefs and experiences. Like in all African societies, a system of education existed in Senegal prior to the arrival of colonization and Islam, and practical experience was the main method of knowledge acquisition and learning which was accompanied by a strong emphasis on respect, social values, rules, regulations, sanctions and vocational training (Bray, et al. 1998; Mautle; 2001). While writing was almost nonexistent, morality played a central role in education as well as in the socialization of the child (Alidou, 2005; Egbo, 2000; Kann & Sharma, 1993). When investigating women and education in Africa, Alidou (2005) cautions researchers not to continue to put women in the margins of knowledge production. Alidou (2005) argues that African women have immensely contributed “and continue to
contribute to knowledge production from within the spaces of orality” (p.54). African women excel in the oral mode of knowledge transmission through proverbs, songs, storytelling and puzzles (Egbo, 2000; Reagan, 1996). In Senegal, women hold a strong tradition of orality which maintains a principle channel for women’s production of knowledge and voices. This is particularly true of the griottes who “are given a license by society to say whatever they want without censorship” (Jagne, 1998, p.59). The tradition of orality in Senegal is important to the education of the community because it has always been a way of not only transmitting knowledge, values and norms but also addressing injustice.

In analyzing the pre-colonial educational system in Africa, Moumouni (1968) identifies three main stages. The first stage, which runs from birth to the age of eight, is a phase in which women are exclusively in charge of the education of children, regardless of sex. This stands in contrast with the second phase or adolescent stage in which boys and girls are trained in different spaces and acquire different sets of skills and knowledge. Girls are taught a variety of household chores such as cooking and sweeping and boys participate in less domestic activities such as farming, herding or fishing. During this phase, critical societal values are passed on to children. This is the moment in time that women are responsible for their daughters’ education regarding their sexualities and sexual health which includes a variety of topics from menstruation to reproductive health related topics. “The final stage is when the adolescent is initiated to the cultural rites informing her/his adult identity” (Moumouni, 1968, p. 24). Moumouni’s analysis highlights the gendered and normative goals of traditional African education, maturity,
and values. Initiation ceremonies prepare each gender group, for their future role in society (Assie-Lumumba 1997; Cutrufelli, 1983). Consequently, traditional African education had pre-set gender norms and provisions for both women and men to follow. These provisions confine women’s role to the domestic sphere by restricting them from entering the public sphere.

However, other scholars such as Cheikh Anta Diop have highlighted and celebrated the vital role women have played in pre-colonial Africa. Diop (1987) argues that matriarchy, a system in which a woman is the leader of the family or clan and where social positions, succession, and inheritance are passed on through the female line, has been in present in Senegalese societies for centuries. While patriarchy has been strongly associated with Africa, Diop argues that Wolof society was quite the opposite as it represents one of the most powerful matriarchies during the pre-colonial era. As Amadiume (1997) writes, matriarchy was rooted in “a very powerful goddess-based religion, a strong ideology of motherhood and a general moral principle of love” (p.101). Whereas European societies have always been patriarchal, Africa “was the cradle of matriarchy” where mother-centered and pro-woman society prevailed (Diop, 1987, p.82). Although pre-colonial Senegalese societies may have been hierarchical, women held positions of power and were active members of society both in the domestic and public spheres (Noris, 2003). As Callaway and Creevey (1997) have noted Senegalese “women move about freely and fully participate in the country” (p. 594)

In reviewing the literature, two factors have emerged as being responsible for the fall of the African woman by reinforcing patriarchy and contributing to her subordination
and oppression: Islam and colonialism (Christianity). Both of these factors are critical to any profound understanding of the trajectory of Senegalese life and people. Islam was first introduced to Senegal in the 11th century coming across the Sahara from North Africa (O’Brien, 1971; Levitzion & Pouwels 1999), however, mass conversion took place after the French colonized and occupied the territory. In Senegalese history, there has been a period when Islamic law alone was applied for the adjudication or resolution of various interpersonal or family issues (Callaway & Creevey, 1994).

In colonial Senegal, Qur’anic education was used as a cachet and mark of social status (Ndiaye, 1982; Levitzion & Pouwels 1999) and learning mainly consisted of reading and memorization of religious texts. As time went on the Qur’anic schools received increasing support from the community. However, when looking at the colonial context, the number of well-educated women in Islam was far from impressive. While both girls and boys were offered an opportunity to attend school at an early age, very few women actually pursued advanced Islamic studies (Bop, 2005, Marty, 1917, Ndiaye, 1982 ;). As Marty states, “La fillette va rarement jusqu’au bout de Quoran; et à la sortie de l’école, prise par les travaux du ménage et des champs, elle oublie ce qu’elle a appris” (1917, p 3) “the girl rarely finishes the Quoran; and once she is out of school, burdened by the domestic chores, she forgets all she had learned” [My translation]. As a result, communal Senegalese knowledge of Islamic production was mainly controlled by a small number of elite men (Bop, 2005). Today Islam is the main religion in Senegal as 94% of the country’s population is estimated to identify as Muslim (Ross, 2008). However, there has been much controversy as to the exact role Islam has played in reshaping traditional
Senegalese society, including gender roles. Some critics, such as Madeleine Devès-Senghor (1972), associate the spread of Islam with the decline of the role of the women in Senegal. In her study entitled “the role of women in the practice of customary law in Senegal,” Devès argues that Islam has given women an inferior rank in society in which they are reduced to their role as wives and mothers, whereby their two major duties are complete submission to their husband and bearing children.

However, on the other side of the debate, Diop argues that Islam in Africa was not as destructive to indigenous African values as colonialism. He claims that Islam, rather, co-existed with African traditions for more than a hundred years and was able to fuse with traditional culture in an inclusive way. This synergetic relationship between Islam and traditional Senegalese beliefs is exemplified today in contemporary Senegalese society. Islamic teaching was not forced in its entirety to all West African societies and cultures. “The written law of Islam interacted with each specific set of pre-existing customs and traditions to create distinctive Islamic societies that differ, sometimes strongly, from each other” (Callaway & Creevey, 1994, p. 31). Moreover, it is important to recognize that as a religion, Islam advocates education for both sexes. The Qur’an does not exclusively address men or women, but all humankind. In its very essence, the Qur’an obliges every Muslim, men or women, to learn regardless of the cost (Kane, 2001, p.11). Several Senegalese Muslim women such as Sokna Magat Diop and Sokna Muslimatu Mbacke have played a tremendously prominent role in public religious and political leadership positions. Sokna Magat Diop was well-educated in religious matters and became “the full leader of her branch of the Mourides, holding “the normal powers of
a khalifa over her community and “initiates disciplines and appoint muqaddams” (Coulon, 1988, pp.129-131). The responsibility of Senegalese women does not end in the home (Callaway and Creevey, 1994) yet Senegalese society has often marginalized or relegated its women, as is the case in many other societies.

Like Islam, colonization has heavily influenced Senegalese culture and society. Through colonization the French introduced Senegal to the European-style of formal learning which brought the concept of grouped children between four walls. In colonial Senegal, education was controlled and restricted to the sons of chiefs and top leaders and only a few schools were opened in the main urban areas of Senegal (Barro, 2005; Farrington, 2007). In colonial Senegal, as was the case in many colonial Africa countries, school knowledge was dominated by colonial experiences that undervalued indigenous ways of knowing and explaining life. Colonial schools were not designed to provide people with the knowledge they needed to develop their communities. As Rodney (1982) argues, the colonial school system “was to train Africans to help man the local administration at the lowest ranks, and to staff the private capitalist firms which meant the participation of few Africans in the domination and exploitation of the continent as a whole” (p.240). As a result, people were clearly denied their status and were trained only with basic skills. Such an education promoted domesticity and produced obedient servants. Similar to other colonial education systems, in Senegal the colonizers failed to put in place an educational system that met the needs of the Africans.
(Eshiwani 1993). As Kelly (2002) rightly puts it, the French colonial educational system’s purpose was:

to expand the influence of the French language, in order to establish the [French] nationality or culture in Africa…Colonial duty and political necessity imposed a double task on our education work: on the one hand it [was] a matter of training an indigenous staff destined to become our assistants throughout the domains, and to assure the ascension of a carefully chosen elite, and on the other hand it [was] a matter of educating the masses, to bring them nearer to us and to change their way of life (p.17).

Achieving cultural assimilation by producing educated French assimilé in the colonies was a major goal in the French agenda. Yet the French policies left out the majority of the population need. “For the great part, [education] was designed to do no more than provide a little primitive literacy and counting for hewers of woods and drawers of water” (Davidson, 1991, p.318). In addition to class biases, the French colonial educational system had grave gender implications. Smock (1981) argues that European conceptions of women as helpless housekeepers caused school administrators to favor the admission of boys over girls. Furthermore, in her book, *The Eloquence of Silence*, Marnia Lazreg (1994) argues, that during colonization the French unwillingness to not only treat women as man’s equal, or even as valuable participants can be attributed to the inferior treatment of women in their own country where women did not get the right to vote until very late the twentieth century. Yet this is not particularly surprising in terms of the previously mentioned French colonial educational policies which were neither concerned for women nor the masses (Conklin, 1998). Instead their policies aimed at disseminating French culture and values to groups of elites. In French colonies, the educational agenda was intended to advance “the quality of private life for both
children and husbands” (Egbo, 2000, p.64). Hence, females received little to no consideration in the French colonial agenda. Colonial educational policies in fact marginalized women and led to the erosion of women’s position and influence in society. Because the majority of girls’ education in francophone Africa was initiated by Catholic missions, Muslim girls experienced a great deal of discrimination, leading to a deeper marginalization for the majority of Senegalese girls (Djibo, 2001). Similar discrimination was observed in Morocco where non-Muslim girls were favored over Muslims by the colonial government (Sadiqi, 2003). Everywhere in West Africa, the colonial educational focus was on boys. The colonial system was designed to train males as leaders of communities and heads of households whereas women were molded to be wives and mothers (Kinnear, 1997). According to Gaidzanwa (2006), colonial education increased women’s domesticity by isolating them from public, political and “lucrative spheres of colonial economies” (p.1). While both African women and men have suffered from colonization, colonization “distort[ed] and pervert[ed] the African males' images of women” (Coquery-Vidrovitch, 1997, p.1, cited in Sehulster, 2004, p.367) by “defining women by the three S's: silence, sacrifice, and service” (p. 18). The French colonial legacy contributed very little to the development of women’s education as it was heavily gendered with women at both the primary and the secondary level being directed by “bourgeois notions of femininity centered on domesticity and wifehood” (Gaidzanwa, 2006). As a consequence, the majority of women were left unequipped with the necessary skills to embark on higher education or enter the formal economy. As Djibo (2001) writes:
Colonial powers having not immediately felt the urgency to use women, the fate of the latter was the least of its main concern, as consequently revealed by the following statistics; in 1918, only 503 girls attended the French West African schools; in 1925, 2500 [girls], and 1940, 7140 [girls], that is hardly a tenth of the overall school enrolled female population. Thus, this constitutes the origin of the imbalance between men and women from the point of view of their integration into a professional life. (p.79)

**Women, Education and Development in Post-Colonial Senegal**

Senegalese independence coincided with the emergence of modernization theory which advocated for urbanization, industrialization and adoption of Western ways of doing and seeing things. Like many African nations, Senegal embraced the politics of the modernization paradigm the years following its independence which exuberated the living conditions of Senegalese women who were already heavily disadvantaged in comparison to men vis-à-vis paid jobs, education, and political offices (Callaway and Creevy, 1994). The role conferred to women in the modernization paradigm was that of recipients where women were only seen as reproducers rather than both reproducers and producers (Gadio, 1993). Yet as Davison (1988) argues, “African women do not view themselves as relegated to one or the other sphere and often operate in both. Production (usually included in the public sphere) and procreation are interwoven in the daily lives of African women” (p.8). However, development experts presumed that men carried out all productive labor. The ignorance of women’s realities and contribution attested of the patriarchal biases of dominant paradigm. As Scott and Reinner write (1996), “when women are discussed in any specific way by the modernization theorists, they are presented in remarkably flat terms, and often uniformly oppressed by men and family structured” (p.25). The perception of women as inferior is noticeable in Lerner’s work.
For Leiner (1976), “traditional women are content to accept the role and status assigned to them” (p.199). For modernization theorists like McClelland (1976):

a crucial way to break with tradition and introduce new norms is via the emancipation of women…The most general explanation lies in the fact that women are the most conservative members of a culture. They are less subject to influences outside the home than the men and yet they are the ones who rear the next generation and give the traditional values of the culture (pp. 399-400).

The years following independence, the Senegalese government implemented projects that worked towards the assimilation of women into modernization. The immediate years of post-independence witnessed an emphasis on formal education, with the government investing more than 30% of its national budget into the education system. While boys’ enrollment increased the following years, the educational system was simply another version of the colonial educational experience (Barro, 2005). The president at that time, Leopold Sedar Senghor, called for an educational system with a “curriculum modeled so closely on the French system that his opponents accused him of forgetting Africa and favoring Europe” (Shattuck and Ka, 1990, p.15). Senghor was persistent in his belief that Senegalese children ought to be taught in French, a language which was first of all foreign to them and secondly “of little use for obtaining non-existent jobs” (Ndiaye, 2006). The policy failed as a direct result of its lacking alignment with Senegalese needs and realities, compounded by problems of overcrowded classrooms and mismanagement of the policy. While formal schooling was failing, the government was failing women by ignoring their critical role in the economic development of the nation. Until the late 1960’s the Senegalese government did “not include women in any official development plan” (Isern, 1990, p.13) as the policies ignored the contribution of women and therefore left them in the margins of the newly
independent nation. However, the major shift in the 1970s laid the foundation for a new vision for women.

In 1970, a study conducted by Ester Boserup on *Women role in Economic Development* brought a new light on the perception of women and their contribution to the economic development. Boserup challenged and criticized the modernization theorists misunderstanding and misinterpretations of African women which have helped to reinforce patriarchy on women. The study revealed the negative effect of colonialism on women status and work. Most importantly her work highlighted women’s significant contribution to vital production machine of African nations and criticized the gender-biased distribution of resources that emerged as an undervaluing of women’s function as producers. Boserup’s conceptualization of the women’s contribution in development led to the inception of the concept of “women in Development” (WID) approach. The WID approach shifted the attention to the relevance of women’s issues to development by demonstrating the positive returns on of investing in women. In highlighting how development programs have mainly profited men in Africa, Asia and Latin America and excluded women from the traditional development process, proponents of WID advocated for women to be included in the development process through access to credit and employment.

Like the proponents of the modernization school, WID theorists argued that competition is an efficient way to fight gender inequalities and discrimination (Becker 1985). Therefore, as development agencies adopted the WID approach, gender equity became a development goal (Abu-Ghaida & Klasen 2004; Moser, 1993). In the late
1970’s the Senegalese government espoused the WID approach and initiated various projects to promote women’s access to education, credit and employment. As a result, many literacy programs that specially targeted women mushroomed all over the country and literacy rapidly became a female business (Kane, 2000). In 1978, the Senegalese government nominated its first two female ministers Maïmouna Kane and Caroline Diop (Gellar, 2005). With the support of international donors such as UNDP and USAID the Senegalese government initiated and implemented programs to promote family planning, child nutrition and agriculture to rectify gender inequality and improve women’s status. For the proponents of the WID approach, these development programs would promote female participation in the economic development process.

However, while the WID interventions played a central role in leading to a greater visibility for women’s issues and highlighting the fundamental contribution of women in development, the framework has been criticized for failing to challenge patriarchy and the hegemony of the capitalist system (Hirshman, 1995). Critics of the WID argue that the approach failed to look at women’s subordination and exploitation as an integral piece of the bigger capitalist system (Beneria & Sen, 1987). Although more women are visible in the job market, the redistribution of domestic work responsibilities is lagging behind and many women still fulfill the triple role of “breeder-feeder-producer” (Boulding, 1977, p. 55). The WID theorists have also been criticized for opting for a “market oriented, technical solutions to women’s issues in society” (Diaw, 2003, p.187). Yet the WID remains the dominant approach for many international agencies and governments up to now.
In the 1980s the critics of the WID approach led to the birth of another approach called “Gender and Development” (GAD). Drawing from dependency theory, the “Gender and Development” framework addressed women’s issues by interrogating the underlying assumptions of the dominant structures of society. As Young (1993) states, the GAD approach called for an inclusion of women in the development process, but in a very specific way; that a focus on women alone was inadequate to understand the opportunities for women for agency or change; that women are not a homogenous category but are divided by class, color and creed; that any analysis of social organization and social process has to take into account the structure and dynamic of gender relations. (p.134)

Unlike the WID approach, the GAD framework demands an examination of both the past and present roots of structural inequalities in society. Rather than merely focusing on women, the GAD framework extends its horizon by starting to interrogate and take into consideration the important role men could play to help address gender inequality and restore gender equity (Rathgeber, 1989). The GAD approach also stresses the significance of the involvement of the state in advancing women’s causes. For GAD theorists, the capitalist system and the patriarchal system are equally responsible for women’s subordination and their exclusion from the development process (Mies 1986; Moghadam 1999; Ward et al. 2004). Therefore, a sustainable solution to women’s condition and status requires addressing simultaneously patriarchy and capitalism (Mies 1986). Scholars like Giele (2001) and Mies (1986) went on to interrogate the need for non-Western countries to adopt the Western model of development and integrate women into the process of economic development.

In their fight for the capitalist and patriarchal oppression, the GAD theorists also focus on women’s empowerment. While the discourse on empowerment was very much
present in the WID framework, the approach and meaning of empowerment differed. Within the WID approach empowerment mainly focused on women’s economic empowerment as it sought to bring in women in development process for efficiency reasons. But the GAD theorists viewed empowerment as political, social and cultural. Such a multidimensional approach to empowerment stresses on conscientizing women in a way that would allow them to gain control over their lives, empower themselves and fight the various forms of oppression they experience. By advocating for empowerment as a form of alternative development, the GAD scholars called for “structural change in the echelons of power in order to device and strengthen self-reliant national development strategies” (Miles, 2008, p.433). The GAD views women as active agents capable of transforming their lives through understanding and challenging injustices that are embedded and normalized through dominant institutions and discourses. GAD’s commitment to women’s empowerment and deconstruction of both capitalist and patriarchy oppression wins the approach a lot of popularity especially in the academia.

While popular within the academy, the application and incorporation of the GAD approach in development projects remains limited. Some scholars argues that GAD’s insistence on critically interrogating the social structures of governments and the institutions is threatening to the elites and thus impedes its integration into development projects (Jacka, 2006). As a result, at first the approach remained less popular among development agencies have hesitated in employing GAD frameworks in their projects. This, though, has begun to slowly change. Over the last two decades, GAD has witnessed an increasing commitment to its approach from NGOs and the World Bank (Jacka, 2006).
Like WID, GAD has also received criticism. Critiques of the GAD approach argue that its attempt to “bring men in” might distract all the attention needed to address women’s issues. GAD has also been criticized for focusing too much on the differences among women rather than stressing the stories and experiences they share in common.

Despite these criticisms, GAD has continued to flourish as more scholars and development practitioners’ call for more participation from women and for approaches that are more sensitive to culture and gender issues. Key concepts to the approach such as empowerment and gender awareness have gained momentum in many countries from the South including Senegal as proponents and GAD advocates are pushing for more engagement and conscientization towards issues like women’s political, social, cultural and religious rights.

In Senegal, many national and regional debates and conferences translated the implementation of various policies and development projects that aimed at advancing and promoting girls and women’s cause. In alliance with the GAD framework, in early 1980s the Senegalese government began to implement various local and national initiatives to bring to the forefront girls and women’s issues and concerns (Ndiaye, 2006). Recognizing the pivotal function education could play in national and the empowerment of all citizens including girls and women, Senegal initiated major changes in the educational sector.

In 1981, the government called for a Meeting on Education and Training (EGEF). The conference involved teacher unions, religious leaders and government officials (Kane, 2001). EGEF resulted in the institution of a committee whose role was to “reflect
on the future of schools in the country and on the alternatives to undertake to face the big challenges related their development” (MENCET, 2001, p.5 cited in Kane, 2001, p30).

The meeting “marked a turning point in the overall development of Senegal’s education system, setting the goal of achieving countrywide democratic schooling for the people” (Ndiaye, 2006, p. 227). Unfortunately, as was the case with the previous policies, EGEF also failed to solve any of the real problems within the school system. “On the whole, Etats Generaux [EGEF] was dominated by the teaching profession and missed the opportunity of providing other points of views from society at large” (Evans, 1994, p.175). Although overall enrollment increased, girls were lagging far behind boys, especially in secondary school and at university level enrollment. To address this imbalance, the Senegalese government initiated a program for the schooling of young girls, the Programme de Scolarisation des Jeunes filles (PSF). As a result of PSF implementation, girls’ enrollment increased significantly but enrollment increases were matched with a very high drop-out rate.

In 2000 the World Education Forum organized in Dakar offered an opportunity to assess the situation which led to some improvements including greater retention in schools and schools safe environments for girls (Ndiaye, 2006). In 2008, the Senegalese minister of education initiated the National Girls Education Day and the Framework for the Coordination of Interventions for the Education of Girls (CCIEF) which illustrated the government commitment to increase girls enrollment and eliminate drop-out rates. In the years following PSF implementation, more programs and initiatives emerged such as Education for All (EFA), Programme Decennal de L’Education et de la Formation
(PDEF), and various adult literacy programs in local Languages. Nevertheless, the educational situation still remains alarming, especially for girls. More than half of the students who are enrolled in primary school do not complete their education through the secondary level. The picture is even more alarming for girls as their non-completion rates and dropout rates continue to be a challenge (Ndiaye & Diarra, 2008). It is clear, as McElroy and Hayden (2009) have pointed out, that there continue to be significant obstacles to educational gender equality in Senegal, despite attempts to enroll and keep more girls in school.

Outside the educational sector, in conjunction with the World Bank and many local and international NGO’s, the Senegalese government has highlighted women’s roles and participation in the development process. As a result, particular attention has been given to the significance of women’s contribution in the national development. Regarded as a leader among Sub-Saharan African countries in the area of democratization, starting the early 1990s, Senegal has witness a steady increase in the number of its female ministers each year (UCAD, 2007). More and more women are holding high positions in political offices, and women represent 40% of the Senate (UCAD, 2007). In 2001, Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade nominated a female Prime Minister with a government composed 13% of women. In 2007, the number of female minister increased to 28%. These gain in women participation in the political arena are a direct consequence of the Senegalese government commitment to national gender-centered educational, political and economic policies to promote and improve women’s and girl’s conditions.
Despite this progress, Senegal has a long way to go to fully engage its female citizens in the development process. While the Senegalese government initiatives have successfully nominated more women to hold leadership positions, it has failed to address the ‘deep-seated’ mechanisms that underline gender inequalities (Bop, 2005, Leach, 1998). Senegal has signed and committed itself to Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), both approaches focusing on the inclusion of girls and women, in education and development however as Sachs declares, “Senegal is not yet on course toward meeting the targets” (Jeffrey Sachs 2004, cited in Warren et al., 2006, p.33) and education remains a dream for the majority of Senegalese girls and women. After fifty years of emphasis on formal education programs, the literacy rates in Senegal are well below 50%, a statistic which becomes even worse for women. Only 29.2% of adult female (15 and older) are literate compared to 51.1 % for men (UNDP, 2006), and without the effective involvement of more than half of its population, women, any real and sustainable progress will remain a dream in Senegal.

Taking on the challenge of women’s education in Senegal requires integrating other alternatives including the cooperation of various institutions such as radio, television, and theater. However, in reviewing the literature, it is apparent that little has been done to investigate alternative contributions to education in Senegal outside of the realm of formal education. Over the years, much research has been conducted regarding girls’ education, literacy and women’s role in development. Given this, it is important to explore whether or not Senegalese private radio talk shows educate and empower Senegalese women as an alternative option or supplement to formal education.
Development Communication

The use of various forms of communication to advance people’s lives and propel development has a very long history. However, the genesis of development communication as it is theorized in academia and practiced by development practitioners can be traced back to the years following World War II (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). The current theorization of the concept of development communication emerged from two prominent scholars, Daniel Lerner (1958) and Wilbur Schramm (1964), who conceptualized the fundamental relationship between development and mass communication. While the critical relationship between media and development is more than ever emphasized and studied, the field of development communication as conceptualized Lerner (1958) and Schramm (1964) has considerably evolved. As the field of development communication began to gain more ground and attract more practitioners and scholars; critics, new ideas and approaches to both development and communication emerged. As a result, the field expanded, produced a great deal of literature and generated new paradigms.

These new paradigms shifts are a result of dynamic political, cultural and historical events and circumstances which in return shaped the trajectories of the various development communication paradigms while offering each time a new definition and meaning of the notion of development (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). A review of the evolution of the field of development communication revealed three paradigms: the modernization approach, the dependency approach and the participatory approach (Singhal et al.1996; Servaes, 2004; Wilkins, 2000; Melkote & Steeves, 2001).
The Modernization or Dominant Paradigm

Modernization is “based on neo-classical economic theory, and promoting and supporting capitalist economic development. This perspective assumes that the Western model of economic growth is applicable elsewhere and that the introduction of modern technologies is important in development” (Melkote & Steeves, 2001, p. 34). With the success of the Marshall Plan in rebuilding post-war Europe, the international aid campaign, with the support of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund shifted from Europe to Africa and Asia.

In an effort to help African and Asian countries “develop”, the United Nations proclaimed 1960 a “development decade” (Sasaki, 2007). The Western economic model of development was replicated and the non-Western countries were persuaded to abandon their agrarian economy and embrace the Western experience of development which heavily emphasizes industrialization. The newly Western-centered policies pushed for accelerated modernization and urbanization. Seen as economic growth, development was measurable through Western “scientific” and “objective methods” (Alvares, 1992; Szalvai, 2008). Gross Domestic Product (GDP) became the indicator for development and economic and social change was measured by indicators such as urbanization, higher living standard, communication systems and literacy rate (So, 1990; Szalvai, 2008). All these models were top-down centralized programs run by bureaucrats and development ‘experts (Melkote & Steeves, 2001).

These experts also saw indigenous cultures, religions, and family structures as obstacles to development and, as such, attempted to transfer Western culture, values and
ideas alongside their economic models. The modernization paradigm “suggested that cultural and information deficit lie underneath development problems, and therefore could not be resolved only through economic assistance, a la Marshall Plan” (Waisbord, 2001, p.3).

In addition, development experts theorized how best to disseminate information about their programs and argued for positioning mass media at the heart of their project for its realization to become a reality. As a result a number of studies and communication theories including: social marketing, media effect, entertainment education and diffusion of innovations emerged to attempt to gauge the effects of media and analyze its impact on the modernization and development project.

The modernization reign was strongly accompanied by the prominence of media effects research. While Lasswell’s book Propaganda Technique in the World War (1948) was the first systematic study on media effects (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1998), Lerner (1958) and Schramm (1964) were the pioneers in conceptualizing the relationship between development and communication. The two scholars articulated that underdevelopment was caused by a lack of information. Therefore, they suggested, informative transfer would be the most effective way to address it (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). Lerner (1958) as well as Schramm (1964) studied the role media played in modernization process and pointed to the great potential media could play in propelling economic and social change. They further associated exposure to media with an increase of economic development and believed in the ability of mass media to “help to bridge the transition between the traditional and modern society” (Schramm, 1964, p.129).
Schramm (1964) further suggested that the “the task of the mass media of information and the new media of education is to speed the long, slow social transformation required for economic development” (p.27). Mass media was seen as a catalyst of change as it can “contribute substantially to the amount and kinds of information available to the people of a developing country” (Schramm, 1964, p.131).

According to Lerner (1958) and Schramm (1964), persuasion through mass media could enable citizens from non-Western countries to divorce from their traditions and embrace modernity and values from the Western World.

Exposure to mass media, Schramm believed had a great potential of changing people behaviors and attitudes thus laying the groundwork for embracing new ideas and innovations. In his manuscript, The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East, Lerner (1958) argued for the need to transform the “non-participant” nature of traditional societies and create needs that would force them to become economically dependent, to which he saw the media playing a perfect role. For Lerner (1958), people from traditional societies must be exposed to issues and ways of doing that transcend their “worldviews and physical horizons” (p.115) and transformed to not only participate actively in society but also develop a “mobile personality”. Such a personality would make people willing and strive to move, change, invent and innovate by developing “the capacity to see oneself in the other fellow’s situation” and thus empathy (Lerner, 1958, p.115). In exposing people from traditional cultures to media, the goal was to get them to develop empathy which “allows the individual to internalize the process of modernization by not only being able to cope with change, but expecting and demanding it…It is the
psychic nexus of all the attitudes and behavior necessary in a modern society” (Fjes, 1976, cited in Melkote & Steeves, 2001, p. 115). When empathy is established within people, they willingly embrace modernity in its totality, thus laying the path for transformation of traditions societies into Western like societies (Lerner, 1958).

For Schramm (1964), “the urge to develop economically and socially usually comes from seeing how the people of the well-developed countries or the most fortunate people live” (p.42) which could be achieved through knowledge-transfer and techniques-transfer from the Western countries (Rostow, 1960; Stewart, 1978). Schramm (1964) believed that Westernization would stimulate and engender modernization. Both Schramm’s and Lerner’s studies and approaches were very pro-persuasion and pro-innovation. Their pro-persuasion and pro-innovation media-centered approach sought that “the essential point was that growth in one of these spheres stimulates growth in others, and all spheres of society moved forward together toward modernization” (Schramm, 1976, p. 46). Government agencies, scholars and policy advocated for macro-level funding and made the case for significant role of the media in facilitating modernization (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). Hence, for more than a decade, the work of Lerner and Schramm provided the groundwork for development communication (Rogers, 1962).

While the Lerner and Schramm model offered the theoretical foundation for many development research and projects, Diffusion of Innovations gradually emerged as a framework to many development projects (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). In Diffusion of Innovations (1962), Everett Rogers defines development communications as a "process
by which an idea is transferred from a source to a receiver with the intent to change his behavior. Usually the source wants to alter the receiver's knowledge of some idea, create or change his attitude toward the idea, or persuade him to adopt the idea as part of his regular behavior” (Rogers, 1962, p. 5). Rogers highlights and emphasizes the power of interpersonal communication and social networks while establishing the critical role mass media could play in the success of the development process at the local level. For Rogers (1962), a proper combination of interpersonal communication strategies and mass media has a great potential of transforming individuals’ lives. The proponents of the diffusions theory brought to attention the significance of the opinions of leaders in the diffusion process. Gradually mass communication scholars shifted their focus from the powerful media effects model to limited effects model (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Williams, 2003). For this new framework, exposure to media was no longer considered as sufficient enough to induce effective change of attitudes. Exposure to media alone could not be viewed as the sole factor but rather as one of the many factors that could lead to behavioral change (Mattelart & Mattelart, 1998; McQuail, 1998).

The Diffusion of Innovations framework conceptualized and proposed a five steps model through which the individual passes on their way to adopt or reject any innovation (Frey, 1973; Rogers, 1962). The first four steps, awareness, interest, evaluation and trial, play a critical role in determining the fifth step, the individual’s willingness and ability to embrace or reject an innovation (Rogers, 1962). Rogers further argues that the individuals within a same entity or society do not embrace an innovation simultaneously; individuals react and adopt innovations over a varied time framework. Therefore, Rogers
classifies individuals into five categories depending on how early they adopt an innovation. “These categories are the innovators, the early adopters, the early majority, late majority and the laggards” (Rogers, 1995, cited in Pulli, 2005, p.30). In that model, the “early adopters act as models to emulate and generate a climate of acceptance and an appetite for change, and those who are slow to adopt are laggards” (Waisbord, 2005, p.5). Rogers further identifies five essential characteristics which influence the rate and effectiveness of adoption of an innovation:

(1) Relative Advantage is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea it supersedes, (2) Compatibility is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters, (3) Complexity is the degree to which an innovation is perceived as relatively easy to understand and use, (4) Trialability is the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis. New ideas that can be tried in a phased approach are generally adopted more rapidly than innovations that are not easily implemented in stages and (5) Observability is the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to potential practitioners of the innovation. (pp.15-16)

For Rogers, making sure that these five characteristic are well thought and well established when implementing any innovation is crucial its realization. Assuring that an innovation is compatible with the ideals, needs and realities of the people or community benefiting from the initiative is fundamental in securing people trust, appropriation and adoption of the innovation. The same is true for the others four elements because each of them is vital and determinant in laying the ground for a successful adoption of innovations. Once individuals and communities identify an innovation as being advantageous, compatible with their socio-cultural values and needs, easy to comprehend and implement, they will likely rapidly embrace and adopt it (Roger, 1962).
At the heart of this diffusion model was a two-step flow of communication (Rogers, 1962). Unlike the Lerner and Schramm model which is a uni-directional, top-down flow of information from the media to the masses, the Diffusion of Innovation model theorized that the stimulation of bi-directional interpersonal communication is critical in enabling the messages received through the media to influence individuals’ attitudes and behaviors (Rogers, 1962).

Just as with the earlier Lerner and Schramm model, studies and development projects in support of the diffusion of innovations framework proliferated in African, Asian and Latin American countries though in the in 1960’s and 70’s. The World Bank embraced the model and provided funding and training support for thousands of development projects in these countries, utilizing mass the media to expose local people to these new innovations mainly imported from Western countries (Mwangi, 2002). Yet all the new innovative ideas and approaches did not spare the diffusion of innovations framework criticisms; for many critics the model embodied the same biases found in Lerner’s and Schramm’s model, with both models being vehicles to spread Western hegemony worldwide. For Melkote & Steeves, (2002), Rogers’ model of development communication is a "message delivery system” which "facilitates the process of modernization via the delivery and insertion of new technologies, and/or inculcating certain values, attitudes, and behaviors in the population" (p. 38). Diffusion of Innovations has also been criticized for other issues, primarily for failure to pay enough attention to message content and also still being a one way top-down information
diffusion: from North to South and from donors agencies, bureaucrats and scientists to farmers (Whyte, 1991; Rahim, 1976).

Other approaches to development communication also emerged during the modernization era including Social Marketing and Entertainment Education. As “the application of commercial marketing technologies to the analysis, planning, execution and evaluation of programs designed to influence the voluntary behavior of target audiences in order to improve their personal welfare and that of their society” (Andreason, 1995, p. 7), the concept of Social Marketing integrated a number of new elements to the dissemination of ideas (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). The model “emphasized the challenges of changing the knowledge and values, as well as behavior patterns, of the receivers” (Melkote & Steeves, 2001, p. 146). The Social Marketing approach combined marketing principles with persuasion models to disseminate social change messages (Kotler, 1984; Melkote & Steeves, 2001). Therefore, the goal of the Social Marketing approach is to bring knowledge to the audience and persuade the recipients to embrace the new ideas and behaviors while giving particular attention to message content. As the Social Marketing model develops, its application began to expand in African, Asian and Latin American countries in the 1970’s, 80’s and 90’s. As a result, with the support of international agencies like The Population Council and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), social marketing campaigns promoting family planning, HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention, nutrition, immunization and agricultural reforms began to expand in African, Asian and Latin American countries in the 1970’s, 80’s and 90’s and have since flourished in many of
these areas (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). While social marketing campaigns have registered a lot of success the last two decades, they have been criticized for focusing too much on “the individual as the locus of change” (Baelden, Audenhove and Vergnani, 2011, p.167) and failing to incorporate local norms and bigger structural issues (Melkote & Steeves, 2001, p.241). Another critic of the social marketing model is a tendency to be a top-down approach since all the initiatives and solutions seem to originate from the leaders rather than the population.

Entertainment Education is another approach used to disseminate information through the media. While social marketing incorporated aspects of commercial marketing to disseminate information, “Entertainment Education [alludes] to the process of purposely designing and implementing a media message to both entertain and educate, in order to increase audience knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes and change overt behavior” (Singhal & Rogers 1999, xii). By utilizing an agenda-setting framework, entertainment education seeks to make social issues more salient and thus influence policy (Melkote, 2002). Like social marketing; entertainment education has been used in numerous countries around the world. It focuses on entertainment media such as folk theater, songs and soap operas to disseminate information that could change individuals’ behaviors. Entertainment Education campaigns offer information about literacy, agriculture, family planning and many other issues. For the proponents of the entertainment education model, individuals’ “intense consumption of media messages suggests that the media have an unmatched capacity to tell people how to dress, talk and think” (Waisbord, 2005, p.14). While the entertainment
education approach fits into the dominant paradigm, it has significantly evolved and has embraced more participatory strategies. As Singhal and Rogers (1988) state “pro-development soap operas in Mexico promoted to promote “knowledge and values to the viewing audience so that these individuals could better understand the reality of their social problems and seek possible solutions” (p.111). The success of the model led to its increasing popularity and use in more than 75 countries (Waisbord, 2005). However, critics argue that there is little evidence to demonstrate that entertainment education approaches are responsible for such results (Yoder, Hornik & Chirwa 1996). For Zimicki et al (1994), rather than causing behavior changes, the strategies used by the model simply supply a push for individuals who are already prone to behave in a certain way.

In summary, development communication approaches within the dominant paradigm did not articulate well the realities, experiences and interests of non-Western populations despite tremendous new changes and ideas within the framework, especially with the entertainment education model which significantly shifted from the dominant paradigm to become a more participatory framework. The argument that exposure to mass media would help “implant and extend the idea of change, to raise the aspirations of…people so that they will want a larger economy and a modernized society” (Schech & Haggis, 2004, p. 209) and “galvanize the population of a particular society, and thus create a climate for development…based on Western know-how” (Schech, 2002, p. 15) failed to concretize. While “modernization and development are touted as the twin engines of progress even though the economic policies advanced by modernization have been incapable of addressing the transformation of the productive forces and productive
relations that lead to progress” (Airhihenbuwa, 1995, p.5). The dominant paradigm mostly helped to legitimize Western ideas and values by painting a rosy picture of Western modern societies and ignoring the social and economic realities of non-Western societies (Schech & Haggis, 2004; Airhihenbuwa, 1995). The failure of the anticipated positive effects of mass media on economic development resulted in the emergence of new paradigm which entailed a deconstruction of the concept of development as envisioned by the modernization school.

**Dependency/Critical Paradigm**

By the early 1970s the legitimacy of the dominant paradigm was challenged on several fronts; for many scholars and development practitioners, it became obvious for “the previously colonized countries, the anticipated economic growth was not to occur” (Akpan, 2003, p. 263). The discontent and the criticisms that emerged from the failure of the dominant paradigm to live up to its promise led to the birth of the dependency paradigm. The origins of dependency paradigm theory can be traced back to Latin America to the work of thinkers like Paul Baran, Samir Amin, and Cardoso (Frank, 1966; Lall, 1976; Larrain, 1989; Vernengo, 2004). Informed by Marxist and critical theories, the dependency theorists challenged and attacked the Western ethnocentric approach of modernization. They argued that the problems of African, Asian and Latin American countries were due to the capitalist system which has created inequalities among and within societies. The dependency theorists rejected fiercely the argument made by modernization theorists that underdevelopment was accelerated, if not caused by, internal factors such as the social structures of traditional societies. Instead they argued that the
Western countries transform the developing nations into aid dependent countries and exploited them through unfair trade relationships (Frank, 1969; Kay, 1989; Larrain, 1989). As Akpan (2003) argues, “the very process that leads to economic growth and development in rich countries results in underdevelopment in poor, mostly formerly colonized countries through negative terms of trade, the debt trap and technological-industrial dependency” (p. 263). Dependency theorists also criticized modernization and the dominant paradigm for its narrow emphasis on individuals and failure to address the structural roots of problems. For the proponents of dependency theory, the solution to “underdevelopment” was rooted in the politics of capitalism. Therefore, the solution lies in major changes that would transform the way in which power and resources are distributed. For dependency scholars, governments had to initiate and implement national policies that would the “put the media in the service of the people rather than as pipelines for capitalist ideologies” (Gupta, 2006, p.33) By recognizing the significance of culture and history in the development process, dependency attracted many scholars and development practitioners in search of an alternative way to approach and address development issues.

The dependency movement also pointed out the ineffectiveness of communication strategies used by the dominant paradigm which led to significant debates in the field of development communication. As a result, various conferences took place and expressed the need to initiate new communication approaches and policies that revisit how modernization theorists and scholars have conceptualized development communication (Servaes, 1999). In 1970, UNESCO recognized “that what has come to be known as
the free flow of information at the present time is often in fact a ‘one way’ rather than a true exchange of information” (p. 2) and initiated talks to rectify the “misrepresentations and imbalance in the international news flow” (Ojo, 2003, p. 3). The discussions led the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) which challenged the media hegemony and proposed culturally appropriately media strategies to foster development and social change (Servaes, 1999). Many other initiatives such as the MacBride Commission report at 21st General Conference of UNESCO 1980 advocated for the democratization of communication and a “more justice, more equity, more reciprocity in information exchange, less dependence in communication flows [and] less downwards diffusion of messages, more self-reliance and cultural identity, more benefits for all mankind” (Many Voices, One World, 1980, p. xviii). The atmosphere and need to decolonize both the content of information and how it is disseminated led scholars like Rogers and Schramm to revisit their positions and conceptions of development communication. Rogers recognized that the diffusion model as proposed and implemented initially did not allow a truly two-way communication process.

Later, in his work, Rogers (2003) revisited his approach and argued “unless clients feel so involved with the innovation that they regard it as ‘theirs,’ it will not be continued over the long term” (p.376). Schramm also expanded his model to recognize the crucial relevance of social and cultural realities to the process of development and communication. Schramm (1964) admitted that while many countries are economically underdeveloped, they are highly advanced in many other aspects such “personal relationships…… or art and philosophy…” (p.10). It will not however be long before
the dependency paradigm start losing popularity. As the model received critics questioning its effectiveness since it is “concerned less with outlining directions for progress than with explaining structural imbalances of power” (Jacobson, 1996, p.135). While the dependency paradigm incorporated some significant aspects such as power issues, class and gender in its framework and embraced cultural, political and geographical elements in their analysis, the model did produce a major shift in the conceptualization and application of development communication. Consequently, more scholars began moving away from the dependency paradigm and to make the case for a more participatory approach.

**The Participatory Paradigm**

The ineffectiveness of conceptualizing the notion of development in economic terms and the failure to involve people in the development communication process eventually demanded a major paradigm shift, one that would involve and engage local people more both in the process and decision making (Korzenny & Ting-Toomey, 1990). It became pressing to articulate a new framework that would deconstruct the failed paradigms and allow ordinary citizens to regain their voices and power which will enable them to take their future in their own hands. As the significance of participation was gradually recognized, scholars and practitioners began embracing the participatory approach to both development and communication.

In many developing countries, the participatory model of development communication blossomed. Scholars demanded a fundamental and eminent redefinition of development communication, which required the abandonment of the top-down
approach. For the proponents of the model, development communication had to adopt a different understanding of communication, one that is people-centered rather than media-centered. In doing so, the participatory paradigm promoted dialogue and self-determination in communication development process. For participatory theorists, change will not occur unless individuals and communities have a sense of ownership and are actively engaged in any development enterprise.

Influenced by the work of Freire (1970) on conscientization, this understanding of communication seeks to liberate people through an education grounded in true dialogue, one that interrogates and rejects the dominant conceptualization of development communication. For Freire, instead of educating the population, the development practitioners and experts persuaded and imposed their own innovations and ideas on local communities. Therefore, to remediate the situation, scholars like Freire and Chambers (1995, 2002), advocates for a model of development whereby participation engenders empowerment. Such a model starts with the realities, priorities and knowledge of local communities (Chambers, 1999; Rahman, 1993). Chambers (1999) emphasizes the value in recognizing the significance of respecting the knowledge, values and ideas of the insiders, the local people.

The new conceptualization of development pulled away from the early development paradigms that viewed beliefs and practices from the African, Asian and Latin American as backwards and impediments to modernization. The participatory model envisions a model of development “sets the focus of attention to the individual as a whole, as a person with self-awareness, and potential for self-actualization and
advancement” (Szalvai, 2008, p.95). Chambers (1997) further argues that when participation occurs, in which multiple, local, and individual realities are recognized, accepted, enhanced and celebrated” (1997, p.188). In the participatory method, communication is defined and articulated as a process rather than a linear, one way flow of information. For the participatory theorists like Bessette (2004), “participatory development communication is a powerful tool to facilitate this [socioeconomic development] process, when it accompanies local development dynamics. It is about encouraging community participation with development initiatives through a strategic utilization of various communication strategies.” (p. 8).

The participatory approach to communication encouraged the use of grassroots forms of communication such as folk songs and theater. As group performance, these forms of communication have the potential to help locals not only to identify and reflect on their shared issues but also together to identify effective solutions. “Embedded in the culture which existed before the arrival of mass media, and still exist as a vital mode of communication in many parts of the world, presenting a certain degree of continuity despite changes” (Wang & Dissanayake, 1984, p. 22) these forms of communication stress the centrality of indigenous knowledge and values. For the participatory model advocates, effective development can only take place when individuals are engaged in the decisions that affect their lives. As Nyerere (1968) stated “people cannot be developed, they can only develop themselves by participation in decision and co-operative activities which affect their well-being. People are not being developed when they are herded like animals into new ventures” (cited in Oakley et al., 1991, p. 2). The participatory
approach to development communication sees individuals as “active in the development programs and process, they contribute ideas, take initiatives, articulate their needs and problems and asserts their autonomy” (Melkote & Steeves, 2001, p.337).

Critics of the participatory approaches argue that the model fails to consider existing hierarchies within societies. Also while participation is a good long-term approach, it presents serious limitations when implemented very fast without taking enough time to truly involve the community. Another critique is the restricted role of the outsider as a facilitator and to insider as the expert as both position when fixe can obstruct a genuine dialogue. Mosse (2001) argues that the knowledge and information gained through participatory approach is a result of a complex interactions shaped by power relationship between insiders and outsiders. The approach has been also criticized for taking Western models of democracy and imposing them on other cultures which means forcing pro-democracy to the end and at expense of other cultural norms and modes that are working well in existing cultures.

Also scholars like Michener (1998), White (1996) and Kothari (2001) argue many so-called participatory projects are top-down models that are less likely to empower the recipients of these initiatives. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see development projects where participant have little to no power and do not feel any sense of ownership in the decision making process. As Servaes (1996) states “participation does not always entail cooperation or consensus It can often mean conflict and usually poses a threat to existent structures...Rigid and general strategies for participation are neither possible nor desirable” (p.23). To avoid such scenarios, Kothari (2001) calls for a close examination
of the many ways in which power relationships affect interactions. According to White (1996), participation is a “political issue” (p.14) which necessitates a carefully examination of power relation as well as individuals’ view of their own interests because “if participation means that the voiceless gain a voice, we should expect this to bring some conflict. It will challenge power relations, both within any individual project and in wider society. The absence of conflict in many supposedly 'participatory' programmes is something that should raise our suspicions. Change hurts” (White, 1996, p.15).

While participatory approach to development communication has some limitations, the model has a lot to offer especially when it comes to recognizing, valuing and appreciating the voices, cultures and knowledge of local communities. Therefore, the approach is particularly important and relevant to this study as it looks the many ways women utilize radio talk shows as a platform to address and discuss their needs and challenges.

**Radio Broadcast in Senegal**

This section looks at the historical development of radio in Senegal and the various factors that have contributed to the changing landscape of radio services in the country over the past several years. As it is the case in throughout Africa, the birth of radio in Senegal can be traced back to the colonial period. Used first as an instrument of colonial governance, the birth of radio in Senegal is linked strongly with the 1911 implementation of the French West African Radiotelegraph Network (Dia, 2001). During the colonial period, radio along with all other infrastructures, was implemented not to promote development in the African colonies, but rather it was utilized to control and
exploit the country’s resources (Hachten, 1971; Wilcox, 1975). In 1932, the French West African Radiotelegraph Network was replaced by TSF colonial station of Dakar which broadcast mainly government and military information and secrets (Dia, 2001). In 1939 Radio Dakar was founded and the same year the station started broadcasting civilian programs for eight hours per day (Bourgault 1995; Perret, 2005). In 1951, radio Dakar began broadcasting via through two channels Dakar Inter and Dakar Afrique whose mission was to promote and extend coverage within francophone West Africa (Perret, 2005). In 1952, that a second radio station, Radio Saint-Louis, was created in Saint-Louis. However, in the early 1940s the colonial government undertook some initiatives to help disseminate information via the radio which led to major developments in the medium “as an information broadcasting technology following World War II. [Yet], accessibility remained [restricted]” (Dia, 2002, p.6). Despite the fact that Senegal had about thirty-two native languages (SIL, 2006), all radio programs were broadcast only in French, the national and official language. According to Sagna (2001):

> the overwhelming majority of broadcasts were, in conception, inspired by a French perspective, in terms of both their content and their form of dissemination. The audience was limited primarily to the European population and to what would have been referred to, at the time, as sophisticates, while geographically the focus was urban. Specifically, Dakar held 90-95% of its broadcasts in French. (pp.5-6).

Although the first non-French-owned radio station did not emerge until 1957, a number of collective listening programs were established in Dakar in 1952. These collective listening programs became very popular and expanded rapidly outside of Dakar. The number of these programs increased with the creation of seven new administrative regions. By 1962, the number of radio stations reached 50 as more programs expand in the new regions (Dia, 1987, Sagna, 2001). The creation of the
listening centers led to an increase in audience and to the reinforcement of broadcast radio in Senegal. As the French colonizers became aware of the strategic role radio could play in bringing about social, cultural and political change, they initiated the creation of the Société de Radio Diffusion de la France d’Outre Mer (SORAFOM). In June 1956, Radio Dakar became Radio Inter-AOF and started expanding throughout the territory. As Dia (2001) writes “radio [then] was transformed into a genuine information tool with an increasingly defined role, run by true professionals” (p.7) The newly created radio station served as an important liaison for French radio broadcasting in Africa and its new mission was “to make others around the world familiar with Senegal and the Senegalese people, to open new horizons to the people of Senegal, and to keep them informed of the activities of the government” (Dia, 2005, p. 7). After independence in 1960, Senegal opted for a democratic constitution, yet the president, Senghor, implemented a government where any sort of opposition was permissible. As a result, radio programming witnessed many more changes during the years following independence with the creation of national and international channels of Radio Senegal.

Eventually, however, the government consolidated its control and took over broadcasting and information dissemination, creating a media monopoly. Eight years later, in 1973, a national television station was founded alongside the creation of the Office of Radio and Television Broadcasting of Senegal (ORTS). The introduction of television brought even more state control and consolidation as ORTS obtained the status of state media. The Senghor administration, as was the case in many African countries, used media, and radio in particular, to reinforce central political power (Bourgault, 1995).
Right after independence, the Senegalese ruling elites, mostly schooled in France, did not make a real effort to decolonize the French model of communication (Bourgault, 1995; Wilcox, 1975). In spite of the continuation of status quo, radio in Senegal became extremely popular the following years. A study by FOP/Marcomer in 1964 revealed that radio had impacted people more than any of the other forms of media such as print media (Dia, 2001).

Between 1962 and 1970, the government used Radio Senegal to promote various development projects. Radio was used to overcome the “the many challenges of independence (increased literacy, modernization of the rural population, increased productivity and national integration) and seeking historic shortcuts for overcoming the lack of development” (Fougeyrollas 1967, p. 964). Radio was also used for education. In 1968, the Senegalese government initiated an educational radio program to increase literacy. This campaign was targeted especially towards rural and urban women. In addition to literacy, agriculture was featured as a vital concern for rural development initiatives with the broadcast of “Diissoo par la Radio éducative rurale.” Through Diissoo, programs were established to raise awareness among rural peasants of the new government and its development plans. In 1969, Radio Senegal started broadcasting lessons through the Centre de Linguistique Appliquée (CLAD), assisting in developing French language learning among those who had not undergone formal education. The programs aired in the daytime and targeted primary school and middle school teachers and students. While it is important to highlight Radio Senegal’s popularity and impact on people, it nevertheless experienced considerable competition from radio stations in
neighboring countries. A study carried out in 1972 by Radio Senegal revealed that “more than half of the audience of Radio Senegal also listened to foreign radio stations, including a number of African stations” including Radio-Mauritanie (26.27%), Radio-Gambie (33.10%), Radio-Guinée (28.55%), and the commercial station Radio-SYD (19.61%)” (Dia, 2002, p. 8). The competition caused the producers of Radio Senegal to initiate major adjustments that eventually led to the increased length of daily broadcasting.

In the mid-1990s, Senegal, like many African countries, was faced with many major social, economic and political changes. The Senegalese government embarked on a series of actions for the creation of a democratic, liberal and free market economy. Senghor’s successor, Abdou Diouf, initiated the liberalization of print media the 1980’s followed by radio sector liberation in the 1990s (Kirschke, 2000).

The liberalization of radio in 1992 served as a catalyst of the explosion of the FM which provoked significant progress in radio sector. July 1, 1994, marked the inauguration of Sud FM, the first private radio station in Senegal. The diversity of program broadcasting ranging from musical programs and participant active call-in shows to informational programs, led to immediate success for Sud FM making it a radio model in Senegal (Dia, 2002). The implementation of Sud FM broke the monopoly enjoyed for decades by the state-owned Radio Senegal and set the foundation for the expansion of private radio in Senegal. In January 1995, Dunya FM was born followed by Radio Nostalgie Walfadjri FM.
By 2000, the media market was very diverse, and by 2007, three public, four international, 12 commercial and 44 community radio stations were broadcasting in Senegal. Today the diverse commercial radio programs are permitted to freely flourish for the first time in Senegalese history. According to a United Nations Research Institute For Social Development Report (UNRISD), “the public, particularly Dakar residents, with greater access to the range of private radio stations, is discovering the virtues of free expression, through the many interactive broadcasts and the different treatment of current events that these stations bring to the scene” (2001, p.12).

Moreover, the result of media pluralization and liberalization is the very significant increase in radio audience. A study by Frank Wittmann carried out from November 2002 to August 2003 on the *Ethnographic Approach to Media Culture usage* in Senegal found that 95.5% of the participants listened to radio on a daily basis. The study also found radio to be the most “informative, entertaining and credible media outlet” (Wittmann, 2008, p.4). The emergence of commercial radio has also significantly transformed the political arena in Senegal. The pluralism of the radio sector has led to a greater participation of the political opposition as private radio stations in Senegal represent a major force that have not only contributed but also facilitated transparency while guaranteeing the regularity of Senegal’s presidential elections, as demonstrated in the March 2000 election of Senegal’s current president, Abdoulaye Wade (Dia, 2002; Wittmann, 2008). Throughout the variety of political broadcasts, “private radio stations managed to clarify the political choices of the citizens in a responsible manner” (Samb, 2000, p. 44). By providing Senegalese people with reliable information, private radio

stations have become an influential instrument for critical thinking and democratic consolidation. Senegalese private radios are now playing a substantial role in the shaping of a new kind of citizen.

The telephone is another major factor that has revolutionized the Senegalese media landscape and is tied to participation in various radio programs. The advent of telecenters and cellular phones has transformed the relationship between Senegalese citizens and radio. As Diarra (1999) writes, “in an oral society, radio begins to express the tendencies that we instill in a more open information society. The convergence between radio and telephone, in particular, has opened up interesting prospects by adding a new dimension to the singularly oral environment” (p.26). Telephones enable the establishment of a rapport between radio programs and listeners and among listeners, thus allowing radio to accommodate and address the needs of the local people (Dia, 2002, Diarra, 1999, Samb, 2000).

**Research on Radio**

There is a dearth of comprehensive research on the role of the media in Africa (Onadipe and Lord, 1999). Despite the wealth of scholarship on radio in various parts of the world, research on the impact of private radio is scarce worldwide. Recent research on radio in academia and in the development field has particularly focused on community radio. Community radio as a new form of radio has “challenged the dominance of centralized, commercialized, state-controlled and professionalized media and favored media that would be small in scale, non-commercial and often committed to a cause” (McQuail, 2000, p. 160 cited in Banjade, 2007, p.52). Community radio is part of a new
paradigm that advocates local and individual realities to social change, a counter-hegemony to the dominant ideology (Carpenter et al. 2003).

While there is a body of literature on community radio, there is a noticeable scarcity of research on African radio in general and Francophone Africa in particular. Although, early research on radio dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, the majority of media and communication research has been carried out mainly in developing countries (Hagos, 2001). As a result, “developing countries have, therefore, been dependent on a small number of sources and restricted research approaches for findings which might or might not be applicable to developing countries” (Onadipe and Lord 1999, p. 224). Studies on the effects of radio on listeners and society as a whole have since proliferated and evolved over time. Since the 1970s, there has been an abundance of literature about the potential that radio offers in disseminating information as well as educating people no matter whether they live in urban or rural settings (Adeya, 2002; IDRC, 2000). Despite the advent of television and the development of new forms of more advanced communication systems, (e.g. the internet), many are still emphasizing the great potential radio can offer. Over the last decades, a great deal of research has highlighted and documented the benefits of radio (Jensen, 1999; Lamoureux 1999; Buckley 2000; Kole, 2000; Kenny, 2002).

In his book, A Passion for Radio, Bruce Girard (1999) writes, “radio is undoubtedly the most important medium in Africa -…In virtually all African countries radio services broadcasting …are the most important sources of information” (p.241).

Indeed, “community radio is Africa's Internet” (Ilboudo, 2007 p.4 cited in Sterling,
O’Brien, and Bennett, 2007) because of its capability to reach almost everybody in the continent regardless of location. As the most accessible and popular mass media radio is used by more than 60% of the population in Sub-Saharan Africa (AMDI, 2006). Since liberalization, radio in general and private radio in particular has flourished in many developing countries, including Senegal, as an alternative to state-owned media (Wilson, 1996; Dia, 2001; Jensen, 2002). In the last two decades, the number of community radio in Africa has increased exponentially. (AMARC, 2005). In her study on radio usage in Zambia, Spitulnik (2002) argues that “radio in Zambia is not strictly, or even primarily, domestic technology but a machine that circulates far beyond home and enters into a variety of social relations and social situations beyond the same-residence family”(p. 160).

It is clear that radio represents more than an entertainment tool. Radio broadcast provides a potential forum for public reflection and debate. Zachary (2000) argues that, “radio is a very effective means of getting issues discussed, while couching them in a way the people can relate to” (p.50). Another study conducted in four Sub-Saharan African countries, in 2000, revealed that 91.1% of the female participants listened to radio and more than 50% of these listeners owned radios. The same study found that less than 20% of women’s husbands decide on which radio their wives listen to and more than half of the women declared that they chose freely the radio program they wanted to listen to (Sibanda, 2001). A USAID study carried out in 2005 on Malian women’s use and ownership of radio revealed that the overwhelming majority of the participants were
radio listeners. The study also found that the 10% of women did not listen to radio were unable due to time and financial reasons, not necessarily because they did not want to.

Recognizing its power of enabling people to engage in dialogue, radio has been used to inspire social change. Beyond just informing illiterate people, radio can be utilized to truly educate people and equip them with practical skills and knowledge to make change happen (Matheson, 1935). In his book, *Community Radio and Its Influence in the Society: the Case of Enugu State – Nigeria*, Joseph Offo (2002) argues that, for a sustainable and true promotion of health education, religious tolerance and cultural and social change, “community radio has to be not only a means of transmitting to people”, but also a means of receiving from them” (pp. 89). Offo (2002) advocates for a two-way communication approach, while seeking effective change and development, because not only will it enable a better understanding of a whole range of misunderstandings, but it will offer an opportunity for the participants to voice themselves and make possible “the tapping of indigenous knowledge, which development specialists are beginning to acknowledge as one of the missing dimensions in development” (Matewa, 2002, p.187).

Radio allows dialogue to take place through a process of talking back and forth. Ilboudo (2001) associates the success and popularity of radio in Africa as a result of the oral traditions of its societies. Several studies have reiterated the great contribution that orality could offer African women in the realm of education and empowerment strategies (Mushengyezi, 2003; Alidou, 2005). Therefore making it a pressing need for African women to “to re-appropriate their oral traditions for their own benefit in order to” (Sterling and Huyer, 2010, p.3) “create and claim space for empowering orality to assert
their survival needs” (Bukenya, 2001, p. 31). “Due to lack of education and resources, the impact of the written press is largely confined to the urban elite able to read and buy newspapers. The radio, however, reached out to the masses, and at times of conflict has a remarkable ability to inflame or quiet the situation” (Hagos, 1993, p. 150).

Community radio has also been specifically targeted at women’s issues using the entertainment-education approach. Entertainment education has been applied in many developing countries like Botswana, Senegal and India to address issues such as family planning, sexual behavior and literacy (Singhal and Rogers, 1999; Michelle, et al. 2003). Radio call-in shows are initiated and promoted through community radio to encourage open and honest dialogues about issues like rape and HIV infection (PCI-Media, 2007). Through certain radio talk show programs, women become empowered to break through sexual, social and cultural boundaries.

Many researchers identify important attributes of talk show dialogues. Talk shows offer participants an opportunity to be part of a public discourse rooted in real life emotions and experiences (Livingstone 1996). Talk shows create a setting where the normal citizen can challenge “the authority of the experts” (Lee, 2001, p.4). Offering “insight into the contradictory ways in which people experience social realities” (Leurdijk, 1997, p. 165), talk radio thus enables them to reflect critically and face their own challenges.

The establishment of the “Development Through Radio” (DTR) program in 12 African nations is a perfect and unique illustration of women’s participation and engagement in creating their destiny through radio. The DTR program allows women to
get involved in every aspect of programming (Sibanda, 2001) which establishes a form of ownership amongst its female listeners (Opoku-Mensah, 2000).

The literature on community radio highlights its value as a successful medium for social change. All over the world, community radio has been targeted to address a variety of issues such as education, health, economic and human rights (De Fossard, 2005). Community radio has been credited for playing a central “role in building vibrant communities, in mobilizing groups to action by informing and empowering citizens, in giving voice to the marginalized groups of society, and in bringing community needs to the attention of local and even national governments” (CIMA, 2007, p.6). However, while community radio has proven that it has a great potential to bring about social change (CIMA, 2007) and that it can play a pivotal role in empowering people, especially the illiterate and other marginalized groups, it is nonetheless crucial to recognize that it has an overwhelming dependence on external donors which may affect its sustainability. Therefore, investigation into the economic viability of self-sustaining programs able to contribute to the education and empowerment of people within other forms of broadcast such as private radio is vital to maintaining this system in the future.

The growth of community radio has been heavily funded and supported by external agencies and funds with international agencies. In Senegal, community radio stations are witnessing an unstable situation, unlike commercial radio stations (Dia, 2001) where the support from both national and international donors and NGOs often remains limited to sustain the various costs of operation. Senegalese community radio stations “lack support, and suffer the strains of meeting operating costs (telephone, electricity,
cassettes, etc.), and paying the fees charged by the Senegalese Copyright Office” (Amath, 2001, as cited in Dia, 2002, p.14). This donor dependency is a major disadvantage in programming as community radio stations must include the latest international aid trends to attract maximum funding. A survey carried out in 2000 on radio audience in Senegal, found that commercial radio stations appear to enjoy greater popularity than community radio stations (Dia, 2001, Amath, 2001). Therefore, it becomes essential to explore the avenues private radio programs offer in Senegal, a task which has yet to be undertaken, until now.

**Theoretical Framework**

Scholars have employed various theories to analyze the experiences of African women. While no single theory is compressive enough to capture and conceptualize the complex socio-cultural realities that govern Senegalese women’s lives. Therefore, I found it necessary to bring together more than one theory in attempt to reach a profound understanding the impact radio talk shows have on Dakaroises’ education and empowerment. This research draws on two theoretical frameworks: Africana Womanist theory and critical theory. As “a lens by which the researcher discovers aspects of the target phenomenon” (Wu & Volker, 2009. p. 11), theory “is essential and inescapable” (p.43) because it guides and provides structure to every aspect of the research (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Not only does theory enhance a deeper understanding of what is being researched, it also provides the structure by which to analyze this study (Denzin, 2000). For Morse (1997) and Merriam (2001) any research enterprise ought to be grounded within a theoretical framework in spite of the nature of the research. While the function
of theory significantly varies across disciplines (Creswell, 2007; Sikes, 2006; Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Yin, 2008), an atheoretical qualitative inquiry is neither possible nor desirable (Sandelowski, 1993). Although the theoretical framework alone is incapable of generating a holistic explanation of the phenomenon under study (Silverman, 2001), it is however fundamental to recognize and establish the relevance of theory to any research and most importantly to identify a theory or theories that permeates all aspect of the study while providing adequate a framework to articulate the experiences and realities of the participants. Drawing from both Africana Womanist theory and critical theory has not only helped frame this study, but also enabled a more careful examination of women’s issues from a more holistic perspective. In the next section, I analyze the content and relevance of both theories in detail and explain how they provide a valuable lens for this study.

**Africana Womanism**

Increasingly, scholars from the Global South are challenging the mainstream methodological and theoretical approaches utilized to study the lives of people from that region of the world. As a result, the Euro-centric feminist research frameworks have been heavily criticized for failing to articulate issues of women of color, including women in the developing world. More specifically, Western feminists have been criticized for treating women with as monolithic group, failing to explore the complexity of their different experiences regarding race, history, religious affiliation and geographic location (Narayan, 1997; Mohanty, 2003). Mohanty (1991) and Steady (2007) rightly point out that this there this tendency merely sees women from the Global South as
victims “bound by the unbreakable chains of religious and patriarchal oppression” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 7). The focus of Euro-centric frameworks of early feminists considered gender a universal category that encompassed the experiences of all women. Thus adhering to the rigid binary opposition of male/female—the very paradigm they sought to dismantle. Adhering to this binary undermined the work of these early feminists and failed to acknowledge the complexity of women’s identities (Narayan, 1997).

Furthermore, this framework suggests that women from the Global South are unaware of the oppressive forces at work in their lives. As such, they are unable to envision their own empowerment. Gueye (2004) speaks to this when she notes that Western feminists “continue to patronize African women and speak about them as objects and helpless minors, who, without the help of the women from the West, will never know what empowerment means” (p. 5). Such a view exacerbated the tension, frustration and criticisms that arose both in the West and the global world. Dissatisfaction with Western feminism’s failure to recognize and accommodate the realities of “other” women generated a proliferation of feminist theories including Black feminism, Post-colonial feminism, and Radical Black Feminism. As more pockets of resistance continued to develop, many women, especially Black women, thought it very odd to support a kind of feminist movement that victimizes women of color and denies them agency.

Consequently, these women deemed it indispensable to create their own movement and to detach themselves from a movement that re-inscribes the same patriarchal vision many Western feminists have been challenging. The creation of these
new movements distinguished themselves from Western Feminist groups not only through naming but also by moving their concerns from the margins and focusing on the role their agency plays in social transformation.

For many, even adding the terms “Black or “Radical Black to feminism was not enough because they did not feel as though these kinds of feminisms embodied a vision that was relevant enough to their struggle, despite the fact that this naming has brought more visibility to non-white women. Hughes-Tafen (2005) argues another discomfort of using of Black feminism is that “it is still assumed to operate within White Western feminism, only more broadly” (p.140). Williams (1990) further argues:

One of the most disturbing aspects of current Black feminism criticisms [is] its separation, its tendency to see not only a distinct black female culture, but to see that culture as a separate cultural form having more in common with White female experience than with the facticity of Afro-American life. (p. 70)

These criticisms of Black feminism are among the many manifestations of how women of African descent strove for a concept that rejected Eurocentric ideas and values and embraced Africanity. The desire to name and delimit the boundaries of their own struggles to empower themselves and their communities has been at the center of debates among women of African descent. While both Womanism and Africana Womanism set themselves apart from Black feminism and feminism, Africana Womanism further differentiates itself from all of them. As Hudson-Weems (1993) declares:

Neither an outgrowth nor an addendum to feminism, Africana Womanism is not Black feminism, African feminism, or Walker's Womanism that some Africana women have come to embrace. Africana Womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture, and therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires of Africana women. . . . The primary goal of Africana women, then, is to
create their own criteria for assessing their realities, both in thought and in action. (p. 22)

Africana Womanism stresses the centeredness of Africana women’s realities, cultures, and experiences. Like many women from the Global South, Hudson-Weems (1995) finds the use of word feminism to be irrelevant to non-Western women. Moreover, the Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD) was one of the pioneering women’s organizations of the South to espouse a critical and theoretical challenge to the Eurocentric paradigms of feminism (Steady, 2007). As Mohanty (1991) points out, African women should address the negative and sensational stereotypes that exclusively label African women as victims. In doing so, African women can illustrate how the processes of racialization and sexualization are used to consolidate particular sets of rules for “woman” that are reinforced by the Western productions of knowledge.

By portraying African women as poor, sexually oppressed, abused, and illiterate, and Western women, in contrast, as sophisticated, modern, and in charge of their sexuality and lives, “the latter are privileged and used as the binary standard against which others are measured” (Beoku-Betts & Njambi, 2005, p. 125). Similar sentiments were conveyed in Chandra Talpade Mohanty’s essay “Under Western Eyes” (1988), which challenges the misrepresentation of women in the developing world “as a singular monolithic subject. She declares there is a pattern of representing the Third World woman as the homogenized and systematized oppressed being without considering the contexts that shape the heterogeneous lives of women in the [developing world]” (p. 53). Given their largely privileged background, generally, Western women’s experiences
generally do not represent those of non-Western women. Additionally, in most countries from the Global South, it is essential to recognize the dichotomy between Western scholarship’s representation of individual women and the perception of women as a collective (Scott & Chueng, 2007). African women’s voices in Western work are often misrepresentative of African societies and cultures (Beoku-Betts & Njambi, 2005).

Another challenge of using feminism as a theoretical lens is that means different things to different people. Many scholars, similar to the participants in this study, refused the imposition of a Western “marker” on African women’s experiences and realities. For them, as Toni Morrison (1987) argued, “definitions belonged to the definers—not the defined” (p. 190). Others felt “that feminism primary appealed to educated and middle-class white women rather than black and white working class women” (Clinton, 1986, p. 155). Therefore, to appropriately address their challenges, Africana women must self-name, self-define and self-identify themselves and their struggle. Such an approach requires Africana women to locate themselves at the center of their historical, cultural, economic, and religious narratives.

Because feminism inadequately and inappropriately addresses the complexities of the experiences of Africana women, the term generates skepticism among many Africana women. In terms of my own project, I noticed the same sentiments among my participants. The same feeling is noticeable among many Muslim women and activists. Many Muslim women feel very uncomfortable with the term ‘feminist’; it is not a term that is used ease as a self-identifier in many Muslim setting including Senegal. As Jeenah (2006) argues “the word ‘feminism’ carries a specifically Western meaning with
particular historical and ideological baggage”…, and “most Muslim activists prefer not having to be accountable for such baggage. Thus, the label ‘feminist’ is often avoided by such activists for strategic purposes” (p. 27). Women from the West have their own ways and standards of evaluating and determining the meaning of such concepts as freedom, power and agency. Because of their different socio-cultural, political economic and geographical circumstances, particularly in Muslim communities, these abstract words almost never have the same connotation for African and Muslim women. Therefore, when addressing women’s issues and experiences in non-Western communities, it is imperative to move discussions “beyond the simplistic registers of submission and patriarchy” (Mahmood, 2005, p.7).

Wadud (1992) argued that, while feminists are engaged in discussions on, and advocate for, “valid issues, they vindicate the position of women on grounds entirely incongruous with the Qur'ānic position on women” (p. 36). As a result, Wadud (1992) declares she ‘gets tired’ of “[T]he ideas that come to us in so-called global dialogue. Most of that discourse suggests that we should put religion aside so we can get real women’s problems on the table. As Muslims, we can't do that, religion is the base . . . I can't separate religion from my identity. It’s just not possible” (p. 38). It is time we started locating, emphasizing and invoking women’s agency (Ferne 1985; Abu-Lughod 1986; Wadud, 1992) and “portraying [them] as active agents whose lives are far richer and more complex than past narratives had suggested” (Mahmood, 2005, p. 7).

Africana Womanism is far more appropriate for my research about and with Senegalese women, many of whom would be as uncomfortable as Na’eeem Jeenah with
prioritizing their gender over their religious identity. African Womanism provides a way for African women to become, in Asante’s words, “the subject and not the object” (1998, p. 1). The theory offers different ways of knowing and understanding the “other” than those presented by Western discourses (Malik, 2003). As a comprehensive approach, Africana Womanism deconstructs and reconstructs women’s lives and status according to their lived, material and cultural realities. It situates Africana “women’s lives at the center of analysis and allows for their self-definition” (Shambley and Boyle, 2004, p.5).

As a theoretical framework, Africana Womanism encompasses gender, ethnicity, religion, and cultural values and recognizes identities deeply rooted within the Afrocentric perspective. As Hudson-Weems (1995) wrote, Africana Womanism:

is grounded in African culture and, therefore, it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs, and desires [of African women themselves.]

Africana Womanism is grounded in a faithful adherence to traditional pre-colonial customs that empowered individuals through the family locus of Africana women (pp. 154-155)

For Hudson-Weems (1993) an “Africana womanist is a self-namer, a self-definer, family-centered, genuine in sisterhood, strong, in concert with the Africana man in struggle, whole, authentic, a flexible role player, respected, recognized, spiritual, male compatible, respectful of elders, adaptable, ambitious, mothering, and nurturing” (pp.154-155). These qualifications are theoretically relevant to the context of Senegalese women in that they require a holistic strategy to addressing the conditions they, in their joint struggle with Senegalese men, face. Rather than distancing or separating themselves from their male counterparts, as some western feminists have done, “Africana men and women are and should be allies, struggling as they have since the days of
slavery for equal social, economic, and political rights as fellow human beings in the world” (Hudson-Weems, 1993, p. 41).

Central to the experiences of Senegalese women are the Africana Womanist values of a family-centered base, nurturing/motherhood, and respect of elders. In most African societies, individuals see society through a holistic lens, as a community that shares a collective culture one in which “the collectivity’s goals are valued over those of the individual” (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999, p. 90). By highlighting family as a vital component to achieve empowerment for the group and recognizing women and men as partners, dependent on one another, Africana Womanism offers a framework by which Senegalese women’s experiences can be explored.

As previously mentioned, Africana Womanism recognizes spirituality, which is present in almost all aspects of Senegalese society. Most Senegalese women believe in a Superior Being and need an accommodating theory that recognizes and respects their spiritual lives. Most importantly, Senegalese women believe that the world is not only made-up of objective explanations and scientific understandings; rather, the Senegalese woman “accepts and welcomes the connections between a higher power, the world and herself” (Mattis, 2002, p. 7). Furthermore, spirituality and religion have been established as key for people of African descent (Dantley, 2003, Mattis, 2002). Jones’ 2003 study of Black female educational administrators found spirituality to be an emerging theme of the participants’ conversations and the driving force behind their leadership. The same is true for most Senegalese people. As Sufi Muslims, spirituality remains a core element in the vast majority of Senegalese people’s lives.
Spirituality, co-ed cooperation, and other characteristics reinforce my choice of using Africana Womanism to explore the experiences and realities of Senegalese women. The essential values of Senegalese societies comprises Africana Womanism and has the potential to bridge the experiences of Senegalese women as they relate to Senegalese men. Articulated through the lens of an African-centered framework, Africana Womanism allows African women “to create their own criteria for assessing their realities, both in thought and in action” (Hudson-Weems, 1995, p. 50). Hence, it allows for the examination of the intersections of various aspects of society and culture--such as spiritual strength and mutual respect--rather than limiting itself to rigid binarist thinking, as Western social scientific analysis tends to do with its focus predominately on issues of race, gender, and class oppression. Africana Womanism deeply reflects the strength of Senegalese women by bringing to the forefront the importance of women’s experience, her role and presence in the history of Africa, her descendants, and her family (Stephens, Keaveny & Patton, 2000). Africana Womanism is rooted in a faithful adherence to traditional, pre-colonial, customs that empowered individuals through the family locus that is influenced “by their survival in a hostile and foreign environment” (Shambley and Boyle, 2004, p.7).

Critiques of Africana Womanism theory, however argue that it has the same problem as Western feminism in that it constructs an “essential” monolithic Black woman. According to Williams (1995) Africana Womanism “tend[s] to ignore the specificities of other black women’s experiences” (p. 6). Like Western feminism, Africana Womanism is accused of homogenizing the voices of women of African
descent. The cultures, beliefs, and rules governing women’s lives in Africa are as diverse, complex and complicated as the continent itself, and cannot therefore be effectively described by a single concept or theory. Scholars such as Marame Gueye (2004) and Obioma Nnaemeka (1997) even question the need to name a framework to articulate what African women have been doing and continue to do to emancipate themselves even before the word feminism was coined (Abdel Halim, 2003). Nnaemeka (1997) noted that:

The majority of African women are not hung up on articulating their feminism, they just do it. In my view, it is what they do, how they do it that provides the “framework.” The framework is not carried to the theater of action as a definitional tool. It is the dynamism of the theater of action with its shifting patterns that makes the feminist spirit/engagement effervescent and exciting but also intractable and difficult to name. (p.5)

While Gueye (2004) and Nnaemeka (1997) might have a valid argument--that it is important to acknowledge the richness and diversity of Africana women’s experiences and voices--it is also crucial to recognize that by embracing the wholeness of people and being grounded in African cultures and values, Africana Womanism offers a great framework through which the lives and experiences of Senegalese women can be investigated and understood.

**Critical Theory**

In addition to Africana Womanism, I also draw upon critical theory to gain a critical understanding and analysis of the complex and rich experiences of Dakaroises. Perhaps one of the most multi-disciplinary theories in the humanities, in the past four decades critical theory has greatly influenced research and theory in a variety of disciplines (Brookfield, 2001; Kellner, 2010). Having originated from the Frankfurt
School in the 1960s, critical theory has since followed a complex trajectory and evolved to embrace a variety of approaches for interpreting and critically challenging our society.

Critical theory is centrally concerned with releasing people from falsely created needs and helping them make their own free choices regarding how they wish to think and live. Framed this way, it is much closer to democratic ideals than people realize. (Brookfield, 2005, p. 364)

Critical theory has emerged to offer rigorous critiques of capitalism and the shifting forms of domination that have emerged from it. Rather than making “the distinction between the world it examines and portrays and the world as it actually exists,” critical theory has challenged people to take their reflections to a higher level (Giroux, 2003, p. 28). As a very dynamic movement, critical theory has always transgressed traditional boundaries, challenged institutions, and generated new ideas and discourses. It is deeply rooted in action and engages in a struggle for social change. Despite the changes it has undergone over time, critical theory is still strongly committed to what Horkheimer, writing in 1972, named as the “idea of a future society as the community of free human beings, insofar as such a society is possible, given the present technical means” (p. 245). Critical theory’s goal is to offer alternatives to perspectives that can be utilized to transform the existing inequalities in society (Horkheimer 1972). In critically examining the changes in socialization processes, critical theorists seek to liberate people from conditions of domination and transform restraining conditions.

Extending Horkheimer’s thoughts, Kincheloe & McLaren (2000) notes that critical theory is extremely “concerned with the need to understand the various and complex ways that power operates to dominate and shape consciousness” (p. 279). In doing so, the theory promotes the emancipation of the oppressed by looking at power relationships
and fighting all forms of domination (Giroux, 2003). Most importantly, it is fundamentally committed to the subalterns in society and aims to disrupt the status quo by challenging how power relations impact human interactions and knowledge construction (Merriam, 2002).

For critical theorists “knowledge does not exist apart from the constitutive interests that lead to its production. There is no clear, distinct line of demarcation between knowledge on one side and ideology, human interests and power on the other” (Cherryholmes, 1985, p. 84). Scholars who embrace critical theories argue that the problems people face in society are not arbitrary, isolated events; rather, these problems emerge from the power relations between the individual and dominant groups in society who produce knowledge about society (McLaren, 1998). Most importantly, critical theory believes in a dialectical view of knowledge that connects practice and theory for a greater understanding of human experiences. As Giroux argues, “all human activity is understood as emerging from an ongoing interaction of reflection, dialogue and action--namely praxis--and as praxis, all human activities requires theory to illuminate it and provide a better understanding of the world as we find it and it might be” (2003, p 15).

By creating a context whereby theory, practice, and reflection come together, critical theory allows change to take place (Freire, 1970). Critical theory’s ultimate goal is to liberate people by challenging asymmetrical power relations and transforming this action into everyday practice.

Under the big umbrella of critical theory, I particularly draw from Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy to provide a conceptual framework by which to investigate the
educational avenues radio provides for women’s empowerment. While many critical pedagogy theorists such as Henry Giroux and bell hooks have greatly contributed to the field of education, Freire’s dialogical approach (1970, 1973) offers a stronger rationale to explore the educational experiences of Senegalese women vis-à-vis radio calling shows.

Freire used critical theory as an instrument of analysis in the field of education. He argued that the educational process was a double-edged sword: although education can perpetuate conformity, it also has great potential to empower the individual by encouraging a critical examination of her/his reality. For Freire, the educational process should not be divorced from peoples lived experience and should be a venue in which people can become liberated by engaging in critical self-reflection. Liberation arises from critical self-reflection. When people actively practice critical reflection and engage in action they can participate in the production of knowledge.

Praxis, according to Freire (1972), is necessary for liberation to take place and thus was a mandatory element for any form of education to succeed. By providing informal learning opportunities for dialogue and producing knowledge in the community, radio programs can play a transformational role in addressing Senegalese women’s daily needs. These programs could be one of the strategies to advance women’s conditions and enable them to live and to pursue a fuller humanity (Freire, 1970). The transformational process could become liberatory by promoting conscientization “in which [wo]men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of the capacity to transform that reality” (Freire, 1970 p. 27).
Radio programs offer Senegalese women the opportunity to challenge social structures and ideologies while exposing the limitations of formal education in addressing their needs. These possibilities are central to critical inquiry. As Yoo (2007) argues, “it is not a theoretical debate to deal with oppression in a classroom.” The type of education that takes places with interactive radio programming is a form of popular education that can address oppression and other issues typically overlooked by formal education.

“Liberating education can change our understanding of reality. But this is not the same as changing reality itself. No. Only political action in society can make social transformation, not critical study in the classroom” (Freire & Shor, 1973, p.175). The structures of the learning institutions have to be transformed and expanded in order to provide alternative learning settings and experiences. Radio talk show programs have the potential to reach a wider popular consciousness. By making the learning process and experience more participatory with less “banking,” critical pedagogy sees learners not as empty vessels where knowledge is to be deposited, but rather as active agents who have a lot to offer in the production of knowledge (Freire, 2000). Freire in a discussion with Antonio Faundez (1989) describes the traditional approach of teaching as the “castration of curiosity” (p.35).

What we see happening is a movement in one direction, from here to there, and that’s it. There is no comeback, and there is not even any searching. The educator, generally, produces answers without having been asked anything! (p. 35)

Unlike traditional forms of education, critical theory has the potential to improve the human condition and transform the world. Freire insists that educators should not force their ideas on learners; instead, he offers a “dialogical method of teaching where
knowledge is inconstant and always only an approximation” (Rozas, 2007, p.8) therefore allowing learners/participants to “act in accordance to their own needs” (2000, p. 76). He explains that “It is not our role to speak to people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours” (Freire, 200, p. 77). It is only through dialogue, according to Freire, that critical pedagogy can bring about a liberatory education.

In agreement with Freire, Roberts (2005) advocates for and endorses critical pedagogy when he writes that “investigating alternative ways of viewing the world is one of the defining features of critical consciousness” (p.133). The ability of people to read the word enables them to name the world. According to critical theorists, allowing people to engage as critical members of their communities enables them to become empowered agents who are capable of not only challenging and critiquing the status quo in society but also contributing effectively toward its “conscientization” and liberation.

I use the Freirean approach to education to investigate the educational avenues radio provides for Senegalese women because his idea of dialogue and praxis emphasizes the significance of process over product (Hooks, 1989). “Conscientization” requires that we connect research, theory, and practice when investigating issues like women’s access to education and empowerment. Such an approach has its place in this study given that it supposes that subordinated groups can become liberated. Moreover, critical theory serves as a powerful tool for critically analyzing the social constructions and ideologies of people who are seeking knowledge and liberation. As Richard Quantz (1992) argues,
the main focus of critical research is “having conscious political intentions that are oriented toward emancipatory and democratic goals” (p. 449).

While Freire never worked on the impact of new media and radio talk shows on education, his writing does offer extended reflections regarding the issue. Even during the 1960s Freire incorporated advanced media technologies in his approach and reflected upon the “politics of technology” in a many of his writings (Kahn & Kellner, 2007, p. 7). Freire suggested that new technologies have the power to transform people’s lives and free them from oppression, marginalization, and discrimination (Freire, 1998). However, he warns against the possibility of technology operating as an instrument of oppression and domination (Gadotti, 1994; Darder, 2002). Freire (1973) suggested we adopt a “critical appropriation” of technologies because “the answer does not lie in the rejection of the machine but in the humanization of man” (p. 35). Instead, we should interrogate and challenge the way technology is utilized so that it can be appropriated by the people and used in the larger fight for humanity. As it aims to provide a genuine framework for empowerment, critical analysis of traditions, educational institutions, and technologies as they relate to people’s lives, the Freirean approach to critical theory holds promise for analyzing the experiences of Senegalese women.

Intersectionality: Africana Womanism and Critical Theory

The fusion of critical and Africana Womanist theories provided a valuable theoretical framework that enabled me to understand, interpret, and make sense of the rich experiences of Dakaroïses as they relate to the phenomenon of radio talk shows. Combining these two theories and Africana Womanism theory opened up a double-axis
framework through which to understand the intersections of culture, class, religion, and
gender and how interrelate to shape the rich and complex dimensions of participants’
experiences (Crenshaw, 1991). Such an approach created an intersection that cut across
these different critical perspectives while connecting them in very unique ways.
Interrogating the ways in which Africana and critical theory intersect of the two theories
was particularly significant to this study because it allowed a profound and critical
analysis of various sites where a multitude of issues intersect to “capture and theorize the
simultaneity of gender,” religion, and class as a socio-cultural process” (Crenshaw, 1991,
p. 403). While Africana Womanist theory and critical theory offer, in some way,
different insights and operate on different agendas, they share a common ground and
concern: “releasing people from falsely created needs and helping them make their own
free choices regarding how they wish to think and live” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 364).
Africana Womanist theory is not to be understood outside the large framework of critical
theory. While one can argue that theories like Africana Womanist theory, Womanist
theory, and Back feminist have emerged as a result of Black women’s grassroots activism
fueled by the need by Black women all over the world to reclaim and rename their own
struggles and experiences, it is also important to mention that Africana Womanism is
strongly connected to Critical theory.

African Womanist theory has been informed by critical theory and also drew from
and expanded the large discipline of critical theory (Weiler 1991; Solorzano & Bernal,
2001). As Critical theory developed and expanded outside of the Frankfurt School, it was
embraced by various disciplines. In the 1960’s scholars such as Edward Said, Frank
Fanon, Wole Soyinka, among others, began to criticize and challenge Western hegemonic ideologies and strongly advocated for the deconstruction and the reconstruction of false images and representation created by Western scholars regarding non-Western cultures. In the years following the 1960s, especially, scholars from former colonized nations began utilizing critical theory discourses in order to articulate political struggle both within and outside academia. At the same time, feminists were challenging the patriarchal nature of both society and the texts it produced. Slowly, Critical theory became a global and multicultural activist movement committed to the propagation of critical discourses that included issues of oppression, gender, and race (Kellner, 2010).

Africana Womanist theory and critical theory are significant in many respects. Both have strong emancipatory commitments. They are genuinely dedicated to challenging oppression in their own ways. While the theories operate on different agendas on one hand, on the other, they are “intensely concerned with the need to understand the various and complex ways that power operates to dominate and shape consciousness” (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 283). Both proponents of Africana Womanism theory and Critical theory strive for social change by engaging in the social, historical, political, cultural and economic transformation of society. In doing so, they investigate the process of transformation and social change by critically questioning existing oppressive structures. Such a process enables people to become more aware of and to raise their consciousnesses about the complex ways in which these structures hinder or expand their thoughts. Africana Womanism and critical theories demand a commitment to valuing and giving voices to those who are marginalized and silenced as
they both emphasize liberation through coming to voice (Hooks, 1984; Weiler 1991; Quantz, 1992; Solorzano & Bernal, 2001).

In endorsing social justice as a general principle, the two theories also emphasize context and experience. As they “seek to effect empowerment at all stages of the research process through critical analysis of power and responsible use of power” (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p. 9), Africana Womanist and critical theories demand that research participants’ voices and experiences be at the heart of the research process while recognizing the vital role context and history play in influencing both individual experiences as well as how communities are socialized. The two theories further emphasize and acknowledge agency and activism. Both advocate that people not view themselves as passives objects to be dominated and controlled by others and institutions; people should problematize the institutions of socialization that control and dominate them. Africana Womanist theory emphasizes on gender and its insistence on utilizing African cultures and values as a framework to understanding, interpreting, and analyzing the experiences of Africana women. Because it is “grounded in the perspectives and epistemological constructs of peoples of African descent” (Dei, 1996, p. 3), Africana Womanist theory rejects Western epistemologies and offers an alternative theoretical lens that recognizes and grounds Africana Women’s experiences in Africana values and perspectives. Critical theory tends to foreground on class, hegemony, resistance and structural (Freire, 1971). Together these theories uncover the others’ blind spots and makes sure that an analysis of gender is contextualized by looking at the creation of power relations that are driven by class. An analysis of power, class, and capitalism
requires that one understands how a person’s gender will affect the way in which they seek to liberate and empower themselves. Despite their different foci, critical theory moves the analysis of this study to another level that challenges the very social and cultural patriarchal institutions that subordinate women. By critiquing institutionalized domination in society, critical theory aims for a “critical consciousness which demands people to think critically about issues like culture, beliefs, traditions and representation within our societies” (Shor, 1993). In doing so, critical theory complements Africana Womanism as it might not address entirely the realities and complexities of a diverse group of critically aware Senegalese women.

Both theories allowed me to acknowledge and situate cultural values within relations of power and connect them in a way that allowed for a holistic analysis of the participants’ experiences. These theories centered the analysis on the intersections of multiple oppressions. Both theories offered a method of investigating social relations that puts relations of production at the center of the argument while allowing people “to rethink their experiences in terms that both name relations of oppression and offer ways in which to overcome them” (Giroux, 2003, p.54). I was able to recognize Senegalese values and experiences and to present a perspective look at the challenges and experiences. Together, they contributed very uniquely to interrogating the perspective Dakaroises’s experiences vis-à-vis radio talk shows. By offering a simultaneous analysis of gender, culture, religion, resistance, and hegemony, Africana Womanist and critical theories transcended their limitations, supplementing each other and providing a valuable theoretical framework for this study.
The Africana Womanism Theory helps us understand the unique cultural norms and values that have shaped Senegalese women’s lives and molded them into what they are, while critical theory enhances our ability to step outside the Cultural Relativism framework and draw from Universalist principles the fundamental human rights that are guaranteed to all by virtue of our being human without falling into the danger of negating the significance of these women’s cultural life.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature pertaining to this research study and the theories that inform and guide my analysis. In the literature review section, I have provided an overview/examination of how Senegalese women’s role and status has been evolved over time starting from the pre-colonial era to the post-colonial period. I have particularly explored the role of both traditional forms of education and formal education on women’s socialization within each period and how international policies, initiatives and concepts such as Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) have affected Senegalese women’s lives. In this section, I have also looked at the evolution of the field of development communication, the various approaches that have emerged from the field, their usage and implication on how media is used for development and social change. Thereafter, I discussed the history of radio broadcast in Senegal and the role it has played in educating and informing Senegalese citizens and promoting national development. The literature review section ends with a review on the research on radio.
In the theoretical framework section, I have first presented and discussed Africana Womanist theory and Critical theory separately and then I have offered a reflection on how the two theories connect together to provide a more comprehensive understanding and interpretation of Dakaroises’ experiences and realities. I have further explained how Africana Womanist theory and Critical theory are sensitive to the socio-cultural context in which the Dakaroises radio talk shows listeners and caller operate. The two theories intersect and complement each other in a very unique way to capture the many ways in which Dakaroises interact with the radio as a medium of socialization, education and empowerment.

In reviewing the theories and literature relevant to this research, various gaps emerged including the limited research on private radios, their impact on women’s education and empowerment, especially in Francophone Africa. The literature review has also indicated an overwhelming emphasis on formal education and a need to investigate others platforms and avenues that have the potential to transform women’s lives. While various studies in many developing countries have investigated many aspect of radio listening such as audience perception, radio effects, the role of community radios on local development, there is still limited research on private radio, calling shows and their impact on callers and listeners. There is also a dearth of research on the exposition of cell phones usage in developing countries and its implication on radio calling shows. While various studies conducted within Senegal by academic institutions such the Senegalese school of Journalism and Communication (CESTI), NGOs and media institutions have looked at impact and influence of radio on democracy, national development, education,
language policies, I hope to add to this rich conversation with an in-depth look the potential radio talk shows offers for women. The gaps in the literature review call for research on the impact and influence of not only community radios but on all forms of radio on citizens’ education, conscientization and empowerment. There is also a need to investigate the potential that bringing radio talk shows, education together for filling the gaps left by formal education in order to achieve social change and empowerment. An exploration of other avenues outside of the formal school setting such as radio talk shows is much needed to reach and educate both schooled and unschooled women. This study, therefore, addresses these gaps by investigating how radio talks have transformed or contributed to the transformation of Dakaroises’ lives through education and empowerment. In doing so, this research also looks at others avenues, strategies and possibilities to advance Dakaroises’ education and conscientization. In striving to effectively address the gaps through this study, I posed the following research questions:

1. What are the characteristics of radio listeners?
2. What are the characteristics and the content of the radio talk shows?
3. What factors prompt or motivate women to engage in talk shows?
4. What roles does the radio play in the everyday life of the listeners?

In the next chapter, I discuss in detail the methodological issues pertaining to this study including my research paradigm, the design of this study, the research setting the research methods I used to collect the data, my positionality as an insider/outsider. I also address the ethical issues I encountered in the field, credibility and trustworthiness issues and how the data analysis is carried out.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter addressed the literature review pertaining to this study. A critical review of the existing literature on women’s education, empowerment, media and communication for social change reveals that the question of using radio talk shows to educate and empower women in Senegal has not yet been addressed. Therefore, in this study, I address this gap in the literature by offering an examination of how Senegalese women experience and interact with radio talk shows. In doing so, my objective is to offer a detailed narrative of the avenues and possibilities that radio talk shows provide for urban-dwelling Senegalese women. I hope to do such through use of methodology that brings out the unexplored sphere of women’s experience in a vivid way and how it is being influenced by the radio talk show.

In this chapter, therefore, I address the core methodological issues underlying this research. I begin by setting the framework for the design of the study and explaining how an interpretive approach and a hermeneutic phenomenological case study approach, grounded in an African-centered paradigm, suits this study. Next, I provide a detailed description of the research setting, the participants and the methods and procedures employed. I then discuss how these research methods provided me with a deeper understanding of Senegalese women's experiences vis-à-vis radio talk shows. Also in this chapter, I reflect upon my position in the insider/outsider binary and its ramifications, ethical issues and how credibility trustworthiness were ensured. I further explain how the data are analyzed and interpreted and conclude by a summary of the chapter.
Rationale for a Qualitative Inquiry

There is an abundance of literature on research design that highlights the significance of identifying suitable methodologies based on the nature of research questions (Creswell, 1998, Wolcott, 1992, Silverman, 2000, Glesne, 2006; Brizuela et al, 2000). As there is a fundamental relationship between research practices and the nature of the question, it is important that the researcher lets the research questions steer and dictate the adequate methods (Glesne, 2006; Brizuela et al, 2000). Based on the questions I posed to understand and capture the meaning of Senegalese women’s experiences vis-à-vis radio talk shows, I determined qualitative inquiry to be most suitable for this study (Creswell, 1998). The focus of the study on understanding the phenomenon of talk shows as it exists within Senegal and as it is lived by women within the Senegalese context suggest that a qualitative approach was not only the best frame, but was critical in order to access women’s voices, viewpoints and experiences. In the last few decades, qualitative inquiry has emerged and gained visibility and status in the social sciences (Merriam, 1998, Patton, 1985). As a result, the field has gained popularity as a favored category among researchers who are engaged in carrying out studies to situate, challenge and confront the inequalities, injustice and hegemonies of social life (Giroux, 1988). As Patton (1985) defines it, qualitative inquiry is:

An effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the nature of that setting, what it means for participants to be in that setting, what their lives are like, what’s going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting. The analysis strives for depth of understanding. (p.1)
For that reason, qualitative research inquiry offers a meaningful platform for gaining insight into the research participants’ perspectives while “giving greater attention to the nuances, settings, interdependencies, complexities, idiosyncrasies, and context” (Patton, 2002, p.60). Qualitative inquiry aims at understanding phenomena in context-specific settings, such as "real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" (Patton, 2002, p. 39). By prioritizing and allowing participants’ voices and viewpoints to emerge, qualitative inquiry enables the researcher to gain richer insights into the phenomenon. Using a qualitative approach enabled me to understand the various perspectives shared by women about the meaning and significance of radio talk shows while providing me with the understanding of the complexities of the whole phenomenon.

In her article: the Choreography of Qualitative Research Design: Minuets, Improvisations, and Crystallization, Janesick (2000) compares the qualitative researcher to a skillful choreographer who, at different stages of the design, is attempting to seize the complexity of the research “in terms of situating and re-contextualizing the research project within the shared experience of the researcher and the participants in the study” (p.380). In the course of this qualitative inquiry journey, like a choreographer, I continuously practiced and performed the techniques, and as the dance carried on, I modified, improved and sometimes “interrupted movements and techniques” (Janesick 2000, p.533). The performance produced a deeper, holistic, yet unique understanding of women’s experiences of radio talk shows.
Qualitative inquiry values and emphasizes giving voice to the participants, and seeks to understand reality from their world view. The discipline offers an array of paradigms that have emerged from various social science fields (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Creswell, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). As many researchers have argued, choosing a research paradigm is fundamental to any research enterprise because of its significance to the choice of the research methods and approach of inquiry (Bryman, 2004; Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Creswell 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Wilson (2001) defines paradigm as “a set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge that goes together to guide people’s actions as to how they are going to go about doing their research” (p. 175). The paradigm thus provides for the researcher legitimate boundaries of inquiry that shape and influence not only how she/he conducts the research but also how she interprets the results (Bryman, 2004). Without this recognition, it becomes difficult to understand and circumscribe the researcher’s emic perspective, her assumptions, choices and stance.

The current literature about qualitative research paradigms reveals many categories ranging from post-positivist, participatory, critical theory to interpretive (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Lincoln & Guba, 2000, Morgan & Simircich, 1980). While these categories have some commonalities, they also hold variations and differences in terms of naming and essence. Amongst all the qualitative research paradigms, I found myself situated in interpretive paradigm as it was the best lens to explore, understand and interpret the complexities and realities of Senegalese women’s experiences vis-à-vis radio talk shows.
Interpretive Paradigm

The philosophical underpinnings of an interpretive paradigm are rooted in the belief that knowledge is socially co-constructed rather than being a personal experience (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Gergen, 1994; Giorgi, 1994; Marion, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 2000). Interpretivist researchers embrace “the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 8). They perceive knowing as a process that is embedded in social interaction. Through interactions, individuals create and negotiate meaning within the context they live in and operate (Ernest, 1999).

For interpretivists, reality cannot be discovered, it rather occurs when people are engaged in social and cultural practices. Not only are realities multiples and co-constructed but, most importantly, understood from various perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krauss, 2005). Therefore, “since each of us experiences from our own point of view, each of us experiences a different reality” (Krauss, 2005, p. 760). The interpretive paradigm emphasizes that reality is dynamic and fluid which allows the construction of meaning to emanate from different interpretations and viewpoints (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I adopted an interpretive approach for this study because I wanted to focus on how urban women make meaning of their spaces as regards radio while striving to gain a better understanding of the world around them and how that consciousness has shaped their world outlook and thereby influenced change in their
social relations. The relationship between what counts as knowledge, the known and the knower, is central to the interpretive paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell, 2003).

The recognition of multiple and co-constructed meanings and realities make the knower-known relationship inseparable and dynamic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ladson-Billings, 2000). As it commences and ends with participants, the interpretive paradigm disrupts the researcher authority and recognizes the co-creation of meaning and knowledge between the participants and the researcher (Giorgi, 1994; Marion, 2002). In such a paradigm knowledge is perceived as fluid and subjective because the goal is to build knowledge based on the participants’ experiences. This was critical for the female participants in this study to see themselves as capable of knowing and interpreting their lives in their own context and languages. The idea of co-construction of knowledge and co-meaning-making offered my participants a chance to own the experience by taking a fundamental role as capable players in their effort to give meaning to their experiences.

Interpretivists view the meaning-making and knowledge construction as highly contextual. Context, however, is influenced by a wide range of factors such as religion, ideology, culture and language which are critical to how people see, understand and interpret their world (Cohen et al., 2004; Gergen, 1994; Madill, Jordan & Shirley, 2000; Schwandt, 2000). This implies that individuals from different religious, cultural and socio-economic backgrounds negotiate meaning, perceive and construct knowledge in different ways (Gergen, 1994; Schwandt, 2000; Stetsenko & Arievitch, 1997).
Languages being at the center of any social and cultural context, interpretivists stress its critical role in the process of meaning making and knowledge construction. As Walsh (1990) stated:

Language is more than a mode of communication or a system composed of rules, vocabulary, and meanings; it is an active medium of social practice through which people construct, define, and struggle over meaning in dialogue with, and in relation to, others. (pp. 32)

For interpretivist researchers, language is more than a medium to convey the description of reality. As a body of socio-cultural practices, language occupies a pivotal place in the course of meaning making and reality construction. This research deals with how urban women make meaning of radio talks shows. Therefore the element of language lies at the core of this research.

As an interpretivist researcher, I recognized and emphasized the significance of words, proverbs and language as they determine the many ways people think and negotiate their social interactions. Language both constructs and reflects social and cultural realities. “One cannot understand human behavior without understanding the framework within which subjects interpret their thoughts, feelings, and actions” (Marshall and Rossman, 1989, p.49). In recognizing and allowing context with all its ramifications to dictate how meaning is negotiated and knowledge is produced, the interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to have insight into what that reality means and how it can be interpreted. In this regard, the interpretive paradigm provides a strong and rich framework to investigate the complex realities of women’s experiences of radio talk shows. By seeing and valuing participants as legitimately knowledgeable, capable of producing knowledge as well as interpreting their world in accordance with the contexts,
the interpretive paradigm embraces a process of negotiation while allowing multiple truths to emerge.

**Phenomenology**

Phenomenology was another approach that provided me with an ideal strategy for the examination of Senegalese women’s experiences of radio talk shows. While the use of the term phenomenology can be traced back in the early 18th century to the philosophical texts of Hegel and Kant (Moran, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), Husserl is recognized as the founder and pioneer of the advancement of phenomenology as a philosophical approach and descriptive method (Moran, 2000; Owen, 1996).

Over time, the philosophical concept has attracted many scholars like Derrida, Gadamer, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty who have endorsed, re-invented, re-visited, re-interpreted and expanded the approach (Moran, 2000). As Moran (2000) argues, phenomenological scholars “have been extraordinarily diverse in their interests, in their interpretation of the central issues of phenomenology, in their application of what they understood to be the phenomenological method, and in their development of what they took to be the phenomenological programme for the future of philosophy” (p.3). This array of phenomenological styles led to both a flourishing and variation of perspectives and paradigms (Findlay, 2009) ranging from descriptive, hermeneutic, existential phenomenology to other phenomenological approaches that constitute a blend of two or more of these approaches (Dowling, 2007; Findlay, 2009, Racher and Robinson, 2003).

Although no single phenomenological philosophy generated research methods, their philosophies are widely utilized to strengthen current qualitative inquiry (Fleming et
In recent years, phenomenology has been established into a dominant framework in the search for knowledge in social sciences. The various types of phenomenology share a common ground as the study of the essence of experience through people’s perceptions of events and objects (Merleau-Ponty, 1995; Patton, 1990).

Among the different types of phenomenology, I have opted for hermeneutic phenomenology as it fits well within the interpretive paradigm and thus offers a meaningful groundwork to explore the stories and experiences of female radio callers and listeners in Senegal. The approach of philosophers like Gadamer and Heidegger took classical phenomenology to an extreme by rejecting the idea of a fixed meaning and thus moving beyond description to reach a level of analysis and interpretation that will “open to the emerging intersubjective explorations of meanings” (Sammel, 2003, p. 8).

While some argue that Gadamer has added the interpretive aspect to phenomenology, others like Heidegger, one of the founders of hermeneutic phenomenology argue that “the meaning of phenomenological description as a method lies in interpretation” (1962, p. 37). Interpretation is rather an unavoidable and essential component of phenomenology. “There is no such thing as interpretive research, free of the judgment or influence of the researcher (McConnell-Henry & Chapman, 2009, p. 4). For Gadamer understanding any phenomenon requires interaction and dialogue which in return engenders interpretation. At the heart of Gadamerian phenomenology lies the idea that interactions through dialogue have the ability to produce co-construction of meaning through what he describes as the “fusing of horizons” with horizons being “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point”
Gadamer’ sees hermeneutic phenomenology as functioning in a circle where the whole is interpreted in light of the parts, which in return are interpreted in light of the whole. Within the circle, each interpretation deconstructs and then reconstructs new meaning which leads to a greater understanding of the previous experience to an opening to of newer experience, a new layer in the circle. This exercise produces a plurality of possible interpretations. As Gadamer (1989) stated:

The person who wants to understand a text is ready to be told something by it. So a hermeneutically trained mind must from the start be open to the otherness of the text. But such openness presupposes neither “neutrality” about the objects of study nor indeed self-obliteration, but rather includes the identifiable appropriation of one’s own bias, so that the text presents itself in its otherness and in this manner has the chance to play off its truth in the matter at hand against the interpreter’s pre-opinion. (pp.72-73)

Gadamerian hermeneutic phenomenology is an appropriate approach for addressing the question of women’s educational and empowering experiences because of its ability to tap into the lived experiences of human beings. Patton (2002) defines the “phenomenological approach to research as a means of capturing and describing how people experience some phenomenon, how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it and talk about it with others” (p. 104). A phenomenological approach allows the researcher, through interpretation and observation of social phenomena, to effectively explore the lived experiences of the participants and is an approach widely used in health, education, and psychology (Van Manen, 1997). Although one can argue that phenomenology underpins all qualitative research methods, and that the phenomenological concepts of “experience and understanding” are found in all qualitative inquiry, it is however possible to be involved in a phenomenological
research and utilize techniques that set it apart from other qualitative approaches (Merriam, 2002). For instance, while ethnographic study is the “process and product of describing cultural behavior” (Schwandt, 2001, p.44), phenomenological study highlights “the essence or structure of an experience.” Hermeneutic phenomenologists are interested in unpacking and understanding the “phenomenon as it is experienced, not as it is conceptualized” (Van Manen, 1990, cited in Arminio, 2001, p.241), while seeking to demonstrate and interpret how complex meanings are constructed.

There is a rich body of research investigating the experience of women from a hermeneutic phenomenological perspective, addressing a wide range of issues like female genital excision (FGE), sexual harassment, pregnancy, and sex trafficking (Bartky, 2002, Kruks, 2001; Marshall, 1996). Many feminist scholars argue that a phenomenological approach offers a valuable theoretical framework through which women’s experiences can be examined. In the same ways feminists value phenomenology. Other scholars from various disciplines view phenomenology as a method that has the potential to address a wide spectrum of health, social, political and cultural issues. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach seeks to discover, grasp and interpret the very meaning of participants’ experiences. According to McConnell-Henry & Chapman (2008), this type of phenomenological research is remarkably valuable because it allows the investigation and the inclusion of biases as valid components of the research. As a result, the participants’ and the researcher’s experience, understanding and interpretations are woven together to create a mutual understanding of the phenomena.
By passing women’s experiences through the filter of hermeneutic phenomenology, we allow the perspective of the whole to be upheld while being consciously aware of the details of everyday life (Gadamer, 1989). Research is increasingly recognizing the significance of the participants’ perceptions. Phenomenological studies value the richness of the participants’ experiences and the power of their stories. Using a hermeneutic phenomenological method enabled me to gain detailed information about participants’ perceptions and experiences. As I embarked on the role of co-learner who searches for knowledge from and among my participants, I understood better the phenomenon of radio talk shows as it is lived and experienced by women.

Case Study

While embedded in hermeneutic phenomenology, the bounded nature in time and place of the inquiry (with its focus on female radio talk show listeners and callers who live in Dakar) suggests the appropriateness of a case study approach. Case study research has been defined by “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context boundaries are not clearly delineated, and multiple sources of evidence are used” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). Thus, undertaking case study research enables the researcher to conduct a thorough exploration of the particular, while enhancing a holistic understanding of the phenomenon as well (Merriam, 2002; Stake, 2000). The main strength of case study research lies in its ability to embrace a variety of the data collection process and procedures, and to incorporate various research paradigms (Bassey, 1999;
Dooley, 2002; Yin, 2003). Through rich methodological research methods, techniques and paradigms, case study research leads to a thorough understanding of the complexities of the context of the phenomenon under study.

Notwithstanding all the confusion and criticisms it generated especially in the 1950s and 1960’s (Tellis, 1997), case study research still prevails in many fields of studies including education. Instead of declining, case study research “re-emerged as a practical approach for comprehensively studying complex issues in context” (Yin, 2003, cited in Anthony and Jack, 2009, p.2). Since the last four decades, case study research has gained increasing popularity as an interpretive method of inquiry for researchers in a variety of disciplines ranging from political science, sociology to education (Gangeness & Yurkovich, 2006; Stake, 1995; Ragin, 1992; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). Despite its popularity, the term “case study” carries some confusion regarding its definition and nature (Merriam, 1998; Zucker, 2001). Researchers have referred to the term “case study” as a research strategy (Yin, 2003; Salminen, Harra & Lautamo, 2006), a teaching technique (Hammersley, 1986; Nielsen & Hauschildt, 2006; Stake 2000), a research design (Bergen & White 2000), a method of data collection (Gangeness & Yurkovich, 2006, cited in Anthony and Jack, 2009), and a research method (Jones & Lyons 2004; Powers & Knapp 1990; Stake, 1999).

Moreover, case study has often been criticized by advocates of qualitative research as lacking robustness, scientific rigor and being invalid for generalization (Bassey, 1999; Tellis, 1997). While the issue of generalization has been particularly well discussed amongst practitioners of qualitative case study researchers, there has been no
consensus as regards the intention, possibility, necessity “or even desirable, to generalize from qualitative research findings” (Denzin, 1989; Greenwood & Levin, 1998, 2003; Rosenthal, 1993; Stake, 1995 cited in Kacen and Chaitin, 2006, p.217). Some scholars like Ruddin (2006) and Mayring (2007) argue that single case study research offers room for generalization whereas others have preferred the concept of transferability to that of generalizability. The shift to the concept of transferability is justified by the fact that transferability implies that the knowledge acquired is solely applied to few specific milieus and contexts, therefore rejecting the application and relevance of such findings across the board.

Whilst the possibility of transferability alongside the crucial role that the findings of this study might play in future research both within and outside the Senegalese context, the purpose of this study is not to generalize findings to other contexts. The phenomenon under study is time and context specific. The interpretive approach used in this research seeks to shed light on a single case under a precise context and therefore “rejects generalization as a goal" (Denzin, 1983, p.133). This case study research aims to particularly yield details and in-depth understanding of the educational effects of radio listening habits of Senegalese women. As Stake (1995) wrote:

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on uniqueness and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (p.8)

Particularity is a key characteristic of case study research and it requires that research focuses on “local meaning” and investigates a phenomenon in its natural setting.
Hence, this case study research aimed to “explicate the ways people [women] in particular settings come to understand, account for, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 7). Furthermore, exploring the complexities of the interactions of Senegalese women with radio talk shows and the milieu in which they live revealed the existence of webs of meanings. These meanings require an exploration of the particularity of each woman’s realities in Senegal.

Therefore, this study research emphasizes “interpretation in context” as I try to comprehend and co-construct meaning with the participants. Moreover, the emergent and flexible nature of case study research makes it particularly appropriate for researchers seeking to understand complex situations and phenomenon (Robson, 2002) while responding “to changing conditions” (Merriam, 2002, p.8). Therefore, these qualities make case study research very suitable for a more detailed learning about the educational impact of talk shows on women in Senegal.

**An African-Centered Paradigm**

My goal was also to provide and interpret a paradigm responsive and sensitive to the realities of African women. Therefore, An African-centered approach was also used to gather, analyze and interpret the data during the research process. During the last decades, African scholars “have been very critical of mainstream methodological approaches to research on and about” (Keita, 2008, p.7) Africa in general and women in particular. As a result, there has been a call for an urgent need to revisit and develop an African-centered framework through “dynamic, multi-dimensional and heterogeneous methodological approaches” that fit African diversity (Steady, 2007, p.5). Vernon Dixon,
in his article “Worldviews and research methodology” (1976), stresses the importance of the relationship between the methodology applied and the researcher’s worldview. Dixon argues that when trying to examine culturally specific phenomenon, the researcher’s methodology represents partially the assumptions that the researcher carries with her/him into the field. Africanist scholars are therefore increasingly advocating for the utilization of an “Africa-centered” paradigm which embodies the African Worldview as a research methodology (Keita, 2008). As Keita (2008) argued:

It would be the mission of African social scientists, at home and in the Diaspora, to devote their energies to the radical reconstruction of the disciplines in which they have been trained. Without such an approach, African peoples run the risk of incorporating the theoretical, mythological and ideological models of white social science into their own methodologies, thereby unknowingly internalizing the values of Western European society, including the negative image of Africa which white racialism and culturalism has created. (p.1)

In an effort to be attentive to such issues, it was crucial for me in this study to utilize an approach that is rooted within African realities. Such an approach has “a frame of reference wherein phenomena are viewed from the perspective of the African person. This means that we examine every aspect of the dislocation of African people; culture, economics, psychology, health, and religion” (Asante, 1990, p. 172). In doing so, this study seeks to apply a research methodology that is committed to decolonizing knowledge and deconstructing images about the urban Senegalese woman, especially those living in Dakar, who like other women across the continent, have been dehumanized and reduced to the rank of what Spivak (1988) calls the “subaltern woman” (or the subaltern of the subaltern). To this end, this study valorizes the African centered paradigm as the fundamental principle of gaining insight into the mindset of these urban
Senegalese women; which means more than recognizing other ways of doing, being and
knowing but also valuing, appreciating and embracing them (Brown and Strega, 2005).
Through recognition and respect of African values and ways of knowing, the African–
centered approach enables the researcher to learn with, by, and from local communities,
thereby creating a rapport which leads to the co-construction of meaning and knowledge.
While the African-centered paradigm has some commonalities with some traditional
Eurocentric qualitative paradigms, it sets itself apart in the sense that it challenges and
demystifies them as the sole body of knowledge production.

Equally important is the recognition of the fact that the African-centered
paradigm places a special emphasis on location because the position, from which the
researcher chooses becomes fundamental not only to the outcome of the research but how
she/he sees the participants, understands and interprets their expressions. When writing
about African people from the center rather than the margins, the researcher reiterates,
confirms and validates the centrality of historical and cultural realities as the place to start
creating a dynamic African-centered interpretive approach to research. This also
translates into the researcher seeing the participants " as centered and central in their own
history then they see themselves as agents, actors, and participants rather than as
marginals on the periphery of ….experience” (Asante, 2009, p.1). By recognizing,
appreciating, acknowledging, respecting and valuing the experiences of the participants,
which the African centered paradigm advocates, “inquiry into a higher realm where the
methodology and the process of knowledge construction ceases to take precedence over
the well-being of the people being researched” (Reviere, 2001, p. 709) is facilitated. The participants build trust and confidence in the researcher.

This populist method of inquiry, therefore, using an African-centered paradigm was critical to this study as it offers a holistic lens that encompasses, appreciates and respects the values, ethics, cultures and principles of the Senegalese women on whom and with whom the research was conducted. This explains why, in effect, the people themselves influenced and shaped the method applied in this research. This paradigm is relevant as it provides a conceptual and an alternative framework that is interpretive yet embraces an African worldview. As Mkabela (2005) stated:

The proposal of an Afrocentric method, however, is not to denigrate Western methodology, but to re-examine and complement any thinking that attributes undue Western superiority at the expense of neglecting African thought. The Afrocentric method can be used as a complement to qualitative research methods. It shares the same characteristics of qualitative research methods in that both Afrocentric and qualitative methods assume that people employ interpretive schemes which must be understood and that the character of the local context must be articulated. (p. 188)

Recognizing the value in other qualitative paradigms should neither distract nor take away the vital function that African-centered paradigm plays as a significant approach to accurately understanding, exploring and analyzing the realities and experiences of African people. Accordingly, operating within such lens allowed me to emphasize culturally sensitive techniques and methods that were embedded in “a fluid way of knowing derived from teachings transmitted from generation to generation by storytelling, where each story is alive with the nuances of the storyteller” (Kovach, 2005, p.9). A further justification for using this alternative paradigm lies in the fact that it
allowed me to achieve a profound understanding of the stories and experiences of Senegalese women from an emic perspective.

**Bridging African-centered Paradigm and Hermeneutic Phenomenology**

I sought to develop a research methodology which draws from, and integrates a mix of, paradigms and approaches to provide insights into the experiences and realities of Dakaroises as influenced by radio talk shows. Utilizing a hermeneutic phenomenology centered on the Senegalese women’s knowledge and ways of knowing was central to realizing the fundamental goals of including and framing the participants’ realities from and within their contexts. The shared ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the African-centered paradigm and hermeneutic phenomenology of subjectivity and co-construction of meaning “glory in the concreteness of personworld relations and accords lived experience, with all its indeterminancy and ambiguity, primacy over the known” (Wertz, 2005, p. 175).

While hermeneutic phenomenology originated in the West and has mainly been used in and for Western settings, its emphasis on critical factors such as human experience, language, and relationship provided a rich and shared foundation with African centered paradigm which forged a constructive bridge between the two. The insights resulting from these factors merge to create an adequate lens capable of capturing the expressive perspectives about the realities facing Senegalese female radio listeners and callers. When reframed to embrace approaches affirming the realities of African women, hermeneutic phenomenology provides more authentic voices and representations of their experiences. Engaging in a dialogic relationship between African
centered paradigm and hermeneutic phenomenology allows this research study to navigate within and beyond the boundaries of traditional Western paradigms while being embedded within Afro-centricity. Establishing such a dialogue whereas the socio-cultural norms and values of the Senegalese women are brought under the spotlight through what Freire (1970) called the “dialogical process” could help to contribute to their empowerment and emancipation. This further translates into a genuine and respectful partnership between the researcher and the participants, a more dialogic relationship whereby through their interactions they can navigate their respective realities and ways of knowing to ultimately generate new understandings of complex experiences and phenomenon such as the impact of radio talk shows on key issues that influence their lives. Such an approach has the potential to advance and deconstruct the understanding and interpretation of African women’s experiences, which in return may result in practical interventions that promote meaningful changes among African women.

**Research Site**

This research took place in the city of Dakar, the capital of Senegal. As the Westernmost African city, Dakar sits on the Cap-Vert Peninsula, protruding into the Atlantic at its western, northern and southern extremes. The life line of the country, Dakar is the most important administrative, economic and commercial center of Senegal (Direction de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2009).
Home to a quarter of the population, the region of Dakar is the most diverse and densely populated city in the country. It has a population density of 12,337 inhabitants per square kilometer (Direction de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2009). Migration from the interior accounts for the majority of the new residents of Dakar. A study conducted by the Senegalese Bureau of Statistics in 2007 found that in the last six months of the year 2007 alone, the region of Dakar registered 65,958 new residents, 63.6% of whom were female and 79.3% of these were below the age of 30. The study also revealed that while the vast majority (78%) of new residents of Dakar were from urban settings and spread all over the region, the majority of the immigrants from rural settings settled

*Figure 1: Map of Senegal*

Source: www.au-senegal.com
in the city of Dakar as it offers more opportunities (Fall 1998; Direction de la Statistique et de la Démographie, 2009).

Dakar also distinguishes itself from its historical and cultural legacy. Founded in the 18th century, Dakar has always been a connecting pole between the people both globally and locally. Only few hours away from New York and most European capitals, and as a place where many Senegalese from the interior converge, Dakar is a cosmopolitan mixture and a remarkable fusion of languages, cultures and people (Cruise, 2008). In fact, the city actually displays an extreme religious and linguistic heterogeneity, even as it stands at the intersection of diverse cultures, beliefs and influences. Although Wolof dominates communication and exchanges and is the language of wider communication for many (Cruise, 1997, 2008; McLaughlin, 2001), Dakar remains a multicultural and multilingual city where many other Senegalese and non-Senegalese languages are spoken. The same is true for religion. Although Senegalese are mainly Sufi Muslims (Villalón, 1995), the city of Dakar boasts a vast array of religious dispensations and denominations represented in their various sanctuaries of worship such as mosques, churches, cathedrals, temples, synagogues and meetinghouses. This mosaic of holy houses is indicative of the high degree of religious diversity, tolerance and harmony in the city in particular and the country in general. It also depicts the influence of religion on Senegalese, most of whom profess one religion or another.

Moreover, as the former capital of French West Africa and because of its strategic geographical position, Dakar played a central economic role in the sub-region during the colonial period. Fifty years after the independence of Senegal, while the scope has
diminished, the strategic location of Dakar gives it the significant role of the engine of the
Senegalese economy, and so the capital city monopolizes almost all of the social,
economic and industrial infrastructure of the country. As a result of its special status,
Dakar hosts the majority of jobs in the country with a strong and reliable revenue base.
As Cruise (2008) states Dakar helps to keep Senegal viable (p. 3). Ironically, however,
this outward depiction of greatness tends to hide the sufferings and struggles of the
multitude of poor and destitute people who form a large proportion of the city’s
population. Even though Dakar controls 80% of the economic activities of the country,
25% of its inhabitants live in poverty (Direction de la Statistique et de la Demographie,
2009). Despite the fact that half of Dakar’s population is female (Ministere de
l’éducation Nationale, 2008), many of these women residents remain uneducated, as the
city constantly receives newcomers in search of jobs and better opportunities
(McLaughlin, 2001; Ndiaye, 2004; Direction de la Statistique et de la Demographie,
2009). All of these facts paint the picture of a city of great diversities, challenges and
contradictions, so making Dakar a significant, interesting and fitting location for my
study.

Rationale for Research Site: Why Dakar?

The question of choice of research setting is central to qualitative inquiry (Patton,
2000; Merriam, 2002). Choosing a research site was not an easy task. It was rather a
challenging decision-making process which involved careful and attentive exploration
and consideration of various possibilities and criteria (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).
At the initial stage of decision-making, while I was open to both urban and rural
locations, I narrowed my options to an urban setting (Dakar) after reviewing the
literature. The overwhelming focus of the literature on rural settings called for the need
to fill the gap regarding studies on radio in urban African settings. Taking rural settings
off the list did not however mean that the decision on site of study was an easy affair, as
Senegal offers an abundance of cities that could host this study. Although I remained
open, I saw cities like Thies, Touba and Kaolack, among others, as possibilities for their
practicality and familiarity for me. After discussing my options with scholars, friends and
family members who were familiar with the Senegalese milieu and seriously considering
key factors such as diversity, accessibility of information, cost, familiarity of terrain and
time, I opted for Dakar.

Diversity was a fundamental reason for my choice of Dakar. Immensely diverse,
Dakar is an excellent representation of the Senegalese society in all of its socio-
economic, political, cultural and linguistic facets. Every aspect of Senegalese’ culture
and life is observed in Dakar. From Sandaga to Pikine the dichotomies between rich and
poor, educated and uneducated slums and high buildings remain visible (Cruise, 2008).
The rapid flow of people from the rural areas to Dakar in search of new opportunities has
transformed the city and made it even more diverse (McLaughlin, 2001; Cruise, 2008).
Dakar is a microcosm of the Senegalese society: where all national languages and
cultures are adequately represented. It is a “field” of hopes and aspirations for many of
the immigrants and indigenes. As Cruise (2008) declares “Who in Senegal could do
without Dakar?” (p.3). Dakar is Senegalese’s hub of diversity, the center for liberty and
cultural life (Cruise, 2008).
Accessibility of information was another key factor that contributed to my choice of Dakar. In the last two decades, Dakar has witnessed an amazing proliferation of radio stations (Panos, 2010). The number of commercial and community radio stations increased from less than five in 1996 to 108 in 2009 (Panos, 2010). This trend has translated into a wider audience of radio in urban settings with 80% owning radios as compared to 65% in the rural areas (Panos, 2010). Widespread and easy access to cell phones in Dakar in particular has tremendously accelerated and improved access to information and brought a new dimension to how people use the medium. While this trend is visible in other cities such as Touba and Thies, Dakar’s soaring and diverse population, as well as its economic advantages due to its prime location, make the city an even more stimulating site for this study.

My familiarity with the city’s complex and intricate transport system, government offices, and deep roots in the social networks further greatly influenced my choice of Dakar. As time can be extremely frustrating to people who are unfamiliar with the slow nature of the bureaucratic system in Senegal, knowing the terrain and how to deal with its complexities was a determining factor in my decision making. I was sure that my research journey as a former resident of the city with close ties and strong connections in the communities would not be frustrated by unwillingness and lack of confidence on the part of participants. My geographic and cultural competency enabled me to make efficient use of my time and to gain access to people, places and documents in a relatively short period of time.
Finally, while I had good access and contacts in cities like Thies, Touba and Kaolack and that these cities were by far more cost efficient than Dakar they did not offer the diversity of ethnicities, cultures, government offices, research institutions and radio stations that Dakar offered. All of these factors combined made Dakar the best research site albeit a few challenges.

**Beginning Fieldwork**

The fieldwork was carried out over a period of 11 weeks in Dakar between March 2009 and June 2009. Getting there was emotionally difficult after almost four years of absence. While I was both excited to get home and see my family and friends the first week did not go as planned as I intended to use that week to obtain the required permission to conduct this study from the government agencies responsible for communication and education. I instead used the first week to re-immerse myself and to reconnect with my family, friends, and neighbors. I also used the opportunity to explain my research to my circle of friends and family.

My inquiry began in earnest on the second week. During that week, I visited the Ministries of Education, Communication, Women and Children’s Affairs, some government agencies and prominent research centers in Dakar such as West African Research Center (WARC), the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire (IFAN) and University Cheikh Anta Diop. I also briefly visited two radio stations to introduce myself during this second week. The process went smoothly because I had already been in contact with each station and or both stations are geographically close to one another. I started
interviewing at the end of the second week and by the end of week nine, I was approaching saturation in several themes I had identified. Participants responded in masses such that on one Saturday, I conducted five interviews in total. There was no single day that I was not approached by somebody who wanted to take part in my study. Some interviews occurred as late as midnight, as we gathered around the *attaaya* (a very popular Chinese green tea around which people socialize), chatted and gossiped. I spent a lot of time with the participants, cooking with them, listening to radio talk shows together and going to ceremonies with them. In between interviews, participant observation and focus groups, I visited women’s organizations, associations, radio stations, government agencies and research institutions. I also spent time listening and re-listening to the recordings of the interviews and began transcription. After nine weeks of fieldwork, I returned to the U.S. to continue transcription and begin analyzing my data. Leaving the field was painful because it meant leaving home once again.

**Selection of Participants**

The participants for this study were selected based upon their participation in radio talk shows either by calling in to the show or by just listening. A total of thirty-four people took part in this study. Thirty of these participants were women and four were men. After thirty-four participants had been interviewed and observed, saturation was reached. At that point, nothing new was added: no new insights were acquired, no new themes were recognized and the information began to be redundant (Denzin & Lincoln 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The number of participants in this study is congruent with both qualitative inquiry and hermeneutic phenomenology
which emphasize profound and rich meaning of people’s experiences (Patton, 2002) rather than a large number of participants. Repeated and prolonged engagement with the participants recruited through selective sampling and snowballing generated rich and unyielding data for this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

The literature on research methods offers multiple sampling techniques (Patton, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Morse 1991, Sandelowski, 1995; Coyne, 1997). Patton (1999) alone has identified fifteen strategies of sampling in qualitative research although he argues that all of them are purposeful sampling as they “typically focus in-depth on relatively small samples selected purposefully” (p. 169). While I share Patton’s (1999) view in a sense that both selective sampling and snowballing can be described as purposeful, I believe that the two techniques have strengths and weaknesses that are unique to them.

I used a snowballing sampling strategy to select twenty-seven participants. Five days after my arrival in the field, I started approaching potential participants to explain my study. The strategy paid off well because the first person I contacted was willing to share her story and experiences vis-à-vis radio talk shows with me, and I used that first participant to start snowballing. The process of snowballing “is based on the idea that ‘a bond’ or ‘link’ exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing a series of referrals to be made within a circle of acquaintances” (Berg, 1988 as cited in Ndlovu, 2009, p.5). “By asking a number of people who else to talk with, the snowball gets bigger and bigger as you accumulate new information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 237). As an effective recruitment technique, snowballing was particularly used
“for locating information-rich informants” (Patton, 2002, p.237) therefore allowing me to reach those whose lives have been transformed as a result of their engagement in the radio talk shows. Through snowballing, people responded en masse as the news spread that I had come from the United States and I was conducting a project on women’s issues. As days passed, more and more women contacted me and expressed their willingness to take part in my research. It then became difficult for me to tell some women that I did not need them. Some neighbors even complained to me and to my family because I could not include them in my project. As I was ready to come back to the United States, I met Mbaaya, a well-known griotte (a female griot) in the neighborhood who told me:

_Hii, Kii kay du Fanta . Yow, bul ma mnu. Deeg naa ne danga joxee Amerik ak sa porose di waxtaan ak jigeen ñi boole woo ma ci sax. Xanaa xamoo ne maay xoromu koñ bi. Boo bëggée mu xoromu, faww nga boole ma ci._

Is this not Fanta? Don’t even greet me. I heard you came back from the United States with a project on dialogue with women without including me in it. Don’t you know the salt of the area? If you want to salt it [make it interesting], you must include me in it. (Translation)

I smiled, apologized for not having contacted her and assured her that I would visit her the following day. As with my run-in with Mbaaya, I encountered many complaints during the last week of my field work. To avoid frustrating friends and neighbors and maintaining a good relationship, I interviewed more women long after I had reached saturation. Some men even approached and asked me why I was only interested in women’s stories and accused me of being a “feminist.”

Selective sampling was another valuable technique used to recruit seven other participants. This group of participants was different from the group recruited using
snowballing participants because it targeted high profile women and owners of radio stations. These seven people were already contacted while I was still in the United States. While I was finishing up writing my proposal, I started calling and sending out emails to highly ranked friends and former colleagues in Senegal to establish contacts. After days of constant emailing and phoning, arrangements and appointments were made. I was stunned by how fast my ties connected me to very high officials. In less than two weeks, I was exchanging emails with, and calling owners of, the biggest radio stations in Senegal and high profile women. As a Wolof proverb says “Nit, nitay garabam. Bu nit ñi dee wut xaalis, wutal nit ñi” (The human being’s best source of solace is her/his fellow human being. If others seek money, look for humans), which highlights the preeminence of human connection as compared to monetary consideration. My personal ties and connections back home opened doors for me that led me to another kind of “information-rich” (Patton, 2002, p. 237) participants. As highly educated people who are in positions of power, these participants generated a very different kind of data, bringing greater heterogeneity to the entire sample. That segment of the sample, however, presented some challenges. It was impossible to form a focus group with these participants despite numerous attempts and trials to work around their schedules. It was also difficult to have less-structured interviews with them as they were very focused and precise.

Combining snowballing and Selective sampling produced a significantly diverse sample that is very representative of the diversity of female radio listeners in Senegal. The two techniques helped illustrate the types and degree of variation in the interpretation which was fundamental to understanding the phenomenon of talk shows as it is
experienced by Senegalese women. The snowballing and selective sampling strategies enriched and strengthened the whole research process and laid the ground for the yielding of valuable data.

Data Collection Methods and Procedures

In seeking to understand the experiences of Dakaroises radio talk show listeners and callers, it was critical to combine different methods and techniques sensitive enough to capture their realities and voices. Achieving such a goal required moving beyond triangulation and adopting the crystallization technique which “recognizes that any given approach to study the social world as a fact of life has many facets” (Janesick, 2000, p.392). As a reflexive and flexible technique, crystallization allows the researcher to understand and interpret the complexities involved not only from different angles but also through combining diverse methods, approaches and paradigms used during the study (Gergen, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Richardson, 2000). As Richardson (2000) argues crystallization “combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multi-dimensionalities and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change and alter, but are not amorphous” (p. 934). As with a crystal, I employed multidimensional techniques such as interviews, focus groups, participant observation and document analysis to gain deeper yet richer perspectives and multiple voices of women’s experiences of radio talk shows.

Interviews

As perhaps the most widely used technique in social sciences, interview is recognized as one of the best approaches for investigating people’s views, beliefs,
interactions and perceptions (Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1998). Kvale (1996) has defined interviews as “… an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, [which] sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasizes the social situatedness of research data.” (p.14). Their ability to go beyond the observable while offering unique access to the participants’ understandings and interpretations of their environment and interactions makes interviews a great phenomenological instrument (Seidman, 1998). Therefore, in this phenomenological case study, interviews played a fundamental role in the articulation and analysis of women’s voices and opinions (Gadamer, 1975; Moustakas, 1994; Seidman, 1998). By enabling both the researcher and the participants to negotiate meaning through dialogue and “interpret their activities together,” (Blaikie, 2000, p.115) interviews underpin the hermeneutic phenomenological notion of understanding reality within social and cultural contexts. However, interviews do present certain challenges; one major limitation of the interview is the possibility of the presence of the researcher to influence the opinions of the participants and therefore bring in some biased information.

Another drawback is the difficulty to reproduce or record features like gestures and body language. In addition, like many qualitative methods of data collection, interviews can be time-consuming. Equally, interviews findings are only limited to the context in which they occurred and cannot be generalized. In spite of the limitations of interviews, their ability to get at the heart of the issues and yield rich and diverse information made them particularly suited for my study (Patton, 2002). Fontana and Frey (2005) have identified three categories of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and
unstructured which differ extensively in terms of structure and the level of control and participation of the interviewer. While unstructured and semi-structured interviews fulfill different functions in the data collection process, I have used each of them at one point during the interviews.

At the initial stage of the interviewing process, I intentionally utilized unstructured interviews as they prove to be very useful and practical to allow the participants to express their ideas and opinions without reservation. Listening with a minimum of interruptions incited the women to narrate their experiences of radio talk shows and what it means to them. The loose nature of the unstructured interviews also allowed the participants to ask me questions with comfort and ease while attempting to discover more about me and the agenda behind my research. Sharing my own experiences with the women in those relaxed environments facilitated mutual trust in a way that helped them to be more comfortable to share details about their lives – details that often went beyond the scope of this study. As Bernard (2002) argues “unstructured interviewing is excellent for building initial rapport with people before moving to more formal interviews, and it is perfect for talking to informants who would not tolerate a more formal interview” (pp. 204-205). Initiating the data collection phase by unstructured interviews not only created “conversational partners” (Robin & Robin, 2005) for me but also allowed me to reframe and improve my questions for subsequent interviews. In the process, I improved my skills at making inquiry.

As I spent more time in the field and built greater trust and stronger rapport with the participants, the interviews became semi-structured. My goal was to remain flexible
while still being able to obtain detailed information by having specific questions answered. The semi-structured interview format offered me these two criteria; they allowed a great deal of flexibility which allowed me “to pursue information in whatever direction that appeared to be most appropriate, depending on what emerges from observing a particular setting” (Patton, 2000, p. 342). The format further assisted me in gaining more specific and targeted information. After I suggested the topic to the participants and opened the floor for conversation, the women were able to deepen and clarify their ideas as I probed specific issues that arose in our dialogue (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). One of the most significant advantages of semi-structured interviews lies in the fact that it engages the participants in dialogue with the researcher while in the process of obtaining first-hand information. In this study, the dialogic nature of semi-structured interviews moves the discourse to another level: that of meaning co-construction between the researcher and the participants while tapping the participants own perspectives and worldviews. As “a conversation with a purpose” (Berg, 2001, p.35.) the semi-structured interview not only helped me gain a better and deeper understanding of women’s perspectives and experiences of participation in radio call shows but most significantly created a "horizontal relationship" (Freire, p.72) between the participants and I. Such a relationship was founded on mutual respect and strong appreciation of the participants’ knowledge and voices. As one of the most suitable techniques to comprehend the experiences, struggles and lives of women, semi-structured interviews allow the participants insights perspectives to arise, thus enabling the researcher to also overcome the difficulties of gaining people’s active participation. When conducted well, semi-
structured interviews “can create energy and enthusiasm that can appeal to participants’ sense of what is important to them” (Zukoski & Luluquisen, 2002, p.6). By allowing the participants themselves to take part in the formation of both questions and answers, the interview process altered the traditional power relationship between researcher and the participants. As Freire (1970) argues when the participants are given the opportunity to “own” the experience, the research process itself can be liberating which in return engenders capacity-building and awareness (Johnson, 1996). Singhal & Rattine-Flaherty (2006) further suggest that interviews provide an alternative outlet of expression to the written word. Such a method is inclusive in most circumstances: anyone, regardless of age or level of education can take part in the process which makes it particularly useful in areas, such as Dakar where illiteracy is still very prevalent and orality plays a crucial role.

While the majority of the interviews were semi-structured, I utilized a more structured style of in-depth interviews with three female participants and two high profile media professional. These five participants were high profile officials who had very busy schedules and needed to efficiently use their time. Prior to the interviews, I had emailed and called these participants to give information about myself and the topic I was researching. During the interviews, I employed a more rigid set of detailed questions. The format of such interviews gave me control over the issues I wanted the participants to address. While the process of focuses on issues I wanted to learn more about, it did not however take away the dialogic aspect of the conversations. All of the five participants seized the opportunity to ask me questions and solicit my opinion about some issues that came up during the interviews. I utilized “detail-orientated probes” (Patton, 2002, p.373),
“elaboration probes” (Patton, 2002, p.373) and “clarification probes” (Patton, 2002, p.374) to “fill in the blank spaces of a response”; incite the participant to elaborate on a specific issue or to elucidate information obtained from the participants. The entire procedure produced rich data.

Most of the interviews took place in the participants’ homes, but a few of them were conducted in local restaurants, coffee places and participants’ offices. Two interviews took place at my apartment at the request of the participants. All the interviews lasted between 45 minutes to two hours. With the consent of the participants, all the interviews were recorded given that a verbatim transcript remains the only way to accomplish a comprehensive analysis (Pile, 1990).

Watching the participants listen to their voices at the end of the interviews was a very amusing experience for the participants yet it carried some element of anxiety because they were keen to know if they didn’t make sacrilegious expressions and comments.

Despite the challenges, the entire interviewing experience was very rewarding. The thirty four interviews conducted played a central part in this research as they offered me a great chance to have meaningful dialogue with my participants. Most importantly, I felt that through the process of answering the interview questions the participants were able to critically think about issues they care deeply care about. The conversations yielded insightful and rich data crucial to understanding how female radio listeners construct meaning of their experiences with radio talk shows.
Participant Observation

Participant observation is another valuable technique I utilized during the data collection period. It is a research “method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their routines and their culture” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p.1). The method allowed me access inside the homes and lives of participants to see and witness how women interact with radio. Being there as participant-as-observer (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, Gold 1969), I was able to gain a profound understanding of the participants’ behaviors as well as the cultural and social milieu in which they operate. The natural setting of the social interactions allowed direct interpersonal contact to occur in an environment conducive for gaining insight into the participants’ real lives. Lofland and Lofland (1995) argue one of the reasons for adopting such a method is to “strive to be a participant in, and a witness to, the lives of others” which facilitates for the researcher to uncover information about issues that participants are not willing to share through interview (Patton, 2002). As a “way of approaching the fieldwork experience, gaining understanding of the most fundamental processes of social life” (Dewalt & Dewalt, 2002, p. 2), engaging in participant observation offered me an opportunity to learn how the actions of the participants correspond to their words.

Observing the participants in their milieu made visible the intricate web of the dynamic connections of human interactions.

Altogether, I spent more than 120 hours engaging in participant observation. While most of those hours were mainly home visits, some of them included going to
social events with the participants as well as participating in radio fans’ club activities. The home visits involved listening to hours of radio talk shows with the participants.

Some of the observations occurred at night as many of the talk shows were broadcast at that time. Visiting at night was also more convenient for the participants who had to work during the day. At night, as we sat outside and gossiped around the attaaya, we listened to the radio talk shows together. While the participants and their friends and family discussed the issues as they were broadcast, I carefully observed their interactions and body language while listening to the tones of their voices, which expressed different emotions. In the course of the observations, I often asked and responded to various questions. The long hours I spent together with the participants enabled me to see another level of interaction that shaped women’s experiences. It particularly allowed me to observe the dynamics of the relationships within the households. I was able to witness how some women were negotiating with other family members or friends which radio talk show to listen to. Being an insider with an understanding of people’s body languages provided me with clues to fully grasp the meaning of many actions and gestures. Also, immersing myself in their world through participant observation helped me in understanding whether or not the women were putting into action the information and knowledge they gained from the talk shows to change their lives. Observing women calling during shows, either to just to ask questions, to give their opinions, to clarify or to disagree with other callers or the expert guest, I was able to detect and gauge the tenacity and passion of some of the women for such a program. The outcome from the participant observations were extremely revealing as they yielded key information in many
occasions that were neither found in interviews nor in the focus groups. The participant observations generated important clues and information that facilitated deeper understanding of the functions and meanings of radio talk shows on Senegalese women’s lives.

Despite the many strengths of participant observation as a research method, the whole process was not without challenges. A major limitation of participant observation is the difficulty to document everything I see, hear or feel. The exercise becomes even more difficult when one tries to observe while engaged in activities like listening to a radio talk show. Yet, I took notes as I was attempting to depict the different dynamics involved in the context (Glesne, 1999). At times, it was difficult to put my thoughts in writing as I struggled to choose in which language to write them. While I documented local proverbs and key phrases in their original local languages, my description of the interactions and body languages varied from local languages to French and English. As a native of Senegal, I was surprised to find that on occasion, I was documenting some interactions data in English.

Other limitations of participant observation included its time-consuming nature and the influence the researcher can have on participants’ behaviors. My being an insider, however, granted me a strong foundation of cultural and religious awareness that allowed me to focus on the research agenda and obtain maximum information in a limited amount of time. I was also aware that in some circumstances, I have greatly influenced how the participants behaved both the talk shows and others people who were present in the setting.
In the course of this study, participant observation provided valuable insights and clues that contributed to maximizing the efficiency of the whole research experience. As perhaps one of the best ways of conducting research (Patton, 2000; Whyte, 1997), participant observation allowed me to develop and improve my research skills and build genuine reciprocal relationship with the participants. Through “not only look[ing] and listening, but also feeling, smelling, touching and intuiting the nuances of human behavior, the smells, the movements ... of the human subject” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.27), participant observation made me recognize and appreciate the values and the complexities of human interactions. The complete immersion that the method dictates in conjunction with the flow and spontaneity with which the participation and the observation occurred in this study made participant observation generate excellent data.

**Focus groups**

As one of the many methods of data collection used in qualitative research (Barbour & Scholstak, 2005; Krueger & Casey, 2000; Madriz, 2000), focus groups discussion has emerged as a robust technique to understand and interpret participants’ attitudes, beliefs, motivations and experiences. Krueger and Casey (2000) defined focus group as a “carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment” (p. 5). Composed of a small number of individuals discussing a collective activity, focus groups engage participants in social interactions to elicit their thoughts, stances and opinions about a particular issue (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Kitzinger, 1994; Puchta & Potter 2004). A focus group discussion is a group interview during which the researcher attempts to
stimulate the participants to engage in conversations framed around carefully crafted questions (Merton, Fiske & Kendall 1990; Puchta & Potter 2004). Like any research method, focus groups have their strengths and weaknesses. One major strength of focus groups has been their emphasis on the significance of the interaction dynamics between the participants (Kitzinger, 1994). Through exchanges and conversations, focus groups stimulate the participants to discuss their realities, thoughts and experiences while considering the socio-cultural contexts that frame their account.

Rather than producing several accounts of individual viewpoints and interpretations, focus groups allow exchange of different viewpoints, negotiation of shared meaning while promoting critical thinking. Such a method is congruent with the interpretive paradigm which recognizes the influence of context and interactions in co-construction of meanings (Puchta and Potter, 2004). The participatory and collective dimensions of focus groups make the method a robust one for data production (Barbour, 2007; Morgan, 1997). In doing so, focus groups offer a platform for the participants to reflect on their lived experiences. The highly social and interactive nature of focus groups made the method particularly valuable when investigating Senegalese women’s experience of radio talk shows, as they provided a forum for the participants to not only share their experience but also to connect with, and support, one another (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Lee , 1993).

Focus groups can be extremely useful in generating diversity, producing new questions, reframing old questions while yielding rich and detailed information from multiple perspectives in a short time period (Gamson; 1992; Krueger, 1988; Krueger &
Casey, 2000; Morgan, 1997). As Gamson (1992) argues, focus groups allow the researcher to “observe a concentrated interaction on a topic in a limited period of time, and raising questions and perspectives that would not naturally occur” (p. 192). Another advantage of focus groups discussion is its aptitude to benefit the participants themselves through meaningful dialogues about issues important to their lives (Krueger & Casey, 2000; Johnson, 1996). By offering forums where participants can bind and connect with each other, focus groups interview has the potential to raise consciousness among its members (Morrison, 1998; Johnson, 1996).

A potential limitation of focus groups is the possibility that the discussion will be dominated by few vocal participants. Instead of engaging the participants in dialogic exchanges, focus groups’ interactions can sometimes lead to persuading the group (Warr, 2005). To avoid dominant voices to overshadow or silence other voices Smithson (1998) suggests that the researcher creates a homogenous group in terms of class, gender and age. Other limitations of focus groups include their time consuming nature, the difficulty to transcribe them, especially when the setting is too noisy and not conducive to audio recording. When I was transcribing the focus group interviews, the overlapping of voices and the rapid flow of the discussion among the women posed a great challenge to me.

Hence, Morrison (1998) cautions researchers to pay a great attention to how they moderate or facilitate focus groups as it can pose a serious limitation to their research. He suggests that the moderator be facilitator and therefore avoid biased involvement. Scholars like Merton and Kendall (1946) argue in the same direction and oppose any involvement from the moderator in expressing her /his opinions, beliefs and feelings
while facilitating the focus group discussion. For them, “by expressing his own sentiments, the interviewer generally invites spurious comments or defensive remarks, or else inhibits certain discussions” (Merton and Kendall, 1946, p.547). Such a position can cause the participants to change their opinions, arguments or feelings. While the interviewer might often face the temptation of exposing her opinion, she should never forget that the objective of focus group is to “discover what the participants think and feel, not a hobby horse for allowing participants to discover what the moderator thinks” (Morrison, 1998, p.214). Retaining one’s opinions throughout the whole process was a challenge for me as participants often appealed for my personal opinion.

Despite the potential limitations mentioned above, focus groups produced remarkable results in my study. They provided valuable access to shared meaning, feelings, realities and beliefs of Senegalese women’s experiences of radio talk shows. Central to this study was implementing dynamic focus groups in safe and culturally conducive settings (Krueger, 1988). Throughout this research, I have conducted three focus groups which provided me with insight into Senegalese women’s experiences of radio talk shows. While the first two focus groups were carefully planned, the third one naturally emerged as a result of one interview. As I was interviewing a woman in her home, three of her friends showed up and decided that they wanted to be part of the conversation. Before I even read to them the inform consent, they were already talking and arguing about their favorites themes on the talk shows. While eight women were invited for focus Group I, only five ended up coming. The focus Group II was composed of seven participants as planned. The two planned focus groups were held at different
times and locations that were convenient to the women. Focus groups II and III lasted two hours whereas focus Group I lasted two and a half hours. The three meetings were recorded, with the consent of the participants. As a moderator, taking note presented some challenges, although I tried to adjust to difficulties systematically.

Except for focus Group III, I invited women whom I thought did not know each other because having complete strangers may encourage the participants to speak openly without restraint, holding back or censorship (Agar and MacDonald, 1995; Morgan 1997; Krueger & Casey, 2000). I later found out that two participants in Group II were friends, but their friendship was not however visible during the interactions. I further used Morgan’s (1997) concept of segmentation which suggests a careful selection of homogenous group of participants which can offer a “common thread across participants.” It is however important to note that Morgan’s (1997) concept of homogeneity excludes opinions and perceptions and rather emphasizes elements such as level of education, age and gender. While gender was central to my study because of the study’s focus on women, I also took into account factors like age, religion and level of education into account. In the focus groups the segmentation contributed to a “free-flowing conversations” and also “facilitated analyses that examined differences in perspective between groups” (Morgan, 1997; p. 35).

Before starting each focus group interview, the objective and the research questions were discussed. Some questions were reframed and adjusted after my experience with focus Group I. At the beginning of each focus group, I tried to create a relaxing yet focused atmosphere to enable the participants to generate productive
interactions. Throughout their interactions, the women shared personal experiences, opinions, beliefs, and also argued about issues that were important to them. The interactions yielded intense moments in which some women allowed their feelings, fears and anger to surface. In the process of telling their stories to each other, some women moved the dialogue to another level by suggesting strategies to identify solutions on health, social and religious issues (Kieffer et al., 2005). After every focus group many participants came to me and acknowledged how productive and fascinating the discussions were to them. Almost all of them talked about how the focus groups’ discussions were an opportunity for them to exercise their critical thinking.

While all the discussions proceeded well in all three focus groups, the exchanges in focus groups one and three were smoother because they had fewer members. In focus Group II, two participants tried to dominate the discussion, while in the other two groups each participant had the opportunity to explain in detail her opinions and experiences. The atmosphere in Group III was particularly friendly and productive, as a result of the homogeneity of the group coupled with the trust that existed within the group. The small focus groups provided more time for the participants to engage in meaningful dialogue. Krueger (1988) however argues that “the size must be small enough for everyone to have an opportunity to share insights and yet large enough to provide diversity of perceptions” (p. 27). It is important to note that although the small groups provided immense insights, they did not offer a diversity of perceptions as compared to what emerged from focus Group II. The larger number of participants in Group II made it challenging for each participant to elaborate their opinions in-depth. The power dynamics were also very
visible especially with two participants: *Bige* and *Nafi*. *Bige* and *Nafi* are very eloquent and very assertive women. In the same focus group, there was also another young woman, *Penda*, who did not really say a lot during the whole two hours despite many attempts to encourage her to engage in the discussion. At the end of the focus group, to my surprise, she approached and said: “Madame Sene, I cannot believe how much I learned today. We have to do that another time.” I responded “That is great! I am happy you liked it and you are taking some knowledge with you home” and I shook her hand. She looked at me in the eyes and said: “*Wax neex na waaye deega ko daq*” which means “Talking is good but listening is great”. The exchange I had with Penda made me rethink the questions of participation and silence in focus groups. While I was worried that I did not succeed get Penda to participate the way I wanted her to, Penda was enjoying the interactions and discussion the group had and had learned in her own way. Although conversation and dialogue lay at the heart of focus groups, it is important to value and recognize silence as a powerful attribute of human interactions.

The focus groups generated unique kind of data that neither participant observation nor interview could offer. As Fontana and Frey (1994) state focus groups “provide another level of data gathering or a perspective on the research problem not available through individual interviews” (p. 364). As a collective and collaborative product, focus group is “a combination of robust research method, self-help group and consciousness-raising session” (Johnson, 1996, p. 531).
**Document Analysis**

Document analysis was another valuable method utilized during the data collection process. Caulley (1983) defines document as “any archived source of information, including writings, oral testimonies, photographs or archeological remains” (p. 22). The technique has been widely used in a variety of social sciences disciplines (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 2007; Glesne, 1999; Patton, 2002; Peshing, 2002) either as a standalone or supplementary method for most schemes of triangulation and crystallization (Peshing, 2002; Yin, 1994; Glesne, 1999; Richardson, 2000). As Yin argues, documents analysis is essential to "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (p. 81). As an unobtrusive and practical method, document analysis overcomes the challenges of participants’ involvement which requires taking into account the complexities of setting, interactions and ethical issues. Documents offer the potential to provide firsthand account of past events and experiences (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 2007). In some circumstances, researchers have decided “to rely entirely on the frozen voices” (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 2007, p. 284) which moves the documents from a supplementing function to a central one. Documents can be used not only to defend and criticize an argument but also to re-analyze the documents themselves.

Document analysis, however, like all methods poses some problems. Some researchers view documents as less credible compared to methods like interviews and participant observation on the grounds that these have “less likelihood of omissions, embellishments and statements added with the benefit of hind-sights” (Deacon,
Pickering, Golding & Murdock, 2007, p. 301). Moreover, dealing with documents, the researcher should consider issues of authenticity and credibility as records may be faked, damaged or lost. For that reason, Macdonald and Tipton (1993) advise the researcher to approach documentary material like a detective “in the sense that everything is potentially suspect and anything may turn out to be the key piece of data” (p.196). This is particularly true for historical research. Translation is another challenge that can arise with document analysis. While this study was not historical in nature, the documents analysis was central to understanding both the past and contemporary issues related to Senegalese women’s experiences raised in radio talk shows. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) argue “knowledge of the history and context surrounding a specific setting comes, in part, from reviewing documents” (p. 107). To understand, interpret, support or challenge the data generated by the other methods used throughout this research study, I collected and examined various documents from academic institutions, government departments and agencies, media houses, NGO’s, and women’s rights organizations. At each location I obtained key documents that were particularly relevant to my study. With the material obtained, I was able to draw similarities, identify themes and fill some gaps in the literature pertaining to the Senegalese context.

**Academic Institutions**

I collected written documents in four academic institutions: the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), the West African Research Center (WARC), the Centre d’Etudes des Sciences et Techniques de l’Information (CESTI) and the Faculté des Sciences et Technologies de l’Education et de
la Formation (FASTEF). In these institutions, I have consulted and collected magazines, articles, conference papers, research studies, thesis and dissertations that pertained to women’s issues, gender, media and education in Senegal. The documents collected were particularly useful in helping me to locate literature relevant to my research. At CESTI and FASTEF I collected and looked at a good number of thesis, dissertations and studies on media, language, audience research and education. CODESRIA offered me a wide range of documents including magazines, articles, conference papers and reports on many relevant issues. In its gender institute, I collected reports on CODESRIA’s annual conference on gender in Africa, a comprehensive bibliography on women’s issues. At WARC, I collected recent conference papers and a few copies of dissertations by American students who conducted their research in Senegal, but it did not offer as diverse and comprehensive material as CODESRIA and CESTI. All the institutions except FASTEF were extremely useful in helping build network with researchers. I greatly benefited from many of them especially those working on the same topic as me. Getting together with the local researchers, sharing my research with them and dialoguing with them turned out to be an efficient and effective circle of learning and taking (Smith, 2007; Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock, et al, 2007).

**Government Agencies, NGO’s and Women’s Rights Organization**

An important number of the documents utilized in this research were collected from a few government departments and agencies which included the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Information and Communication, the National Agency of Statistics and Demography and the National
Institute of Study and Action for the Development of Education (INEADE). The documents consulted included decrees, laws, reports and speeches. I specifically looked at:

- Reports
- National Strategy for Equality and Equity in Gender (NSEEG) Report
- Statistics on Girls’ education
- The new family code

These various documents were enormously useful for drawing general patterns on issues such as the state of girls’ education, the female literacy rate, and female representation in leadership positions. By examining the materials, I was able to detect changes over time; a close examination of documents enhanced my understanding of the situation of female education in Senegal. Most importantly the materials allowed identifying the gap between the Senegalese government’s policies and practices and between action and rhetoric. The critical examination of the policy documents reaffirmed the critical need to look for alternative ways to supplement formal education. It was also critically important to review these various documents as that kind of data is difficult to access outside of the francophone countries.

**Media Centers**

The media centers were other important locations where I obtained valuable written and audio documents. I visited five radio stations: Sud FM, WalfFadjri, Sonxa FM, Dunya FM, RFM and RTS. In those stations, the written documents I collected and
assessed consisted of mission statements, minutes of meetings, daily and weekly programs, reports and audience media research materials. I also collected audio materials which consisted of 34 hours of previously aired talk shows. The documents from the media houses were fundamental in understanding and analyzing the impact of radio on Senegalese women. The audio material yielded interesting information that was later used to reframe and probe during some interviews and focus groups. The materials gathered at the media house were critical in answering some of the research questions by helping to identify recurring themes and issues and to categorize the guests hosted on the talk shows. By analyzing the materials, I was able to detect which issues were ignored and which were emphasized. The analysis further made possible a more thoughtful description of the content of the talk shows. It is however important to note that access was not always easy in the media houses; on almost all occasions, I had to negotiate with some staff especially for the audio materials. I was not allowed to leave with recordings, and rather had to schedule appointments and listen to the recordings on site only. The experience was somehow frustrating yet productive.

All the documents consulted and analyzed throughout this research study have been very uniquely useful as they “have been produced in particular conditions, with certain aims in mind, and are indelibly shaped by pressures, possibilities and temptations generated by the political and cultural contexts in which they are embedded” (Hodder, 1994, p. 394). As an important part of the repertoires of the methods of data collection, documents provided this study with a “rich menu of alternative possibilities within qualitative research” (Patton, 1990, p. 65).
Positionality: The Research and the Researcher

The literature extensively addresses the challenges of carrying out research non-Western societies (Easterby-Smith & Malina, 1999; Kuwayama 2004, Smith, 2007; Kara & Philips, 2008). In recent years, as a result of a growing concerns regarding “writing ‘with’ rather than writing ‘about’ some researchers have engaged in rectifying the “concerns about marginalization, essentialisms, and differences in representation” (Sultana, 2008, p. 2). The scholarship has addressed a broad selection of issues including the challenges researchers encounter in unfamiliar setting as they try to overcome linguistic difficulties, challenges of translation, gain access and build rapport with their participants (Kara & Philips, 2008). The discussions have also debated at length issues of positionality, reflexivity and knowledge production (Earley & Singh, 1995; Ward and Jones 1999; Marschan-Piekkiari & Welch, 2004) while offering strategies on how to effectively carry out research in international settings (Easterby-Smith & Malina, 1999; Smith, 2007; Kara & Philips, 2008). While this research fieldwork took place in a non-Western setting, it was carried out by a native who shares social, religious and cultural background with the participants.

As a Senegalese Muslim who has been raised in Senegalese values and traditions, I was able to fit in extremely well to the settings and realities of the participants (Balde, 2004; Kiliwua-Ndunda, 2001). That insider’s position alongside my familiarity with the setting granted a valuable foundation for a successful research experience that came with full cooperation and unflinching support. Possessing the linguistic and cultural competences that enabled me to grasp the articulated and the inferred through idioms,
proverbs and body language (Balde, 2004). Contrary to most researchers coming from Western universities, I did not need to hire a translator.

Understanding the language and the social-political of the setting played in critical role by allowing me to manage time and cost efficiently while being more effective, more flexible and also more sensitive to the participant’s realities (Kara & Philips, 2008). The comfort I had as a result of my linguistic and cultural skills further facilitated my access to people and information. The fact that this research was carried out in my homeland allowed a smooth and successful “entry” into fieldwork (Smith, 2007; Sultana, 2007; Kara & Philips, 2008). Although gaining entry and access can be extremely challenging, taking advantages of being part of context significantly reduced the potential difficulties of these decisive steps of qualitative inquiry. A native, carrying out research back in my home country also laid the ground for me to build strong rapports with all the participants. The high level of trust and solid rapport I developed with the participants were fundamental in generating the kind of rich data this study generated. Such an outcome might be difficult to achieve in short period of time especially when the researcher is unfamiliar with the culture and the setting (Smith, 2007; Kara & Philips, 2008; Sultana, 2008).

Being an insider, however poses some challenges as the native researcher is “is still assumed to be less adept at creating the kind of objective detachment needed to properly interpret the emic etically, to turn humanistic ruminations into true scientific fact” (Jackson, 2004, p. 34). When insider researchers fail to pay a critical attention to how their positionality might affect the whole research process, they run the risk of
conduction “backyard research” (Creswell, 1998) as they struggle to demarcate ‘home’ and ‘field’ (Sultana, 2007). After almost four years spent in the United States, going back to Senegal to conduct fieldwork transferred me into a different position. My privileged position as an educated woman from an American University also situated me as the “other,” an outsider. Such a label moved me into a fluid position where I became both an insider and outsider. Thus I was neither a full insider nor a full outsider despite my physical presence in my own homeland. As the two lines or labels became often blurred, I could not embrace them in their totality because “there is no easy or comfortable in-between location that transcends these dualisms” (Lal, 1996, p. 199).

During the field work, I engaged in constant border-crossing between the insider and outsider position as I negotiated and constructed meaning with the participants. In an attempt to create fair relationships during the research process, I paid extreme attention “to histories of colonialism, development, globalization and local realities, to avoid exploitative research or perpetuation of relations of domination and control” (Sultana, 2007, p. 375). My awareness of the power dynamic between myself and the participants made me interrogate my privileged positionality and I worked to develop a critical, analytical and reflexive attitude (Moss, 2002).

Adopting a critical stand vis-à-vis my positionality not only reflected on the kind of relationships I nurtured with the participants but also allowed me to engage in a more meaningful research experience. As Peake and Trotz (1999) argue, researchers’ awareness and recognition of their positionality reinforces their engagement and dedication to carrying out good research based on appreciation and respectful reciprocal
relationships. When conversing with the participants, especially those less educated than me, I used the Senegalese concept of “Wacce sa bopp” which means “lowering yourself.” Such an attitude required me to dress simply, to exclusively speak in Wolof, to use idioms and proverbs from time to time to demonstrate to them that not only that was I one of them but I could relate and socialize with them. With some participants, I cooked and carried their babies on my back while they were rushing to finish chores so that they could share their stories with me. Some of them could not believe that after almost four years of having lived and studied in the United States, I was still able and willing to carry babies on my back. These mothers told me that they thought the practice was even disappearing in urban settings in Senegal. While they laughed at me, I was filled with joy to see that I was still recognized as being deeply rooted in Senegalese culture. By “lowering myself”, I was able to “to let slip the cloak of authority, lower the barrier between researcher and researched and allow both sides to be seen and understood for who they are (Etherington, 2007, p.4).

The approach “Wacce sa bopp” allowed me to share affinities with some participants despite the huge educational gap that exist between us. Paying great attention to positionality and its implications for the power dynamic between the participants and the researcher is decisive to a successful research enterprise. Although carrying out research in one’s own community presents real challenges, the native researcher’s “intimate knowledge of a setting” (Creswell, 1998, p.114) remain a great asset and that the inherent advantages of such research trump the drawbacks.
Ethical Issues

Ethics is an omnipresent concern for any researcher which permeates “every aspect of the research process from conception and design through to research practice and continue to require consideration during dissemination of the results” (Goodwin, et al, 2003, p.1). Therefore, establishing clear ethical guidelines are vital when embarking on any research journey. While ethics is not indeed restricted to research that only involves humans (Guillemin & Gillman, 2004), qualitative inquiry that engages human interaction directly requires a serious ethical (Robley, 1995; Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001) analysis which must “must reflect not only on how research is conducted but also on what research topics are pursued . . . what questions are investigated and what questions are neglected” (Sherwin, 2005, p. 157). Therefore, an ethically conscious researcher must remain constantly aware of and sensitive to class, gender and cultural differences while paying extreme attention to the traditions, beliefs, rights of the participants (Etherington, 2007). With that in mind, I carried out this research guided by three ethical approaches: procedural ethics, ethics in practice and ethics of care (Guillemin & Gillman, 2004; Gilligan, 1982).

Procedural ethics (Guillemin & Gillman, 2004) refers to the formalities required by universities and research institutions to guarantee that researcher understands well all the rights and the risks of the participants. The procedure involves filling out forms that require responding to specific questions that demonstrate the researcher’s knowledge of issues related the participants’ rights to confidentiality, rights to anonymity rights to protection and harm from exploitation and informed consent (Hammersley & Atkinson,

As required by Ohio University, this study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) after I diligently answered all questions and completed all appropriate forms to ensure the protection of all participants from potential harm related to their participation in the study. The IRB approval also required that the informed consent form be read and explained to the participants and signed by them before their involvement in the study. Once in the field, whenever I engaged with participant, I tried hard to apply the IRB guidelines and protocols. At the beginning of each interview after I asked the participants in what language they wanted to be interviewed, I then read the inform consent in that language and asked them to sign the form. As expected, many participants refused to sign the form despite my insistence that I needed the form signed to prove to Ohio University that I did not force them to participate. One participant told me “I cannot even read and signing papers makes me nervous”. After I re-explained to her the meaning of her signature, she was still uncomfortable signing but agreed for me to record her oral consent. After that experience, for those who were either skeptical or did not find worthy to sign the informed consent, I asked if I could record them telling their consent which they agreed. Another five participants informed me after agreeing to participate in this study that they needed their husbands to agree before they could signed the informed consent and be recorded. For these women, I had to explain the details of the study and read the inform consent to their husband in their presence. For most interviews and these five in particular, privacy was an issue when looked from the IRB’s
perspective but was very normal is the Senegalese context. For the 11 weeks I spent in
the field, I cannot recall a moment where I was just by myself. While I was interviewing
some women, people came and went and “threw their worlds” (Jagne, 1998). What a
person from the West might call intrusion or interruption was a constant occurrence
throughout the field study.

In one of the focus groups (focus group III), only one person signed the informed
consent as she was the one I had schedule to interview. The other three women are her
friends who showed up in the middle of the interview and decided that they also wanted
to be part of the conversation. As I stopped to recorder to read to them the informed
consent, they said “deedeet, jaru ko” which means “no, there is no need, don’t cut the
flow of the conversation”. At the end of the unintended focus group, I made them listen
to the conversation. We all laughed at our voices. I asked them whether or not they still
wanted me to use their interview, which they agreed but wanted me to assure them I
would be the only one listening to it. They also told me that I could not have another
person transcribe it for me and it was fortunate that I asked that question because I had
been considering hiring someone to help me transcribe the interviews. As they were
telling me what I could and could not do with their interviews, I finally convinced this
group of women at least to let me read them the inform consent because it addresses all
the issues that they were concerned about. When I finished reading the informed consent,
they looked at each other and said “Great! You really thought about everything”. The
same way I did with all the participants, I guaranteed them anonymity and
confidentiality. I further assured them that I will use pseudonyms for all the participants although some of them wanted their real names to appear in the study.

In addition to the procedural ethics issues, the one that I had expected to encounter, what Guillemin and Gillman (2004) call ‘ethics in practice’ emerged in process of data collection. ‘Ethics in practice’ address the unpredictable ethical issues that emerge while conducting research. As opposed to the procedural ethics, ethics in practice arise often in a very subtle way at ethically crucial moments during the fieldwork (Goodwin, et al, 2003; Guillemin & Gillman, 2004). The spontaneous and unexpected nature of the ‘ethnics in practices’ often puts the researcher in a dilemmatic position where she/he has to struggle to make the right and best decision. Such a moment happened to me when I was conducting one of the participants Rakki (a pseudonym).

While Rakki was sharing with me her experiences of radio talk shows in her living room, her husband suddenly entered without knocking at the door or even saying asalamu ‘aleykum at loud as would be customary in Senegalese culture. Immediately after her husband entered the room, Rakki grabbed the recording device and sat on it and suddenly changed the topic of our conversation. The husband greeted me and we started talking about the Senegalese political situation and President Obama’s election. As her husband continued talking with me, Rakki suddenly went outside with the recorder and came back in and sat next to her husband. We all chatted for almost three hours during which I kept wondering what caused Rakki to stop our conversation and hide the recorder. Finally, the husband left to visit a friend who was newly married. As soon as he left, Rakki said “uff” with relief, locked the door brought the recorder back and told me “Let finish our
conversation”. I was shocked that she still wanted to finish the interview. I told her that I
did not think that it was the best idea and reminded of the content of informed consent. I
proposed that I come back another day, or to schedule the interview in a different place
but Rakki would not hear of it, but she rather insisted on finishing up the interview
immediately.

After about fifteen minutes into the restarted interview, Rakki looked at me in the
eyes and said “you don’t know that guy. He seems so nice from the outside but…” After
a moment of silence, she shared with me some deeply personal issues and became very
emotional. Rakki cried while I sat by helplessly. When I began trying to comfort her, I
could not help it but display my emotions as well; I got caught up in Rakki’s emotion and
also began to cry. We cried together for a short while and then went together to get some
water to wash our faces and afterwards, returned to the living room. Rakki went to the
kitchen and returned with two cups of Kafe Tuuba for us. As I was reaching for the cup
of coffee, I stepped on the recording device; I real-
ized that it has been recording the
whole time. I stopped the recording immediately but there was a decision to be made:
what do with all deeply personal accounts of Rakki’s life. I had to decide whether or not
to delete the whole conversation including our interview because it was all in one file and
there was no way for me to separate the two. I discussed my dilemma with her and we
came to the agreement that I should transcribe the interview the next day and then delete
the file. That moment was one of the most powerful moments of the whole research
experience. While I was there as a researcher, I felt that for a moment I had to act
humanely; I had to cease to be a researcher whose goal is to extract information. I needed
to do more than act friendly; I wanted to be a friend. I felt morally compelled to first consider what was right and good for the participant. In such circumstances, instead of being self-centered, I chose to join ethically conscious researchers who are called to “to act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others.” (Ellis, 2007, p.4 cited in Cahill, Sultana & Pain, 2007). I therefore adopted a relational and caring ethical standpoint which stresses one’s responsibility toward the other (Noddings, 1984; Gilligan, 1982). Such an ethics standpoint starts from an inherent sentiment of care for the other, which leads to an ethical responsibility and obligation. It was therefore necessary for me to closely pay attention to both between my own desires and objectives as a researcher and my relationship, responsibilities and care for toward the participants (Gilligan, 1982).

To carry out an ethical study, researchers need to move the focus beyond the issues strictly listed on the procedures specified by Institutional Review Board guidelines and to become more attentive to the surprising ethical dilemmas that cannot be foreseen and prevented. In doing so, the researcher develops a more sensitive and relational ethical stand which necessitates to “constantly have to consider which questions to ask, which secrets to keep, and which truths are worth telling” (Ellis, 2007, p.4). This can only be achieved through constant questioning and reflection of the relationships we develop with the participants. When founded on responsibility, mutual respect, care such relationships lead to more ethical research practices and more humane relationships.
Credibility and Trustworthiness

Implementing measures and strategies to ensure rigor are critical when carrying out any research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rubin & Rubin, 1995, Creswell, 1998; Humble, 2009). While some scholars like Guba and Lincoln (1985) have advocated for qualitative researchers to emphasize of trustworthiness over reliability and validity (Altheide & Johnson, 1998; Leininger, 1994; Guba and Lincoln, 1981), others view reliability and validity as appropriate and relevant to qualitative inquiry (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002; Golafshani, 2003; Humble, 2009). Personally, I agree with Guba and Lincoln (1985) and I like to think of rigor not in terms of reliability and validity but rather in term of credibility and trustworthiness as criteria to assess and guarantee quality in qualitative inquiry. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, I engaged in various strategies such crystallization and triangulation of data, prolonged engagement in the field, member checks and peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Triangulation and Crystallization

Throughout this research study, I combined participant observation, interviews, focus group and document analysis to supplement and strengthen each other for a more credible and trustworthy research experience. These four methods of data collection through triangulation and crystallization were utilized to “search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126). In doing so the crystallization and the triangulation increased both the credibility and trustworthiness of the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Gergen, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Richardson, 2000).
The multiplicity of the sources and opinions the fusion of strategies generated enabled for me understand, connect, compare and interpret the data. The entire process ensured and increased the credibility of the data.

**Prolonged engagement in the field**

The basket of methods of data collection used in this study led to prolonged engagement in the field. The extended hours I spent with the participants generated not only valuable information but also facilitated my understanding of the complex and elaborate ways women make meaning of their experiences while negotiating their lives. Recurring and productive conversation combined with persistent observation with the participants yielded many opportunities to gain in-depth information but also make comparison and verification (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Prolonged engagements with the participants also offered me a better, fuller and deeper understanding of how their perspectives affect their daily lives, behaviors and trustworthiness of the data (Kvale, 1989).

**Member checks**

Member check was another valuable strategy used to guaranty credibility and trustworthiness for the study. While I only sent transcripts of the interviews to three participants since they were the only one who could read Wolof or English, I listened to the interviews together with other participants except for two participants. Listening to the interviews together with the participants gave them the opportunity to infirm, confirm, interpret, clarify and validate the findings. The exercise offered the participants an opportunity to verify whether or not I was “representing them and their ideas
accurately (Glesne, 1999, p.32). For Lincoln and Guba (1985) engaging in member checks grant the participants the chance for an “immediate opportunity to correct the errors….and to assess intentionality” (p.314). The interactions, the back and forth checking and questioning gave certainly more credibility and trustworthiness to the data.

**Peer Debriefing**

Peer debriefing was also employed to ensure more credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) define peer debriefing as "a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind” (p. 308). I engaged in ‘peer debriefing’ with a PhD student and university professor on a regular base. I met with them for approximately a total of 14 hours to discuss my findings and field work experiences. Both of them had an excellent understanding of my research topic and qualitative methodological issues. These individuals were also experienced in conducting research in non-Western and Muslim settings. I also peer debriefed with friends and professors in various setting including conferences, email exchanges, lectures and informal settings such as coffee shops. Sharing the findings with my peers was very productive and helped elucidate my reflections. As I discuss with them the emergent themes, the consistency and inconsistency, I was able to better understanding the data and reach a better analysis and interpretation. The feedbacks and reflections of the peers on my work helped me to discover alternative explanations of the findings which then translated into a more valid construction and interpretation of the participants’ experiences. Acknowledging my positionality to the peer, coupled by receiving their
critical reflections on my findings, helped me to better articulate my thoughts through rigorous process to generate more credible and trustworthy research.

**Data Analysis**

All the data were collected in Wolof, then transcribed and translated into English. I attempted to make sense of the data as I was transcribing and making notes of preliminary themes, however the full analysis occurred only when the data collection process and transcription ended. The full analysis aimed at a systematic search of meaning through a constant revisiting and interrogation of the narratives of the participants, my field notes and recorded observations. As Hatch (2002) writes, data analysis “means organizing and interrogating the data in ways that “allow researchers to see patterns, identify themes, discover relationships, develop explanations, make interpretations, mount critiques, or generate theories” (p.148). Thus, throughout the data analysis process, I engaged in “breaking data down into bits, and then 'beating' the bits together” (Dey, 1993, p.31) in search of meaning. Rather than just a ‘thin’ description of the data, the data analysis involved a “thick” description (Geertz, 1973, Denzin, 1978), which required a ‘thorough’ description of “the context, intentions and meanings that organize its subsequent evolution” (Denzin, 1978, p.33). As Judith Bell (1993) writes, “a hundred separate pieces of interesting information will mean nothing to a reader unless they have been placed into categories …. groupings, patterns and items of particular significance” (p.127). While there is a multitude of techniques of qualitative data analysis (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2005) this study adopted constant comparative analysis, also known as “coding” (Miles & Huberman, 1994), given the narrative nature of the topic
and methods that were used to collect data. Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the function of constant comparison analysis is to produce a theory or generate themes. When using the constant comparative analysis method to analyze data, I followed three steps: The first step, known as ‘open coding’, is inductive. During that stage I identified themes and started sorting the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In search of “patterns and narrative threads,” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, 133; Bishop, 1999, p.117) I unpacked, organized and sorted the data and appended codes. This exercise, which resulted in data reduction, required me not only to read the transcripts several times but at times to go back to the recordings to re-listen to the voices of the participants. Re-listening to the interviews with the noises of the cars, goats and children in the background was very powerful as it always took me back home and returned me to the field.

Utilizing a basic coding system using highlighters and labels, I moved to the subsequent stage or axial coding is when the codes are categorized in various groups. These categories were not predetermined. They emerged as I immersed myself in the data (Perkins, 2005). In the final stage or selective coding, I tried to find meaning and make sense of the data. The entire process of data analysis required “noting patterns and themes;” “clustering by conceptual groupings;” “making contrasts and comparisons;” “shuttling between data and larger categories;” and “noting relationships” (Bishop, 1999, p. 117). The strategy enabled me to establish connections between the literature review and the data to gain a better understanding of the experiences of Dakaroeises vis-à-vis radio talk shows while filtering the data through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach grounded in an African-centered paradigm.
Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed in detail the methodological issues pertaining to this study. Thus, the chapter offered a “vivid portrayal of the conduct of [the]events…in which the sights and sounds of what was being said and done are described in the natural sequence of their occurrence in real time” (Erickson, 1986, p.149). I have first accounted for the qualitative research design in which I opted to collect the data for this study. I have argued for an interpretative research paradigm which is sensitive enough to capture the complexities of Dakaroises experiences of radio talk shows. I have demonstrated how this research study fits philosophically and theoretically into an interpretive paradigm in general and into a hermeneutic phenomenology and case study in particular. I have also explained how this phenomenological case study is grounded in an African-centered paradigm which enabled me to pay particular attention to the Senegalese socio-cultural values and ideals while critically interrogating the ways in which Dakaroises negotiate and make meaning of their experiences of radio talk shows. The common denominator connecting these approaches lies in their commitment to co-construction and production of meaning. Integrating a hermeneutic phenomenology approach to African centered paradigm created a nexus that generated valuable information about the role of the radio talk shows in Senegalese women’s struggle of gender transformation and social and religious change.

My research design has led me to adopt the crystallization approach through the combination of interviews, participant observation, focus groups and document analysis to answer the research questions. I have also attempted to critically address the strengths
and limitations of the each technique used in the crystallization approach. In this chapter, I have also offered a reflection on my position as an insider going back home to carry out research. The reflection included the possibilities, opportunities and challenges such a position presented for this study.

Ethical issues were also given special attention in this chapter, as they created moments of dilemmas which were at times emotionally intense moments in the course of the data collection procedure. I further accounted for the strategies I utilized to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the research. Finally, I have offered a detailed explanation of the data analysis procedure. Despite all the challenges, the field experience exceeded my expectations at many levels: personally, intellectually, and emotionally. By sharing the participants’ stories while accounting for every step of the data collection procedure and context, my positionality, how I negotiated power in the field and the relationships I formed with the participants, I am hoping that it will enable the reader to engage more in the text. In the next chapter, I present a description of the 34 participants of this study.
Chapter Four: Meet the Participants

In this chapter, I present the characteristics of the participants involved in this study. I investigate how these characteristics inform women’s choices of radio talk shows. In an attempt to offer a more comprehensive description for understanding the various elements involved in this research, I provide a detailed description of all the participants. This comprehensive examination of the women and men who took part in this study provides a contextual background through which a more personal and thorough understanding of the impact of these radio talk show programs on the interviewees can be understood. A sample of thirty women constituted the core of this study, in addition to four men, who were not part of my target population, yet provided me with invaluable information and insight that allowed me to triangulate the data. In introducing these 34 participants, I provide the context in which we met. Each account explains where and how we were introduced, age, pseudonym, marital status, level of education, occupation, relevant personal background information and a brief understanding of their individual relationships to radio talk shows. This information is crucial to appreciating the impact of radio programs on women’s empowerment.

Kolle, a 49-year-old widow and a mother of five young children, was the first woman I interviewed. She had never attended school. She has operated a food stand since the death of her husband in 2004. I met Kolle upon returning to my home country of Senegal from the United States. She was recommended to me as an ideal participant by some friends who know her passion for radio. I visited her house to ask her about her participation in my study. She was very pleased that I showed interest in her listening
habits and she agreed to be interviewed. Arriving at Kolle’s on March, 29th, 2009, I found her preparing for her day of selling fruits, vegetables and an assortment of spices. Her back was turned as she bent over her products, arranging and organizing while her handheld radio hung from the overarching umbrella, loudly broadcasting the news. I shouted asalamu’aleykum (Peace be upon you) in greeting. Kolle turned around, greeted me with a big smile and said “I am ready for the interview.” We talked for more than two hours, although there were constant interruptions through greetings from people passing, by customers buying her products, or from her introducing me to her clientele or friends. Kolle told me she listened to more than 30 hours of radio per week and asserted that every day “her radio wakes her up and puts her to bed, the radio is never off”. Kolle thinks of herself as a strong, independent woman committed to her freedom and uses the radio as a tool to remain educated and informed.

Awa, a 31-year-old, married mother of two daughters, was my second interviewee. What intrigued me about her was her beauty. She was very dark, petite, veiled and had an unusual gap in her front teeth. Awa comes from a successful business family that does not place a high value on female education. Despite being an excellent student, at the insistence of her husband Awa was forced to drop out of high school after her marriage, who preferred her to stay at home and take care of the house instead. Kolle introduced me to Awa at her food stand and suggested I interview her because she spends a lot of time listening to the radio at home. After the introductions, Awa and I talked briefly. Without hesitation, she agreed to take part in my research. On March 31st, 2009 I went to interview Awa. When I arrived at her house, Awa was standing in the kitchen
washing rice while the radio was playing. She invited me into the living room and offered me a glass of water. We then chatted for more than an hour while we ate lunch. After lunch, we prayed together and began the interview in the kitchen since her entire family was still gathered in the living room waiting for the *attaaya (Senegalese Nationale tea)* to be served. The interview went on for about 80 minutes. Throughout the interview, Awa expressed regrets for dropping out of school and insisted on her constant desire to expand her horizons through radio and television. Every day as she cooks, cleans and takes care of her family; Awa searches the radio dial for meaningful shows.

My third interviewee, Hadi, is 51 years old, married, a mother of three children and a French teacher. She is very active and engaged in politics and teachers’ unions. Hadi is a powerful leader in the realm of women’s rights in Dakar and she is often invited as a guest to various talk shows to address some of the issues Senegalese women are facing. I was introduced to Hadi by one of my former female colleagues, Thiane. Thiane and Hadi are connected because they founded a local organization which helps women who are victims of domestic violence. My original plan was to interview Thiane but when I called Thiane to see if I could interview her, she told me that she was not available since she was travelling to Mauritania. But she had a better participant for me, Hadi, and gave me her contact information. Even, before I could contact her, Hadi had called *me* and invited me for lunch. When I arrived at her house, I walked into the living room to find Hadi simultaneously watching TV and listening to the radio with her three sons. The scent of *ceebu-jën (rice and fish-Senegalese national dish)* wafted from the kitchen as she invited me to sit next to her and discuss her relationship with radio. Hadi
and I talked for over two hours. During this time, she asked me a lot of questions regarding women in America and my views vis-à-vis women and Islam. She emphasized the fact that radios offer everyone the opportunity to be informed, regardless of their education, and because of this she excuses no one for being ignorant. She also mentioned how she loves the fact that the radio keeps her informed while allowing her to multitask with her everyday responsibilities.

Yasin, my fourth interviewee, moved to Dakar in 1999 after finishing high school to pursue a degree in Economics at Cheikh Anta Diop University. After failing the first year exam twice, due to several local strikes and the difficulty of the exam, Yasin decided to enroll in a private professional school to study finance instead. At 29 years old, Yasin is single and works at a bank. I met Yasin through Kolle, the first woman I interviewed. Yasin and Kolle have been neighbors since 1999 and have become very close friends. Like a sister, Yasin spends most of her evenings at Kolle’s house chatting and helping the children with their homework and school issues. After meeting me twice at Kolle’s house, Yasin invited me to her office for an interview. The day of the interview (April 2nd), I walked into the bank lobby and found Yasin sitting behind her computer, listening to the radio through her cell phone. She took me around the bank and introduced me to her boss and colleagues and then we began the interview. We talked for about an hour. She was an extremely articulate and intelligent informant who gave me an interesting perspective. While she joked about using the radio to find her husband because her “time is running out,” her main uses of the radio include listening to music and programs that address religious, social and political issues. However, she said she believes that the new
generation of musicians lack depth in their lyrics and added “music without substance and a message is just noise for me.”

Mati, a 49-year-old married woman and a mother of two daughters, was my fifth interviewee. Robust and dynamic, Mati spends her days sitting outside of her house providing laundry services. Mati has never been to school but did learn some of the Koran when she was young. Like many young girls from her village, she came to Dakar in search of a job some 37 years ago, at the age of 12. Like her, many women and girls participate in a form of migrant labor, traveling to Dakar during the dry season for work, and usually returning to their villages for the rainy season. Mati has remained in Dakar since her mother passed away in 2000 and only goes to the village from time to time to visit her relatives. I met Mati as I was walking downtown to go to Yasin’s office. I noticed her radio continuously playing inside her laundry stand. I stopped, greeted her and asked if she would participate in my study. Her immediate response was. “Only if you pay me because you come from America and you have a lot of money.” When she found out I was Peul she ended up agreeing to the interview because she was Seereer. The Peul are the second largest ethnic group in Senegal. They represent about 20% of Senegalese population. The Peul or Pullo (fulbe for plural) as they called themselves are referred to as Fulani in African countries that were colonized by British. The Seereer represents the third largest ethnic group in Senegal with about 17% of Senegalese population. The Peuls and Seereers are linguistically closely related. Most importantly, they have a special joking relationship and share a strong love of cattle. She agreed to an interview the next day on April 3rd, 2009. Before I could begin to interview her, Mati had
a lot of questions for me and wanted to know why “Americans” were interested in her listening habits. Our interview lasted 92 minutes and she praised the radio for being her “school.” Her favorite activity related to the radio talk shows is directly after a show when she and her fellow laundry mates discuss and argue about the issues just addressed in the previous shows. Mati listens to the radio for most of the day but admitted that she only fully pays attention during her favorite shows, such as the ones that address religious and social issues. She does not like political shows because according to her, “all politicians are liars.”

Kumba, a 43-year-old journalist and also a divorced mother of one, was my sixth interviewee. Kumba comes from an educated and conservative family. Kumba divorced her husband after he took a second wife two years ago, despite her family’s strong opposition to divorce. I met Kumba through one of her colleagues, Tafa, whose wife is Kumba’s cousin. Tafa arranged my first meeting with Kumba at the radio station where Kumba works for April 2nd. We had a brief interview, yet we connected over a very productive half-hour discussion. She then invited me to breakfast at her house on Senegalese Independence Day, April 4th, in order to continue the interview. That Saturday morning when I arrived around 9 a.m., Kumba was drinking coffee by her pool. She took me into the living room, and we sat around a table filled with all kinds of cookies, cakes, and drinks, with hot French bread. After eating, we went outside to begin the interview. I was amazed by Kumba’s profound and critical analysis of women’s issues; she is a strong believer in radio programs’ ability to influence positive change. Kumba advocates for proportional representation of gender within the media, arguing that
with more women in leadership positions in the field, more young girls will be empowered to pursue jobs in media too.

My seventh interviewee, Sata, is Kumba’s mother. As I was getting ready to leave Kumba’s house, Sata arrived with Kumba’s daughter Nini, bringing her to spend the weekend since Nini normally stays with her grandmother during the work week. After Kumba had introduced me and my study to her mother, Sata requested to participate as well, expressing that she had a lot to say about “the radios of today,” as she called them. She then asked me to come by her house later that day (April 4th) to interview her. When I arrived at her house at around 5 p.m., Sata was sitting outside praying with a beautiful rosary. She pointed to a chair, offering me a seat. Her husband approached me then to ask me into the living room, where I was introduced to two extended family members and a domestic worker who also lives with them. When she finished praying, Sata greeted me and said that she was ready to begin. We started our interview in the living room but halfway through, people were coming in and out, interrupting us, so she suggested we relocate to her bedroom to continue. We talked for about an hour and a half. In the middle of our conversation she declared “Sama doom (my daughter), the radio of this generation is much too open.” With a soft-spoken manner, she elaborated on this throughout the entire interview, explaining how she thought of radio listening as a paradox. “Radio is informative and empowers women, but that at the same time it’s much too open and inappropriate,” she said. “It’s like a market,” she continued, “you have good and bad onions and one must sift through to find the good onions (radio programs).”
Aysata, a 55-year-old divorced woman and a mother of two, was the eighth person I interviewed. Aysata dropped out of high school as a teenager to help her mother care for her nine younger siblings. I met Aysata at a bus stop, where she was selling hand-roasted coffee on the bridge of Gueule Tapée, during my first week in the field. Like most street vendors, Aysata always had her radio playing on the table. One morning while I was waiting for the bus, I asked Aysata if I could sit on one of her benches and rest for a moment. She said, “Oh yes, sit down,” and offered me a cup of coffee. We chatted as she served her morning customers until my bus arrived. On my way back from town, I stopped by again to tell her more about my study. That brief stop became a routine and Aysata and I saw each other almost every day during my time in the field. A week after we met, Aysata invited me to her house to interview her on April, 5th, 2009. That Sunday morning I arrived early at her home, since I had already scheduled two other interviews the same day. We began our interview after she had introduced me to her family. The interview lasted for slightly more than an hour. Aysata mentioned that she was not always an active listener. It was not until her customers showed an interest in the talk shows and started discussing the issues raised in those shows that she became a more active listener. After that, she began listening attentively to be able to take part in the discussions with her clientele. She stated that she has become “addicted” to listening to some of the programs. She also believes that the radio encourages communal meeting and listening which has allowed her to build and expand her business, since people gather around her table to debate the issues.
My ninth participant, Daado, is a 35-year-old, married woman with two children. As a primary school teacher, Daado spends every morning at school, where she teaches from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Daado was introduced to me by Mati. They are long-time friends, and Mati has been doing laundry for Daado for more than seven years as a client. When Mati (my fifth interviewee) discovered that I was Pullo (Fulani) and spoke the language, she decided to take me to Daado’s house not only to meet her but also to interview her. When I met Daado, we connected immediately and she was thrilled that I was a Pullo woman, married to a Wolof man, studying in the United States and yet still speaking perfect Fulani. Daado immediately invited me for a lunch of rice and okra the following day (on April 4th). But since I had already agreed to go spend the day with Kumba, we scheduled a lunch interview for April 5th. During the interview, we discussed her listening habits as well as the importance of the use of local languages within radio. The interview lasted for almost two hours. During this time, she mentioned that she particularly liked the programs that address women’s rights, religion, and at times, political issues. However, since Wolof and French are not her first languages, she described often being frustrated with the hegemonic ways in which the Wolof language dominates the airwaves. She believes that one is able to safeguard culture with the use of language and thus she is a big proponent of speaking Fulani with her children.

My tenth interviewee, Fama, is a 32-year-old single woman. She graduated from high school but was expelled from her university after failing the first-year exam twice. With the help of her mother’s brother (who lives in France), she was able to attend a two-year training program in Morocco to obtain an Associate’s degree in computer science.
Fama now runs the cyber-café at Gueule Tapee where I went almost every day to check or send emails. During my visits, I noticed that Fama was constantly listening to the radio either on the computer or on her cell phone. I then decided to ask her if she was interested in participating in my research. She agreed and I interviewed her the night of April 5th, after she got off work. The interview with Fama at the cyber café lasted for about 80 minutes. During our conversation, Fama emphasized that she relies on the radio to educate herself on becoming a better Muslim since she does not know the Koran, despite her associate degree. Therefore, as to not bother her customers, she primarily listens to her programs on the Internet or cell phone. She rarely calls in to the shows as she rather enjoys listening to the comments made by other callers.

Binta, the eleventh woman I interviewed, is a 56-year-old wife, mother of three children, and a Member of Parliament of the government of Senegal. She is a former high school teacher and is a very active and well-known politician, with a reputation for defending the rights of women and of teachers. Before I began my field research, I had exchanged emails and phone calls with Binta through which she agreed to take part in the study. Once in Dakar, Binta and I talked on many occasions over the phone but meeting her was extremely difficult. Her high profile as a Member of Parliament made her unavailable, yet her many contributions to various women’s organizations and some talk shows made interviewing her important to my research. After various failed attempts to meet, we finally arranged what would be a successful interview. I arrived at her office on April 7th, gave my ID to the security guard and knocked on her office door. She opened it and said “Enfin, te voila,” (finally, here you are). I sat down and explained my research
to her, and she in turn asked me a few questions about the recording before we began the interview. About five minutes into our interview, her phone rang and she told me that she had to go home immediately and that I should accompany her. We conducted the majority of our interview in transit, in the car to and from her luxurious, incense-scented office and home. Eventually we had the time to sit down in her living room to finish our conversation. We talked for more than two hours. She passionately spoke of her faith and skepticism in the use of radio shows, noting their ability to empower the disadvantaged but also their vulnerability to those who wish to spread patriarchal ideas.

Mounasse is a 39-year-old married mother of three and was my twelfth interviewee. Although she was raised in an educated family, Mounasse dropped out of high school after failing her high school diploma baccalaureate exam three times. She stated that her brothers and sisters see her as the “black sheep of the family,” especially after she became pregnant twice while unmarried. She then married the father of her children in 2004, but three years later, Mounasse moved back in with her parents. Her husband left Senegal and migrated to Spain in search of a better future for his family. She confessed that she wishes she had listened to her family and made different choices. “If I had listened to them, I am certain I would have a job and would be able to take care of my children without relying on my family” she told me. Mounasse spends most of her days at home cooking, cleaning, watching television, or listening to the radio. I met her in an unusual way: Mounasse contacted me after I had called during a radio show to express my interest in talking to women callers of the show. We set up an appointment on Monday, April 6th for lunch in a restaurant, which was also near her home. In our first
meeting I only got to know her and explained my research. I asked if I could then come to her house on the following day for an interview, and she agreed for an interview on April 9th. On April 9th, when I arrived at her house, Mounasse was sitting outside with a group of women listening to a show on the subject of bigamy. I sat and listened with them until the end of the show. Mounasse and I then went to the balcony to start our interview. We talked for over an hour and a half. She talked extensively about how she enjoys calling during the shows. She also enjoys gaining knowledge and building relationships with other listeners through the communal practice of gathering to listen together in groups.

Mintu, the thirteenth woman I interviewed, is 35 years old, single and has no children. Mintu finished primary school but in the village where she was raised, there was no middle school for her to attend in order to continue her schooling. The closest school was too far away from her village and it was unsafe for her to get there on foot. At 14, she moved to Dakar to stay with her mother’s cousin, a nurse. Two years later, Mintu’s aunt sent her to one of her friends, a famous tailor, to work as an apprentice. Now Mintu is a renowned and successful tailor and runs her own shop. I met Mintu via Mounasse, my twelfth interviewee. After I had interviewed Mounasse, she offered to take me to meet one of her best friends, Mintu, who is also a radio listener. When we arrived at Mintu’s shop, she was sitting on a sewing machine, pedaling. She stood up, greeted us and we sat down. Mounasse introduced me to Mintu. Mounasse explained my research to her friend. Mintu was excited and wanted to be interviewed later on the same day (April 9th). I was able to return at around 8 p.m., and we began the interview. I spoke with
Mintu over the gentle hum of her sewing machine. We talked for almost two hours with few interruptions. During the interview, Mintu explained the reasons for her listening habits and the role of radio in her business and in her life. At the end of interview, I made attaaya (Senegalese national tea) and mingled with Mintu’s apprentices and customers. I was able to network and recruit two new participants, Ndikku and Saly.

Ndikku, a 42-year-old mother of four children, was my fourteenth interviewee. While she had never attended formal school, Ndikku was the only participant in this study who memorized the entire Koran. Not only did she memorize the book, she was also well versed in hadith (narrations or quotations from the Prophet Mohammad (SAW)). Ndikku owns two successful restaurants in Dakar and her work there keeps her extremely busy. As mentioned earlier, I met Ndikku through networking at Mintu’s sewing shop. While interviewing Mintu in her shop, Ndikku, one of her customers, stopped by to pick up an order Mintu had made for her. As soon as Ndikku entered the shop, she complimented me on my veil and also expressed her frustration about the ways young women dress today; I seized the opportunity to introduce myself and my study. She showed great interest in participating and invited me to her house to also meet her daughter. We then arranged to meet on the following day, Friday April 10th, since it would be her day off. On that Friday, when I arrived at Ndikku’s house around noon, she was bending over in the yard performing her ablutions and getting ready to go to the mosque. When she heard my voice, she turned her head, greeted me with her soft voice and called her daughter Asiya to take me into the living room. I was introduced to the entire family and then we all went to the mosque to pray. Returning to her home
afterwards we ate lunch together and then began our interview. The interview lasted about one and a half hours, with Ndikku talking extensively about her three favorite radio programs and how she would never miss these shows for any reason. She also talked about her selective listening habits due to time constraint and interests. At the end of the interview, she invited her children into the room and lectured them about their future. She told them that I was the proof that they can be good Muslims and still “modern” and successful.

Saly, a 40-year-old married woman, primary school teacher and mother of two children, was my fifteenth interviewee. Saly is a union member and activist who was committed to helping women gain greater access to education. In 2000, Saly offered tutoring and literacy classes at her house three days a week for girls and women in need. Saly is another participant I met at Mintu’s shop. When she came in the shop, Ndikku and I were discussing how the dressing of Senegalese women had changed throughout the years and the role of the media, particularly television, has had in reinforcing such behaviors. After greeting us she immediately jumped into the discussion and talked about the role education could play in helping to raise more awareness among women. After the conversation, I approached her as a potential participant and ended up interviewing her at her house over the weekend. When I arrived at Saly’s house on Saturday April 11th she was already prepared for the interview. We talked for nearly two hours during which she passionately spoke of the avenues radio provided to her and could also provide for all Senegalese women. Saly listens to the radio mostly after 5p.m. and often calls in to share
her thoughts on-air. She targets shows that address women’s issues and sometimes
initiates listening groups when important topics are scheduled to be discussed.

Dioulde, a 47-year-old mother of nine, was the sixteenth woman I interviewed.
Dioulde finished high school but could not further her education after delivering twins.
As the first wife of a polygamic marriage of two women, Dioulde became the head of her
household when her husband moved to Italy. She was well respected by the entire
household. She declared that she has a wonderful relationship with her husband’s second
wife, Koura, who is 28 and a primary school teacher. As Dioulde states, “Koura treats me
like an older sister and I treat her like a younger sister and we support each other. As for
the children, you cannot tell which ones are mine and which ones are hers.” She really
prides herself as a leader of the family. I was introduced to Dioulde by Hadi, my third
interviewee who talked about Dioulde as a neighbor and friend. Hadi took me to
Dioulde’s home on April 1st after our interview. After the greetings, I explained my
research and she immediately agreed to participate in my study. She was ready to be
interviewed right away, but since I had people waiting for me at my house, we agreed to
an interview on April 2nd. However, we were not able to conduct the interview on April
2nd due an unexpected event Dioulde had to attend. We ended up carrying the interview
on April 12th. When I arrived, Dioulde invited me into her bedroom for the interview
because the house was packed with people chatting here and there. Our conversation
lasted for about an hour and a half. During the interview, she praised the radio for being
at the forefront of political change and consciousness-raising in the country. She also
noted that the radio had helped her to become a better citizen and a better Muslim. She
felt she had become more aware of the duties and responsibilities of Senegalese citizens and of Muslims.

Oumou, my seventeenth interviewee, is 48 years old, married, and a mother of six children. Oumou owns a clothing store at Marche Sandaga (Dakar’s biggest market). She attended college through her sophomore year, but ended up dropping out when she became pregnant with her second child. In 2001, with the help of her brother who lives in Spain, Oumou started a small business selling used clothing in front of her house. After five years of savings, as well as obtaining a small loan from a local women’s group, she was able to open a cantine (small store) in Marche Sandaga. I met her on April 2\textsuperscript{nd} at her shop, while I was searching for fabric to buy. As I was admiring her beautiful fabrics and trying to decide which one I wanted, I noticed Oumou was carefully listening to a radio program in the back while her cousin Musa dealt with customers in the front. After I bought my fabric, I asked if I could speak with Oumou. Musa went to the back and got Oumou’s permission. I introduced myself and chatted with Oumou for about an hour before I left. That was a beginning of our relationship, fostered by several weekly shopping trips to her shop. After my third visit, Oumou and I arranged for an interview at her house on Sunday April 19\textsuperscript{th}. I arrived at her house around 10 am and we began our interview an hour later. The interview lasted about an hour and a half. She spoke of her love for the radio. She likes both call-in shows and other shows in which experts provide information and education to listeners. Often she feels the radio programs speak directly to her due to their relevance to her daily life.
Aminata, a 48-year-old, third-time divorcee with no children, was my eighteenth interviewee. She had endured three abusive husbands and now takes a stand to protect her dignity and empower herself. Aminata has never been to school but can read and use a calculator. She is a successful manager of one of her current husband’s businesses and supervises a group of five male employees. I met Aminata through Ndikku, my fourteenth interviewee. Aminata and Ndikku have been best friends since they were teenagers and today live in the same neighborhood. After my interview with Ndikku on April 14th, I had accompanied her to visit Aminata’s house. After the introduction, Aminata told me that she was interested in participating in my research because she had a lot of experience with the radio. We then briefly discussed my research objectives and she invited me to her workplace for an interview the following week-end on Sunday April, 19. When I arrived on the day of the interview, Aminata was on the phone and leaning on the service desk. When she saw me, she smiled, greeted me and took me by the hand to her office, while still on her mobile phone ordering merchandise. At the end of the call, she apologized, brought me a drink and said “I am all yours.” We began the interview, which lasted about an hour and a half. She talked about her particular love for religious talk shows, which have helped her heal the pain of never being able to have a child.

My nineteenth interviewee, Rakki, was a 39-year-old Joola woman. Joola’s constitute four percent of Senegalese population and are the dominant ethnic group in the Southern region of Senegal known as Casamance region. Rakki was married and, had three children. Like most girls in her village, she never attended school. She moved to
Dakar in search of peace and new opportunities twelve years ago after the *Casamance* conflict by the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance. A separatist movement, the Casamance region, which began in 1990, destroyed her family. Her two brothers were killed in the conflict and her sister lost her leg after stepping on a land mine in a rice field. After a year of intense job searching in Dakar, she finally found work as a maid for a French family, for whom she worked for eight years. In 2004, Rakki decided to open her own restaurant and was able to hire one employee. I met Rakki through her husband Lansana, a taxi driver who I met the first week I arrived in Dakar. He ended up being my chauffeur whenever I needed a taxi. When I told Lansana about my study, he suggested I interview his wife since he said she loves listening to the radio. Then on April 19th, Lansana brought his wife and children to meet me. They stayed for few an hours while we chatted and connected over our common Southern roots. I seized the opportunity to explain my research to Rakki and inquired about her listening habits. Then, Rakki suggested I come to her house the next day (on April 20th) to interview her, but only on the condition that I would stay and have dinner with her and her family. On April 20th, when I arrived, Rakki was sitting in the front yard waiting for me. As we went inside, she offered me some *Bisaab* (*hibiscus juice*) and we began the interview. We talked for a little over an hour. She highlighted how essential the radio was in helping her to learn Wolof when she first arrived in Dakar. She also talked about the radio being her sole companion when she was a maid. Since she started her restaurant she cannot tune in all day as she had before, but she has maintained her early morning listening habits, and targeting specific shows that she never misses.
My twentieth interviewee, Adama, is a 30-year-old mother of two and a famous radio talk show host in one of the most popular private radio programs in Senegal. After high school, Adama went on to do four years of reporting training. As early as middle school, she knew that she wanted to work in radio and did not want to go on to university. She wanted to do something practical. She could not wait to pursue her dream after high school. I met Adama on March 28th, the first day I arrived in Dakar. When I visited the director of the radio station where she works, he introduced me to Adama and said “talk to Adama, she knows a lot about the shows. She knows individual stories and experiences.” He also said that she was often in the field. On April 21st I returned to the radio station and Adama and I talked for an hour and then arranged an interview at her house for the following Saturday. Arriving at Adama’s house on Saturday April 25, I found that she was not home but rather on errands to the market, yet her husband welcomed me and he and I chatted until Adama returned. When she arrived, she was very excited and said “I especially went to the market for you, to make you a good supp kañña (Okra soup) because I know there is nothing like that in the United States.” She then invited me in the kitchen, and I helped cut the okra and pound the spices. We began the interview as we were waiting for the food to cook. The interview lasted about 80 minutes. During our interview, she emphasized the impact of the shows on her life and the invaluable and unique relationships she developed with the callers.

Salimata, a 28-year-old, divorced mother of four children, was my twenty-first interviewee. She was able to go to high school but was expelled after her second year due to poor grades. A strong and dynamic woman, Salimata struggled every day to make ends
meet. Every morning after sending her two older children to school and the two youngest to her neighbor’s house, Salimata goes to downtown Dakar. She goes from office to office, selling sandwiches and Bisaab (hibiscus juice). As she moves between offices or waits in the hallway for customers, she listens to the radio through her earphones. I met Salimata on March 31st, at the Assemblée Nationale (Parliament) on my second attempt to meet Binta, my eleventh interviewee and a member of the parliament. As we sat there for more than an hour waiting for members of parliament and complaining about the slow pace of Senegalese bureaucracy, the incompetency of the politicians, and the daily struggles of Senegalese women, I discovered that Salimata constantly listened to radio talk shows and is very interested in social and political issues. I then explained my research and she agreed to participate. At the end of our conversation, we exchanged phone numbers and she said that she would call me to inform me of a convenient time to interview her. She called me the next day and stopped by my house on her way home. We then saw each other and communicated regularly over the phone. On April 25th, she called me and requested that we meet at Café de Rome downtown the following day for the interview. On April 26th, upon meeting, we talked for almost two hours during which she described in detail the role radio plays in her life. I was surprised to find out that radio was a loyal companion of Salimata via her cell phone but listens to a radio apparatus when she is at home.

My twenty-second interviewee Roxeya was a 41-year-old, married mother of three children. Like Salimata my twenty-first interviewee, she too has a portable trailer from where she sells her food products around the city. Roxeya has never been to school.
She told me that her father was opposed to French schools and saw them as nothing but a way to destroy African cultures, values and religious beliefs. Her brothers also never attended formal school, but spent years learning the Koran. While her brothers still living in the village do not send their children to school, all of Roxeya’s children are in school and are doing well. As she said, “Even my daughter, who is married, is in school. I asked her husband to leave her with me, since he lives in Spain, until she finishes school because I don’t want her to become like me.” I met Roxeya through her friend Salimata. When Salimata realized my surprise to see her using her cell phone to listen to the radio, she decided to introduce me to her friend, Roxeya who was also an avid cell phone radio listener Roxeya. When I called Roxeya on April 27th to request an interview with her, she told me that Salimata had already explained “everything” to her and that I could come to her house the next day to interview her. The following day, April 28th I arrived at Roxeya’s very early. We had breakfast and began our interview as we were eating. The interview lasted for about an hour and a half. She talked about the convenience that listening on one’s cell phone offers but also highlighted how she enjoys when her customers sometime gather around her trailer to listen to some shows. After our interview, I spent half of the day with her working around the city selling food.

Rama, a 52-fifty two year-old married mother of five children and a grandmother of six, was my twenty-third interviewee. Rama has never been to school but is a successful business woman. She owns two houses and four taxis. Rama is also the leader of two women’s associations in her neighborhood and provides financial support and guidance to many women. Most of the time, Rama stays at home during the day receiving
visitors looking for financial help. I was introduced to Rama by Lansana, the taxi driver. Lansana has been driving Rama’s taxis for the past five years. After he told Rama about my research she agreed to meet me. Lansana and I went to visit Rama Friday April 24th in the evening. When we got to Rama’s house, Rama was sitting in her living room with a group of five women counting money for a *tontine* she is running. When she saw us, she stood up, came toward me, shook my hand strongly and said, “I have heard so much about you. I am always proud of women who initiate things and want to help other women,” before she added “Bismillah! Toogal! (Welcome! Sit down’”) Lansana and I sat down and she brought all kinds of drinks. She started asking me a lot of questions about my research and how I got to study in the United States. She wanted to send her two sons and daughter to school there. After about an hour of getting to know each other better, she said, “Now we can go to my bedroom for the interview.” I did not expect her to agree for an interview the same day, yet I was too surprised to witness another side of Senegalese hospitality. I worked with her into her bedroom, and she began by showing her family’s pictures before to start of the interview. We talked for almost two hours with a few interruptions from visitors and grandchildren who also wanted her attention.

During the interview she mentioned how she still preferred radio despite the fact that she also owns a huge TV: radio allows her to multitask. “You can listen and talk and count money at the same time. There are no images to pay attention to,” she said. She also praised the radio for having contributed immensely to her accumulation of knowledge.

My twenty-fourth interviewee, Khoudia, is 30 years old, had no children and is married to a successful carpenter. Khoudia, the eldest of a family of eight children, was
the first girl in her family to go to high school. She dreamed of becoming a doctor so she could help poor people and also lift her own family out of poverty. Unfortunately, she was expelled in high school after failing the Baccalaureate twice. Nevertheless, she still dreamed of being successful and taking care of her family. A year after she dropped out of school, she started a small business selling juices and yogurt with the help of a family friend. Three months into her business, she met a man who soon became a loyal customer. This person helped her expand her business and hire an employee to help her sell her products. Then, as she told me, “Before I even realized what was going on, we were married.” Since the marriage, Khoudia does not work because her husband provides everything she needs to support her family. However, she is afraid that support might end one day and her family will return to the cycle of poverty they knew before she met her husband. She also added, “I am very happy, Alhamdulillah (Thank God) but I miss being a seller on the streets and interacting with people. Now, I am home all the time and the radio has become a great friend and school for me.” I initially met Khoudia at the mosque on Friday, May 1st. She was introduced to me by a friend who attends to the same Arabic literacy classes on Friday afternoons with her. After long greetings, Khoudia invited me to her house two days later on Sunday, May 3rd to tell her about Muslim Women in America and at the same interview her for my research. When I arrived at her house, I found her lying on a couch reading a magazine, the radio playing in the background. She said, “I was waiting for you. We need to start now before my husband gets here.” We then started the interview, which lasted about an hour and a half. She described her relationship with the talk shows and the kinds of opportunities it has created for her. Her
husband came home some time after we had completed the interview. He later joined us with his best friend and wife discussing Islam in America and President Obama.

Soxna, a 46-year-old married woman with no children, was my twenty-fifth interviewee. Soxna holds a bachelor’s degree in Arabic and has been an Arabic teacher in a private school for twelve years. In 2007, she quit her teaching job to devote more time to herself and her husband. The job was too far away and not paying enough. The following year, with the help of her husband, she opened her own Koranic school in the lower level of her house, comprised of four classrooms. I met Soxna on May 3rd when I went to interview Khoudia. Their husbands are best friends and they too have become very close since Soxna joined the circle. She showed interest in my research and invited me to her house the next day, May 4th, for an interview. When I arrived at Soxna’s house, she was standing on the balcony and as I walked in the house, she yelled, “Come on up, I am here.” I went to join her and after long greetings she gave me a tour of the classrooms, eventually leading us to her office, decorated with her diplomas and photos on the walls. Her radio was placed on her desk, and was broadcasting the news in Wolof. She offered me a drink and we began the interview. We talked for a little bit less than two hours, during which she described her listening habits. Soxna thanked the radio for keeping her informed and educated. She spends a good portion of her day “shopping” from show to show in search of interesting topics and conversations. While she doesn’t make a lot of money from the school, she’s making more than she did before, and she even has been able to hire two other teachers as well.
My twenty-sixth interviewee, Astou, is 52 years old, married and a mother of seven. I have known Astou since 1995 when I moved into her neighborhood. She calls herself “the queen of her house” as the first wife of a polygamic marriage of three wives. Astou has never been to school but is a very eloquent and assertive woman. She can speak a fair amount of French. As the gewël (griot) of her neighborhood, she spends most of her days going to familial ceremonies as a way of making a living. On May 5th, as I was bargaining while buying fruits, I met Astou and for about five minutes, she complained that I had not informed her about my research. She reminded me that there was no better candidate than her because she “knows everything about everybody.” I then agreed to go to her house the next day, on May 6th, for an interview. That day, when I arrived, I found her in her bedroom listening to the radio surrounded by children and grandchildren. When she saw me, she exclaimed, “See! I have my radio out and I’m listening; I was waiting for you.” She sent the children outside and we started the interview after she asked me a lot of questions. She asked what she would gain by participating in this study. We spoke for over two hours during which she explained in detail her listening habits. She shared how much she loves the discussions they have as a family after listening to talk shows together.

Bigué, a 34-year-old married mother of two children, was my twenty-seventh interviewee. Like Astou, Bigué is a gewël who views herself as strong and conservative. She is married to a wealthy Modou-Modou (the male Senegalese immigrants who go to Europe or United States are called Modou-Modou) who works and lives in Italy. Bigué attended high school but dropped out after two years when she got married and had to
move to Dakar to join her husband. Astou, my twenty-sixth interviewee, introduced me to Bigué. After my interview with Astou, she recommended I interview Bigué and took me to her house to meet her. When Astou and I entered Bigué’s house, Astou explained my research to her in detail, like someone who had mastered it. After the introductions, Astou returned to her house but Bigué insisted that I have some tea and carry out the interview right then. I could not refuse the tea, however I had to reschedule interviewing her until the next morning because I was exhausted after a long week of work. When I returned the next day on May 7th, she was sitting in a beautiful living room decorated with furniture from Italy, and ready for the interview. She offered me a cup of Café Touba (Senegalese coffee named after the holy city Touba) and we began the interview, which lasted almost two hours. During the interview, Bigué gave an interesting perspective on both marriage and radio listening: “a woman’s legs should be short,” she exclaimed, arguing that when a husband is gone, the wife should be at home. Because she lives by this mantra, she spends a lot of time at home listening to the radio. Her favorite programs include those that address social issues, especially concerning the impact of immigration on women, women’s rights vis-à-vis Islam, and any music program because she and her entire family are musically inclined.

Anta, my twenty-eighth interviewee, is a 35-year-old married mother of two. She has a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration and works as a financial manager in an airline company in Dakar. I was put in touch with her through Binta, the eleventh interviewee and Member of Parliament. After our interview, Binta had suggested that I talk to her friend Anta, whom she described as a critical thinker who was very concerned
with women’s issues. She also told me that Anta calls into some of the shows and that
listeners like her “take on the issues.” I called Anta immediately after my interview with
Binta on April 7th. When I called Anta to see if she were available to meet with me, she
suggested we meet for lunch the following day, on April 8th. Anta took me to a fancy
restaurant in downtown Dakar to eat fresh shrimp. As we were eating, we shared our
stories and experiences as Senegalese women and ambitious mothers. At the end of the
lunch, we agreed to meet again but she could not meet with me for four weeks due to
family obligations. She agreed to an interview on May 9th. On that day when I arrived,
dinner was ready and Anta and her husband were standing on their balcony waiting for
me. When I got out of the taxi, they waved to me and came down to open the door for
me. We hugged and went to the living room. Anta offered me orange juice and invited
me to the dining table to eat dinner with the rest of her family. As we were eating, we
discussed a whole range of issues including my research, President Obama’s leadership
style, Muslims in the United States, and my choice to wear the veil. At the end of dinner
Anta and I went to the balcony to begin our interview. We spoke for more than two
hours. She admitted that she listens “24/7” like many people, but targets specific shows
and programs that she believes to be informative. Her interpretation of the role of radio
on women’s lives was very profound and critical. She believes that “radio is having a
transformational role in many Senegalese citizens’ lives, including women”.

My twenty-ninth interviewee, Penda, is a 28-year-old divorced woman and a
mother of one boy. Penda was still in primary school at the age of 15 when her family
decided to marry her to a wealthy cousin who lives in Italy. After five years of marriage,
during which Penda had not stayed with her husband for a time period longer than three months, Penda decided to get a divorce. Her husband refused a divorce unless she returned all the money he had spent on their wedding. Since her family did not support the divorce and could not afford to pay back the money, back, in 2002 Penda decided to move to Dakar to look for a job that would allow her to earn money to repay her bride price. A month after moving to Dakar, Penda found a job as a maid for a married couple, and was able to earn and save. She divorced her husband in 2006 and still works for the same family. I met Penda at Mati’s (my fifth interviewee) laundry place. While I was interviewing Mati on April 3rd, I noticed a group of women sitting around a radio listening to a talk show. One woman in particular stood out to me as she listened quietly and intently. That woman was Penda. After my interview with Mati, I asked Penda if she would be interested in participating in my research. She agreed but only if she could come to my house to do the interview. We then arranged to meet the following Sunday on April 5th, but she had to cancel for an emergency related to her job. We talked on the phone at least once a week for the five weeks following our first meeting, and ended up doing our interview on Sunday May 10th. When she arrived for the interview, I offered her a drink and we went in to the room where I was staying when I was in Dakar. We talked for nearly two hours. She spoke powerfully of how the radio has contributed to changing her life. She described the radio as her companion, especially at work. The radio, she said, “is extremely beneficial and informative as it has made me aware of many social issues.” By the time I left Dakar, Penda and I had become close friends, spending
time together listening to radio programs and discussing the challenges that Senegalese women face.

Abu, a 52-year-old married man with two children, was my thirtieth interviewee. He is a well-known Senegalese media and communication specialist. I have known Abu since 1999 and we have become very close friends. Abu played a central role in my research. He is the key person who helped me gain access to highly positioned people such as members of Parliament, directors of radio stations and other important personalities. Even before I arrived in Dakar, Abu knew I was interested in interviewing him. When I met him in his office on March 30th, during my first week there, the first question he asked was, “When do you want to interview me?” I responded that I was not in a rush to interview him since I could get a hold of him anytime; for that first week, my priorities were to get in touch with the high profile participants thanks to Abu’s help. He made some phone calls and I was able to start conversations with some of them. After which, Abu and I arranged for an interview on May 11th. When I went to his office the day of the interview, he was ready and waiting for me. We started immediately and conversed for about two hours. During the interview, he highlighted various issues including women’s representation in and on the media. He also added that while he does listen consistently throughout the day, he makes exceptions on Wednesdays and Fridays when he pays particular attention to some shows that not only address critical issues, but also attract a wider audience. But every morning, the first thing he does is to listen to the radio as he gets ready for his day, and also listens in his car as he commutes to and from work.
My thirty-first interviewee, Amadou, is a 40-year-old married man. After college, Amadou enrolled in the Centre d’Études de Sciences et Techniques de l’Information (CESTI) to become a renowned journalist. I was introduced to him by Abu (my twenty-ninth interviewee). Due to his busy schedule, reaching Amadou was not an easy task. When I went to Abu’s office my first week in the field, he called Amadou and put me on the phone to talk to him. We talked briefly and he gave me his cell phone number and email address, advising me to call him the following week to set up an appointment with him. When I called, we arranged an informal meeting on Sunday, April 12th to talk more about my study. At the last minute, he called me to reschedule and we ended up meeting on Wednesday April 22nd to get to know each other better. At the end of that first informal interview, we arranged to meet three weeks later, on May 13th for a formal interview. The day of the formal interview, he was kind enough to carve two hours out of his busy schedule to have a dialogue with me. He even brought a list of questions to ask me about my take on social issues affecting Senegalese people. In conversing with Amadou, I gained a greater understanding of his various programs and what they offer to the listeners. His interview provided me another dimension of the impact of radio on Senegalese women.

Bouba, a 54-year-old married man, was my thirty-second interviewee. Bouba is a communication professor at CESTI, the Senegalese school of journalism, and has written extensively on various aspects of radio. While I was working on my dissertation proposal, I came across his work frequently and wanted to interview him on the impact that radio talks shows have on women. I tried to contact him while I was in the United
States but was not successful. Luckily for me, Abu was there to connect me once I arrived in Senegal. Even before I had asked about him, Abu had suggested I interview him since Bouba is an expert in the field of radio studies in Senegal. After my meeting with Abu on March 30th, he gave me Bouba’s number to follow up. Two days later, on April 1st, I called Bouba and we arranged to meet at his office briefly on April 6th. On April 5th, he called me to cancel our appointment and we re-scheduled for an interview on May 15th because he was going to be out of the country until the first week of May. On May 15th, I arrived at his office at little bit early and he was still in a meeting. His secretary told me that he was expecting me and to please have a seat. While I was waiting, she presented me with a list of his work and started explaining how passionate he is about the subject of radio. Ten minutes later, his door opened, his meeting adjourned, and his secretary took me into his office. He stood up to greet me and asked me to sit down. I sat down and re-introduced myself. He first apologized for being disorganized, as he had books scattered everywhere. He then started by questioning me about myself, my studies in the United States, and wearing a veil in an American university. After that warm-up conversation, we began the interview which lasted almost an hour and a half. He gave a detailed description of the history of radio in Senegal and its role in national development. Bouba also presented me with a lot of insight into how radio can be used to empower citizens and foster democracy.

My thirty-third interviewee, Malick, is a 52-year-old married man. Malick is a famous journalist known for his insightful analysis of the media. He has been recognized for his dedicated engagement with democracy, his advocacy of social justice and of the
rights and liberties of individuals. He is extremely critical of the Senegalese government for sending some journalists to prison and he has written extensively on freedom of speech, transparency and good governance. I was able to meet Malick with the help of my father’s best friend, Elimane. Elimane and Malick have the same Sëriñ (spiritual leader) and are very connected spiritually. When I told tonton (uncle) Elimane that I would like to interview his friend Malick, he picked up his phone and told him that he wanted him to meet me. At the end of their phone conversation, I had an appointment with Malick within the same week, on May 18th. Although I did not talk to Malick, I was confident that everything was going to go smoothly. On May 18th, I arrived slightly late to our meeting due to traffic. I was immediately ushered into Malick’s office. He greeted me with a big smile and said, “Welcome my niece! Sit down.” I sat down and we started discussing my research topic. After half an hour of questioning and getting to know me better, we started the interview, which lasted about eighty minutes. The interview went very well and Malick gave a detailed and profound analysis of the impact of radio on women. He also drew an interesting comparative analysis of how the media functions in Senegal and in the Western world. At the end of interview, he introduced the entire staff and gave me his contacts.

Oumy, a 54-year-old married woman and mother of three, was my thirty-fourth and last interviewee. Oumy is one of the first female talk show hosts in Senegal and the host of one of the most popular shows that addresses women’s issues. Oumy has a “soft, convincing and healing voice,” as one participant described and this is one of the reasons that made her show extremely popular. I was a fan of her show when I was in Senegal. I
met Oumy the day I went to interview Malick the director of the radio station where she works. After Malick introduced us, Oumy and I met over lunch to briefly and casually talk about my research and the importance of education for Muslim women. She was very “impressed” that I was veiled and pursuing a doctorate in the United States. After lunch Oumy invited me to her house for an interview the following Saturday on May 23rd. When I arrived Oumy was preparing a special *ceebu-jën* (*Senegalese National dish*) for me and we spent the early part of the afternoon talking in the kitchen and chopping vegetables while her daughter looked after my daughter, Marieme. After lunch, we began the interview which lasted over two hours. During the interview she talked about the impact that talk shows have had on her life and on the lives of callers. She particularly highlighted the kind of trust and closeness she has developed with many callers who have become part of her family.

**Summary**

![Figure 2: Participants levels’ of education](image-url)
In sum, this section told the stories of the thirty-fourth people interviewed for this study. Each person interviewed came from a different background and from ages ranging from 25 to 61. Some were highly educated while others had never been to school. As figure 2 indicates, 27% of the female participants have a college education, 13% have some college education, 3% have a high school education, 20% have some high school education, 7% have primary school education and 30% have no formal education. Many worked as vendors (27%), housewives (23%), teachers (14%), and managers (10%) while others worked in other sections like media. Some participants were mothers and even grandmothers, while others did not have children. The majority were married (73%), while the others were widows, divorced or never married. Each participant relied on the radio for different reasons. For the women interviewed, the radio was their occupation, their teacher, their companion during the day or their source of information about the world around them. No matter where they came from, their level of education, marital status or why they relied on the radio, they all seemed to value the talk radio shows. They all felt in some way that radio was essential to living an informed life in Senegal and promoting change within the country.
Chapter Five: Radio Talk Shows: Themes and Structures

In this chapter, I discuss in detail the various radio talk shows which the participants mentioned, categorize them, and offer an explanation of how they inform and influence women’s talk radio show preferences. Based on interviews, focus groups, participant observation and document analysis, I present their characteristics as they pertain to the experiences of the thirty women who took part in this study. This also provides more context for the radio shows. A review of the data reveals that the participants were engaged in 29 radio talk shows. A close examination of these 29 shows reveals an immense diversity due to the explosion of the radio talk show phenomenon in Dakar. Recently, Dakar has seen the development of a whole range of new shows that are moving beyond the traditional boundaries, with genres and formats feeding one another to create a mixture of these aspects. While these 29 talk radio shows are immensely rich and vary greatly in terms of purpose, style, airtime, functions and content, I opted to categorize them in terms of how they are structured (the formats) and the issues and themes which they address (the genres). The chapter ends with a reflection which summarizes the characteristics of these 29 radio talk shows and how they relate to the participants’ listening preferences.

Talk Radio Formats

In Senegal, the trend of talk radio shows exploded following the privatization of the media in the late 1990s and led not only to audience popularity, but also to the emergence of a platform of talk radio hybrid formats (Dia, 2002; Diagne, 2005). As one of the most vibrant forms of media in Senegal (Dia, 2002), the radio landscape is
constantly evolving, restructuring, adapting and innovating its formats to offer a richer performance for its listeners. What started as expert-focused talk shows evolved rapidly to an array of formats which rapidly collapsed the boundaries and generated new hybrids and more diversified formats. As Amadou, a 40-year-old Senegalese journalist, argued:

We are constantly working really hard to make our shows more and more attractive and educational for our listeners. This requires a lot of creativity and flexibility to not only come up with something that pertains to and addresses the citizens’ lives and experiences, but most importantly to create an array of formats that would respond to our audience expectation. At first, we did a lot of expert-focused shows but then we added more ‘lay person’ oriented formats and that paid off, it worked! We could see that because of the diversity of formats, more and more people are calling in and attesting of their satisfaction. And that’s just the beginning; we are always investigating more formats and ways to reach more and more citizens effectively. It is part of our mission.

As Amadou suggests, the Senegalese radio landscape is a vibrant platform that offers a broad spectrum of more than twenty formats. While these formats cluttering the airwaves of Dakar are very interesting, I will not venture to describe them all. Instead, I will focus on the 29 talk radio shows which my participants have identified as being the ones they listen to and call in to. A review of these 29 talk radio shows suggest that their formats fall into six categories: the Guest-Expert format, the Experts Panel format, the Vox Populi (Community Outreach Format), the Individual Testimonials format, the Open-Air Call-in format and the No set topic (Listener’s Select format).

The “Guest-Expert Format”

The Guest-Expert features one expert who comes on air to discuss a topic that is relevant to her or his expertise with the host of the show and members of the audience. The guests vary, but include politicians, religious leaders, doctors, traditional healers, musicians, lawyers and educators. The topics discussed are usually provocative and tend
to address current and controversial issues facing the listening population. Examples of topics the format addressed while I was conducting this study include: bigamy, homosexuality, immigration, sexuality and corruption. Most of the shows that fall under this format run for one hour and are structured into three segments.

The first segment begins with the host of the show introducing the guest and the topic of discussion to the audience. The host then starts a face-to-face conversation or one-on-one interview with the guest and/or expert and together they act as if they were performing a dialogue for the audience. Throughout that first part of the show, the expert is given the opportunity to get her or his message across, to display and demonstrate her or his knowledge of the topic and provide facts to strengthen her or his arguments “to win the trust of the audience,” as a 56-year-old participant and member of the Parliament, Binta said. Binta argued:

When I was invited during these talk shows to talk about the challenges married Senegalese women face when they are in a leadership position, I took the first segment of the show to really show the people who were listening that I knew what I was talking about. I demonstrated that I was talking both as an expert but also as someone who can relate to the majority of Senegalese women because I come from a very marginalized background. I believe that because I articulated my knowledge well at the very beginning, it made that show very successful. I was very aware of the educational and decisional impact the show could have not only on women, but also on men who really want to help their wives be successful and effective leaders.

In that first segment, the host also holds a special role and power, as she or he is the one in control of the conversation, sets the agenda and initiates the questions and challenges the expert through a sometimes tough questioning sequence.

The second segment starts when the phone lines open up to the callers to ask questions, make contributions or challenge the guest’s position or point of view. This part
of the show is very dynamic and interactive and is the crucial part that makes the format incredibly successful among the listeners. Not only are ordinary people given the opportunity to participate, but it is not uncommon to see other experts call to either reinforce views of the guest or to challenge them. The role of the host becomes even more powerful during the second segment where she or he has to make sure that the guest does not avoid the questions asked by the audience which could generate negative reactions from the audience.

The third is the wrap-up segment. During this segment, the guest-expert is given the opportunity to summarize her or his argument and provide final thoughts on the topics and the various interactions that took place during the show.

Many participants expressed their appreciation of the Guest-Expert format with 16.67% of them identifying the guest-expert format as their favorite. These women attributed their love of the format to not only the topic it addresses, but to the way in which the host handles the second segment of the show. As Awa, a 31-year-old woman, stated:

I really enjoy the shows with one expert, especially when the host does her or his job well. For some of these shows, I feel as if I don’t even need to call because I know the host will ask the experts great questions, the kinds of difficult and uncomfortable questions that I would want the guest to weigh in on. When that happens, it makes me believe that the host has solidarity with us, the ordinary people. This also demonstrates that she or he is not there to please the so-called elites and experts; he becomes the voices of the marginalized and those who cannot get on the phones.

Like Awa, many participants felt that the way the host would often defend ordinary people calling in was a strong determinant of how often and how long they would listen to that format. The participants recognized that most talk radio hosts,
especially on private radio, did a good job of challenging the expert and representing those who wished to call but were not able to for financial or time constraints.

**Experts from different fields: the “Experts-Panel format”**

The *Experts-Panel* is similar to that of the Guest-Expert in many ways. Both formats have the same structure in terms of the three-segment aspect of the show. In both formats, the first segment takes the form of an interview where the experts display their knowledge and expertise, the second segment is the dialogic period when the experts and audience are all engaged together to reflect on specific issues, and the third and final segment constitutes the closing. Similar to the *Guest Expert* format, the topics discussed in this format tend to be very controversial. However, the topics addressed on the *Experts-Panel format* are usually urgent/timely and are of great concern to the population who want serious dialogue to take place. Some of the addressed topics of these shows have included abortion, incest and homosexuality. Four elements, however, differ largely between the Guest-Expert and Expert-Panel formats: the number of experts, the time allocated to the show, the extent to which the host controls the show, and the nature of the conversation.

The first and most obvious difference is that the *Experts-Panel* format targets various experts who come on air to discuss one topic from different perspectives instead of one expert, as is the case for the *Guest-Expert* format. For example, when I was in the field, one *Experts-Panel* addressed abortion. During that show, five experts were invited: a doctor, a lawyer, an *imam* (Spiritual leader in Islam), a priest, and a school principal. Each addressed the issues of abortion from her or his area of expertise, although all of
them provided another view based on gender, experiences and position as a mother, a 
sister, a husband or a brother.

The time allocated to the show is the second significant difference between the 
two formats. All the Experts-Panel shows last two hours as opposed to one hour for the 
Guest-Expert. In the Experts-Panel format, the guests are given more time to present 
their views and defend their positions and views, but most importantly, to facilitate 
dialogue among themselves despite the “crossfiring” of opposing points-of-view that 
occurs at times.

The third difference is the role the host plays in this format. In this format, while 
the host is still in charge of posing the questions, she or he stands more like a facilitator 
as opposed to the advocate role she or he plays in the first format. In the Experts-Panel 
format, the host, as a facilitator, makes sure that not only do the guests address the 
questions asked by the audience but also that every expert is given enough time to make 
or clarify her or his viewpoints. The participants felt that in this format, the host was 
challenging the guests less and was also less partisan to the public. For a 56-year-old 
participant Binta:

In that format, the host does not feel the need to represent the people’s voices. All 
these experts, be it the priest, the imam or the educator, represent their own 
community, their locality, and together they all represent the nation’s interest.

The fourth difference between the two formats remains in the nature of the 
conversation. The fact that the shows in this format last two hours greatly impacts the 
outcome of the dialogue that occurs between the host, the experts, and the audience. All 
the participants highlighted how dialogue occurring on air triggers and somehow forces
them to re-evaluate their own feelings and perceptions of these difficult issues. The participants also mentioned that they noticed more experts call during the Experts-Panel format, which adds more to the credibility of the information and knowledge that is produced during the show. Anta, a 35-year old, talked highly of the potential the format has in educating women. She then went on to state:

You know me Fanta. Nobody can shut me up. I believe in individuals, especially women’s ability to speak-up and voice their opinions, but I love the knowledge and information that is produced in that format. That’s why when these shows air, I love to just listen. You learn so much by listening to all these incredible people and the ways in which each of them is trying to convince the rest of the group. I really admire the calm and soft tones yet extremely rich and convincing aspect of the discussions.

The format was very popular among the participants, with 26.67% choosing the format as their favorite because of its richness and the amount of knowledge they gained from it. The participants also highlighted the effectiveness of shows because of its ability to bring to light a wide range of contradictory and complementary viewpoints in such a short period of time. As Khoudia, a 30 year-old woman, put it:

[This format] is very educational. It is not a setting where controversy occurs nor is it a platform that desperate politicians exploit by using the avenue to vehicle their own agenda. I love [the format] because it is about sharing and understanding knowledge, not argumentation. While the topics discussed are very controversial, the guests talk with the facts on hand.

Another participant, Soxa, a 46 year-old Arabic teacher, described the format as a miniature of the openness of Senegalese people and she added:

See! I love this format, Wallaahi (I swear). Most of these experts have very divergent opinions and are perceptive but they listen so respectfully to each other. I think that’s a good example for not only women but for the entire nation. I really like having these various perspectives because I feel like all the perspectives are valid in some ways because they have a strong foundation. Nobody is wrong. They are all right. But the most important thing for me is how they inform as just
women, just Muslim, just Catholics, just citizens of Senegal and then it is a job to put all that together and decide on which route we want to take.

The participants overwhelmingly enjoyed this kind of show. Yet 70% of them preferred to just listen as opposed to 30% who believed that it was very important to call and talk to these experts live.

The “Vox Populi or Community Outreach” Format

*Community Outreach* is the third format that women who took part in this study identified as one they enjoy. The production of the format is structured in two phases. The first phase consists of the host going to the field or a neighborhood to interview people directly about issues or concerns they would like to share with the rest of the country. The discussions are then recorded and used as foundation for a show. The time allocated to the discussion in this phase varies a lot and is very much determined by the availability and motivation of the population. According to Oumy, a 54-year-old talk radio host of this format:

> When we go reach out to the population, we try our best to avoid being rigid. We want things to be determined by the populations [them]. Just like what we do with the topics, we are also very flexible with time and, you know Fanta, we are in Senegal, you have to be patient with people, especially women who have children and a lot of work to do. It is important to show them that you are there for as long as it takes to allow them to tell their stories. Usually it takes us between one and two hours, but there were two occasions where our recording lasted more than three hours because many people wanted to participate. Not only could we not say no but we did want to. We go to gather the population’s voices; we…stay there for as long as it takes to get the work done.

The discussions take the form of interviews or focus groups, depending on how people respond. The shows under this format may address one specific issue or many issues, depending on what people have identified as important and relevant to talk about.
Topics featured in this format are extremely diverse and cut across a whole range of economic, social, religious, political and legal issues. For example, they can deal with poverty, early marriage, street children, women’s beauty, maternity leave, bleaching skin, or hygiene. The format especially targets marginalized people such as women, children and disabled people.

The second production phase of this format consists of turning the recordings into a show in the studio. Days before the show is scheduled to air, the host plays a segment of the recording as a way to advertise the show, but also to give the listening community time to think about the issues raised in the recording. The actual show airs for an hour. The show begins by the host presenting a brief overview of the neighborhood where the recording took place and the main issues raised by people who participated in the recording. Then the host opens up the lines for people to call and a dialogue begins between the host and the audience. What is interesting is that most of the people who participate in the recording call during the show to clarify issues and sometimes argue with other callers to try to challenge them.

In this segment, there is not an expert or guest on the same plateau as the host. The host is there to regulate the conversation while both asking questions to the audience and responding to their questions about the issues being raised. In this format, the hosts seems to put more emphasis on letting people voice their opinions and share their stories rather than enforcing his or her voice or playing devil’s advocate. The format relies on generating stories by interviewing people in their own setting to reflect their personal stories in their own words. As Oumy suggested:
This format of going to the people and inviting them to open up about issues that are important to them is a very powerful and meaningful model, I believe. Innumerable women have spoken to me about how it has enabled them to not just talk about their issues but also to take action.

More than 23% (23.66%) of the participants reported this format to be their favorite but 55% acknowledged that they really liked this format because of its closeness to the people and real issues that ordinary people face every day. Salimata, a 28 year-old saleswoman, argued that:

This format is one of the best among the talk radio shows. It is my favorite because it invites action. I remember when these people, the radio people, came to my neighborhood. The entire neighborhood, especially women, talked about the prevalence of mosquitoes, and the fact that people spill water anywhere and everywhere which drew mosquitoes and made a lot of people, especially children, sick. We all complained, especially we women, because we are the caretakers, we are the most affected when malaria hits. So it was not until the radio people came down that we realized that we were a big part of the problem. The show allowed us to start a conversation within our neighborhood and fix the problem and that is what we did. Now, I can say our section of the neighborhood is maybe one of the cleanest places of Gueule Tapee. Not everybody took action but I am sure if the radio people keep coming the entire place will change.

A few other participants, including Salimata, said there was also some kind of shame associated with having some issues broadcast. For these people acknowledging one’s faults can be difficult, especially when done in public, but it pushes them to take action and forces them to address some of these issues. As Awa, a 31-year-old woman stated:

The reason why I love that format is it exposes irresponsible citizens and leaders. Thanks to these shows, the populations are now taking more matters into their hands because they know that our leaders are unreliable. Also, politicians now know that the radio makes their lack of care public, especially to the very people who elected them.

The participants felt that this format emphasizes not just talking about problems, but also finding solutions, which makes it unique and practical. The participants who
took part in this format particularly believed in the ability of the format to bring all neighbors together and through both talk and action, identify solutions to their own struggles. Another participant, 41-year-old Roxeya, who was interviewed during one of these shows, suggested that:

The community outreach format plays a significant role in bringing populations who share the same interest together by allowing them to voice concerns and take action. These talks could lead to important and necessary actions for the formation of strong and vibrant communities which will be, in return, an important step to building a strong nation.

All the participants, even those who did not classify the format as their favorite, seemed to recognize its potential. Participants argued that the horizontal exchange of ideas and knowledge remains one of the most powerful ways to enact change.

**The “Individuals Testimonials” Format**

The *Individuals Testimonials* format is the fourth format identified by the participants. The layout of the format is very similar to that of *Experts-Panel* format. The show is once again structured into three segments, conversation occurs in the form of a dialogue, and the host once again plays a facilitator role. However, these two formats have three fundamental differences: the nature of the guest, the layout of the first segment, and the number of guests per show. In the *Individuals Testimonials* format, the guests are ordinary people who do not identify as experts, although some of the participants characterized them as experts because they talk from experience. This factor greatly affects the outcome of the first segment. In this format, the first segment takes the form of narratives in which the “everyday person” relays a personal story or experience with the audience rather than trying to display any type of expertise. While the guests are
regular people, sometimes even with no education, they tend to be people with extraordinary stories. This format puts a strong emphasis on people’s willingness to share their sometimes deeply personal stories and the audience’s capacity and willingness to understand and empathize. Examples of topics featured in this format include rape, incest, sexual problems, personal tragedies and domestic violence. The shows that fall under this format usually last two hours due to the immense flow of people wanting to call to either share their stories, ask questions, make comments or suggest solutions. The format’s aptitude to deal with challenging, taboo and controversial issues has given lead to greatly popular shows. Many participants showed a great interest in that format, even those who did not favor it, although about 13 % identified it as their favorite format. Even though the guests on these shows are not called “experts”, the women found the format to be both rich and educational in many different ways. As Penda, a 28-year-old woman, argued:

I really like that format. It is my favorite. I love to connect with people and that format provides that for me. I feel like when these guests, who most of the time are people like me, reveal their stories, it makes me feel like they are speaking on my behalf. Something also very important- I truly respect the guests on that format because they are extremely courageous people. I don’t think I could do that. Sometimes, I feel as if I need to be a guest in one of these shows because I have a terrible story that I think I should share with people, especially young girls, so they don’t make the mistakes I made, but I don’t think I am courageous enough. This format is just perfect in creating ties with the listeners.

All participants mentioned one specific show that falls under the Individuals Testimonials format. The show is called “Ci la ñu bokk” [We /They are part of it] and focuses on the experiences of disabled women. The host of the program is a woman with a disability and she uses her platform to invite her peers to share their powerful stories
and not to lose hope. The show promotes awareness of a change in behavior towards disabled people, who often suffer discrimination in society. Both the host and the guest utilize the show as an avenue to promote the rights of the disabled, who according to Saly, a 40-year teacher and activist, “are often openly disregarded.” The participants found the show tremendously important for them, for the disabled and for the entire nation. As Awa, a 31-year-old woman, stated:

What has made a remarkable difference here is not the topic, it is the format, and how the show is structured. The fact that disabled people are brought [on air] to tell of the pains and stereotypes they have experienced is powerful. Also the fact that the host herself is disabled adds more salt to the story. It makes her qualified to ask the guests the right questions because she knows what it means to be disabled. But I am not saying the topic is not important, all I am saying is if the guests were doctors, or imams I don’t think the outcome would be the same.

Many participants also talked about how this format provides an avenue for ordinary people to oppose the idea that only experts hold knowledge. While they recognize that experts possess knowledge that most people usually accept easily, participants also argued for the need to give ordinary people a platform to display their own knowledge and share what they have accumulated through their life experiences.

According to Kumba, a 43-year-old journalist:

The *Individuals Testimonials* format has an emancipator function, especially when the guest is female. Although the guests are not introduced to the audience as experts, the position they are put in during the shows as not just story-tellers but knowledge producers who speak with authority and somehow the only expert of their own story can be transformational.

The interviewees showed a deep appreciation of the firsthand and life experiences of the many people who testified on these types of shows. They not only related to their problems and how they have overcome them, but also how the guests have been
transformed by their experiences. The interviewees embraced and valued the information and knowledge produced by the radio talk show guests.

The Open-Air Call-in Format

The Open-Air/Call-in is the fifth format mentioned by the participants as one of their targeted formats. The format does not feature any guest and instead takes the form of a conversation, a dialogue between two different parties: the host and the audience on one hand and the opposing audience on the other hand. The format has two distinct structures.

The first structure is when the host chooses a topic and presents it to the audience for discussion. The show begins with greetings, followed by a brief overview of the topic of discussion. Once the telephone lines open up, the discussion begins. In this type of show, the topics often arise from current affairs, news and social issues. Sometimes people send letters to hosts about issues they would like to be addressed on the show and the host chooses the topic from these letters. When that happens, the host reads the letter at the beginning of the show and lets people weigh in.

The second structure allows the first caller chooses the topic. In this structuring, the show begins with the opening of lines immediately after the host’s greeting. Then, as soon as the first caller gets on air, she or he proposes a topic and explains the reasons of her or his choice. It is important, however, to note that the justification is only procedural because no first caller’s topic are ever rejected. This is indicative of how the format is a genuine open platform where each and every citizen’s opinion and voice matters. The topics proposed by the callers are extremely diverse and can be anything, whether it be
simple, sensational, taboo, challenging or conservative. People call to get audience insights on issues such as addiction, abusive relationships, cheating spouses, marrying outside of one’s religion, STDs, the youth dressing style, child abuse, and parental responsibilities. The two types of shows involved in this format air for an hour and the audience has the entire program to ask questions, comment and discuss amongst themselves the issue at hand. Here the host plays a minimal role as the facilitator and occasionally mediates conversations or adds in a thought; this format is mainly listener driven and participant-shaped.

While 69% of the participants reported that they liked to be involved in this format, only 10% of them identified it as their favorite. Those 10% showed a real interest in how it is structured and argued that the format provides ordinary people with an opportunity to “to make a decision about what is to be discussed.” Yasin, a 39-year-old bank worker, added:

I love that format, not just for me but also for the people who get a chance to use a topic. I once proposed a topic on sexual harassment that women go through when they are looking for jobs. It was so good. It was fulfilling. I felt it inside me. Of course I did not change the lives of victims. I am one. What this format did was allow me to finally get out of my chest something that was eating me. I was so frustrated. I felt as if I got the entire country talking about the issue. The show was so successful that weeks after, there was a show on the topic with experts. I was proud of myself.

Yasin really believed in the potential of that format to raise awareness about issues nobody wants to discuss. She also suggested that the format is an excellent way to challenge established power relations and get the views and experiences of the ordinary people to be heard. The only critique that Yasin had for the format was of the usual confrontations that take place on air but she also recognized not everybody can have the
same opinions. She also declared “that [confrontation is] what happens when people are angry and so many people are angry in the country for one reason or the other.” Hadi, a 51-year-old French teacher, further supported the opportunities the format offers and yet warned against its use by government and politicians for propaganda. As she stated:

The government is trying really hard to take over the shows that fall under this format. They [the government] provide money and calling cards to their people for them to spread their agenda. It is not my favorite format because I believe there are other formats that could offer more to women and all citizens in general in terms of education and information, but this format is a great avenue to reach so many people because of its large listening audience. I always try to call or have my friends call when it airs.

A few other participants shared the same fear as Hadi for that format. Hadi suggested that the solution is not to abandon the format but instead to make sure, “the ordinary people flood it with their voices and ideas and not let politicians decide on the agenda of the discussions.” These participants viewed the format as an opportunity to counter hegemonic discourse.

The “No set topic or Listeners-Selected” Format

The No set topic/Listeners Select is the sixth and last format which the participants of this study were drawn into. The format is very similar to the previous one, the Open-Air /Call-in format, but is by far more open in regards to the discussion topics. The shows that fall under the umbrella of this format are extremely audience-driven. For the No set topic or Listeners Select format, there is no set topic of discussion. The host does not choose a topic but instead leaves the discussions up to the listeners to create an open-format experience in which the audience calls in to talk about their problems, challenges, successes, hopes and dreams. Every caller can choose to comment on a
previous issue or come up with a new issue. In this format, the host has the minimal role of occasionally mediating conversation and making sure nobody goes over the time limit they are allocated. For the most part, the host is there to listen to the callers who drive the program. As one can expect, the topics can be anything, although they tend to be very emotional and personal. For two hours callers confess, display their anger, seek advice, denounce abuses and their dislikes in society, as well as criticize leaders, politicians, husbands, wives and parents. While this format is extremely open and not focused on any specific issue, it is not uncommon for radio stations/programs to organize special follow-up shows based on the issues raised in the open format. The follow-up shows that emerge from it are usually expert-focused and tend to address the chosen issues thoroughly.

While only 6% of the participants reported having shared their personal stories and concerns on shows falling under this format, 10% identified the format as their favorite. These women praised the format for having greatly contributed to transforming their lives by giving them a space to cry out and openly display what they believe could have destroyed their lives. As Aysata, a 55-year-old woman argued:

This way of allowing people to call and disclose deeply private issues is helping so many people change their lives in a positive way. I was in a very abusive relationship. I had nobody to talk to. The few family members I had talked to blamed me instead and praised my husband because he was always nice to other people. But these shows listened to me. What the shows did for me was to give me a group of people who trusted me and were willing to share their stories with me as well.

Many participants claimed that while they truly loved and enjoyed the format and believed in its ability to improve people’s lives, they never called in because they
preferred to listen. For them listening was one of the best ways to learn. As Sata, a 61-year-old woman stated:

I love that format, it speaks to the degree to which so many people suffer and struggle. I feel like when you are trying to call, you might not concentrate on the show and will lose the very important things people say. The show makes me realize how lucky and grateful I should be to God. Sometimes, I miss my prayers because I get so caught up with some of the topics but I have no doubt God understands. This format is so good. We should have all the wealthy people and all the people who have wonderful lives listen to it, and even the president. People have lost their ability to listen and their patience. Now everybody just runs and runs. We need to listen.

A large number of the participants mentioned having called in to provide comments or solutions to callers facing similar experiences that they had gone through in the past. This group of women argued that the reason why they enjoy the format is because it provides an opportunity to share with the public the strategies they used to overcome their own challenges. In doing so, these women felt that they were being useful and helpful to other people and to their community, which shared advice with them and listened to them when they were in need. For Khoudia, a 30-year-old who enjoys calling and helping people in need, this format is doing what it is supposed to do, despite the critics. She said:

You know Fanta, some people say that these shows are disorganized and people talk about so many issues at the same time. What they don’t realize is what comes out of these “disorganized talks.” So many of them lead to practical solutions. I think the fact that it is underprivileged people who tend to be involved make these rich and snobbish people who criticize it not realize how important it is. They cannot get it.

Khoudia further talked about a good number of follow-up shows that took place as the result of issues raised in this format of show. She particularly liked one that was on
the stigma associated with HIV. During one of the *No set topic/Listeners Select* shows, Khoudia said:

An HIV-positive woman called and shared her sad experiences and pain about stereotyping and stigma she was facing within her own family. Her story was heartbreaking. The audience was so touched by the story that the radio programmers decided to hold a follow-up show, a more “organized” HIV show with doctors and imams as guests.

Khoudia, like many participants, enjoys this format a lot and highlighted its many interesting functions. Despite the critics, these women love how the telling and retelling of personal stories discussed in that format intersect with their own lives and lead to further positive change for the callers.

**The Talk Show Genres/Themes**

![Figure 3: Radio talk shows genre/themes distribution](image-url)
The same way it has created an increase of talk show formats, the exponential growth of radio stations in Senegal has created a very rich diversity of talk show genres.

As Oumy, a 54-year-old female talk radio show host argued:

With the growing number of radio stations and programs in past ten years, the talk show field is constantly expanding, always bringing in new themes and topics as a way to attract not only more listeners but also inform citizens about the kinds of issues that affect their daily lives.

Like many Senegalese women, the participants of this study were drawn to a variety of topics addressed by the talk radio shows. A close examination of the 29 radio talk shows the participants participated in, suggest that these participants targeted five main genres: social and domestic issues, religion, health, politics, and music and entertainment. As Figure 3 indicates, 31% of the 29 shows were religious, 24% addressed domestic and social issues, 17% were health talk shows, 17% were music and entertainment shows and 11% were political talk shows. This section offers a detailed description of each genre and the participants’ responses toward these topics.

*Figure 4: Radio talk shows preference*
The Social and Domestic Issues Talk Radio Show Genre

The social and domestic issues are among the newest themes in the Senegalese talk radio scene. They emerged in the early twenty-first century (Dia, 2003), long after religious and political talk radio shows were already established. While the social and domestic genre intersects with other genres such as religion, politics and health, it tends to address issues from a more holistic perspective, taking into account various aspects and layers of Senegalese life. These aspects fuse simultaneously and act separately to affect women’s lives. The social and domestic shows are frequently broadcast on almost every radio station from the national radio station to private and community radios. These shows last between one and two hours, depending on the format. Shows in this genre come in all six of the formats described above. While the social and domestic genre is the second largest, it was the most popular genre among the participants. It accounted for 24% of the total number of shows the women were involved in and 31% of the women identified it as their favorite. These women attributed their choice to the diversity and complexities of the issues the genre touches on. They particularly highlighted the degree to which the genre’s topics relate to their own life experiences and that of their communities. As Bigué, a 34 year old who identified the genre as her favorite, argued:

I love it [the social and domestic topic]! I cannot remember a topic discussed in these shows that did affect me directly or a member of my family or a friend. It is like the people who are in charge of the shows read our minds. One of the reasons why I really enjoy this format is how it dares to address taboo issues, issues that most women experience but have nobody to talk to about. I really love when they speak to us about our real challenges.
Another participant, Astou, a 52-year-old woman who also preferred the
domestic and social talk shows, praised the genre for consistently allowing her to view
new and better perspectives in a range of issues. She declared:

These shows, the ones that deal with social and domestic issues, are very useful in
our society. They allow us, as a nation, to tell each other the truth and sometimes
that is painful and difficult to do. What is more fascinating and important for me
is how it has started so many nationwide conversations on issues that affect so
many women’s lives. Issues like domestic violence, rape, bleaching, immigration,
prostitution, poverty, marriage, divorce, etc. And I personally believe that while
the impact is immensely significant with women, it is equally important on men
and the entire family.

Like Astou and Bigué, the group of women who designated the social and
domestic shows as their favorite suggested that the genre gives them a forum to converse
and unpack complex issues that they believe would not have otherwise been brought to
the public’s attention. All the participants, including those who did have a strong
penchant towards the genre, spoke of its potential to change people’s lives. They
unanimously expressed their appreciation and approval for two particular social and
domestic shows: Èttu Jigeen ñi (A Women’s Gathering) and Akh ak Yelef (Rights and
Obligations). Èttu Jigeen ñi airs twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays from 2 pm to 4
pm on Radio Dunyaa, a commercial radio station, while Akh ak Yelef airs every Sunday
from 4 pm to 5 pm on Manoor FM, a women’s community radio station. Both shows are
expert-focused, switching from the Experts-Panel format to the Guest-Expert format and
stress the promotion of women’s domestic and social rights in all spheres of the
Senegalese society, from the home to the work place. These two shows also distinguish
themselves by having female hosts and by regularly inviting female experts, including
lawyers from the Association of Senegalese Women Lawyers, activists and leaders of
NGOs. The participants felt that these two shows have offered them unique opportunities “to truly examine each other on critical issues,” as Binta, a 56-year-old woman put it.

Many participants affirmed their appreciation of the ability of both the hosts and guests to challenge prejudice, discrimination, the cultural and traditional practices that hinder women’s liberation and fulfillment, while highlighting the significance of naming and pointing out injustice regardless of its perpetrators and roots. As Mati, a 49-year-old married woman, put it:

I closely follow these shows, especially the Êttu Jigeen ñi. They talk about all the ills of Senegalese society, especially the daily problems that we women are facing. That show is a school in itself. The ways they address domestic issues is so useful and productive. They encourage both men and women to challenge all injustices, the hidden ones and the obvious ones, if we are to build a strong nation founded in fairness. I really like that.

The majority of the participants really enjoyed the domestic and social genre because of the many ways in which it intersects and addresses the issues that are dear to their lives and aspirations. For Mati, “the beauty and spirit of bringing men, women, doctors, lawyers, civil servants and teachers all together with the intention to solve domestic and social issues is the foundation of the success of these shows.” They praised the genre’s commitment to addressing the complex layers of Senegalese peoples’ lives and its emphasis on holistic and multi-perspective approaches which include engaging men and women, religion, culture and secular laws “to face, challenge solve the ills of the system,” Awa, a 31-year-old said.

**The Religious Talk Radio Show Genre**

Religious talk radio shows have become a major force in the Senegalese media landscape with at least three shows broadcast per week across all stations. As old as news
broadcasting, the religious programming has been part of Senegalese radio scene since the early 1970s. What started as a preaching platform in the early years following Senegalese independence evolved rapidly to include the audience in producing religious education. Slowly, the audience began to get involved by writing letters to the hosts/imams to ask questions, seek advice and give suggestions regarding a whole variety of issues affecting their religious lives. In the last decade the involvement of the audience in the religious shows has not only been amplified but the nature of the interactions has changed significantly. The combination of factors such as liberalization of the media and the widespread adoption of cell phones has revolutionized the genre, making it more diverse and more accessible, which has generated a more participatory model of communication between the audience and the hosts/imams.

In these shows, the hosts tend be Islamic scholars who are well-versed in the Koran and knowledgeable about the issues they are preaching or advocating for. They are called Oustaz (the word Oustaz comes from Arabic and means teacher. In Senegal all Arabic teachers are called Oustaz). As opposed to other genres where the host can be either a facilitator or an expert, in most religious genre the host is the expert and has the most fore-grounded role. This however does not mean guests are absent in this genre. For the majority of these shows, guests are invited on a regular basis to join the host to form a panel of experts. The experts do not always come from the same Islamic denomination, which brings a diversity of perspectives to the table. It is not uncommon to see Tijanes, Mourides and Ibadous (different schools of Islam) come together on shows to provide perspectives on religious issues. In shows in which there are many Oustaaazs, the host of
the show often moderates the discussions between the audience and the guests while co-
constructing knowledge with her or his peers. The religious talk radio genre is the largest
genre and the second most listened to among the participants. Twenty nine percent of the
participants said that religious shows were their favorites and of the 29 talk radio shows
identified by the participants, 9 were religious. These religious shows differ in format
(quiz format, denomination, tone) but all have one common feature: they are all expert-
focused shows and as Awa asserted, “preach and provide religious knowledge to the
listeners.”

Two religious shows particularly stood out to the participants: *Diine ak Jamono*
and *daraay jigeen ñi*. *Diine ak Jamono* (Religion and Society) is a weekly radio show
hosted by radio Walf Fadjri, one of biggest private radio stations. The show airs on
Fridays from 3 pm to 4:30 pm and addresses a variety of issues such as politics, society
and economics from a religious perspective. The show is hosted by the Director of the
Radio, Walf Fadjri, who is an Islamic scholar from the Niassene brotherhood and known
for his commitment to challenging controversial issues such contractual marriage and
homosexuality in Islam. Like *Diine ak Jamono*, *Daraay jigeen ñi* is a religious show that
addresses issues related to Islam and airs every Friday from 11 am to 12 pm on radio
Manoore FM, a community radio station. Unlike *Diine ak Jamono*, which tackles a broad
spectrum of Islamic themes, *Daraay jigeen ñi* focuses specifically on themes revolving
around women and Islam. The show is particularly interested in the practice of religion,
the behavior of women in society and the role that Islam plays in women’s lives. The
participants who identified the religious shows as their favorite spoke passionately about
the genre and highlighted the many functions it plays in their lives. Soxna, a 46-year-old woman, Arabic teacher and a fan of the religious shows, suggested the religious talk radio genre “has allowed many to become better Muslims, wives, husbands, citizens, mothers… [and] just better human beings”. Many believe that the genre has allowed them to access information on religious subjects and into discussions not only at the mosques, but at home, at work, in the car and even on the streets as these women often perform their prayers at home. For Awa, a 31-year-old woman, the religious shows “are re-inventing the religion for us (women)”. She added:

There is no way one can ignore the religious now. The religious talk shows are everywhere, on every radio station and at all times, especially on Friday. So you should see when the show Diine ak Jamono [religion and society] starts on Fridays. It is everywhere; you cannot miss it unless you lock yourself up in your room. People turn their radio on and up everywhere: on the busses, the Car Rapides, the taxis, on the street seller’s stands. What is even more important: it forces people to keep the conversation going even at the end of the show.

Another fan of the religious genre, Rama, a 52-fifty two year-old woman, admitted that she did not like the religious shows at first because she felt as if some of the hosts and guests failed to connect with her realities and understanding of Senegalese culture and society. However over time, the religious genre has become her favorite by far. She stated that many of the Oustazs:

Were most of times reciting Arabic verses, as if they were there to display their Koranic knowledge instead of connecting to the daily lives of the listeners. I felt as if they did not do a good job of really translating the meaning of these verses to the audience. Now that trend has changed; most of the Oustazs really speak the languages of the masses which make a lot of people feel that they still have an opportunity to start a dialogue with these experts. I am not saying Arabic is not important, it is crucial and the Oustazs still use it and have to do so. But now they have just found the right balance. The Oustazs are now doing a wonderful job of speaking to us and not about us and that has made me fall in love with the religious genre.
The majority of the women who have a penchant toward the religious also stated that the hosts are now starting to address men’s responsibilities. These women attribute their love for these talk shows to the willingness of the hosts to address men’s roles and responsibilities in a strong society. They expressed real support for male hosts calling on their fellow men to remind them of the need to be more conscientious of women’s issues.

For Soxna, a 46-year-old woman:

It has been long overdue to talk about what good Muslim husbands should do and look like. Before the preaching was too focused on women and what they needed to do to be seen as good Muslim wives and mothers, which is important, but we need both good husbands and good wives to make good societies. It is happening now. The talk is shifting more toward men while still addressing women. That’s very important.

Almost all participants, including those who did claim the religious talk shows genre as their favorite, suggest/believe the religious shows have given them a new vision of the world as Muslims and women. As Bigué, a 34-year-old woman, argued:

Shows like Xam sa diine [know your religion], Daraay jigeen ŋi [women’s school] are reasons why I love the religious genre. These two particular shows have taught me so much about my religion. Most importantly, these two settings helped me discover that I knew so little about what I claimed to be the most important aspect of my life, Islam. This [genre] is by far my favorite because whenever I finish listening to one of these religious shows, I feel like I have added something to my humanity.

Even the participants whose stated the religious genre was not their favorite asserted they did enjoy listening and appreciated what the format offered to them as individuals deeply affected by religion. The group named the fact that the genre is going beyond preaching and has decided to deal with private issues such as rape, battered women and homosexuality rather than how to pray or to be a good Muslim wife as a
factor in increasing their interest in religious shows. They also seemed to like how some Oustazs seems to have a political agenda by criticizing the drifts of the government and seeking to mobilize listeners in hotly debated causes. Anta, a 35-year-old woman, argued:

Here in Senegal, the religious is political. Religion weighs so much in the outcome of election, so the leaders should, I believe, take our Oustazs seriously. Therefore the Oustazs should be some kind of a bridge between the people and the government. I am of the people who think that the Oustazs should not have any restrictions when it comes to what they can and cannot talk about on the air. We cannot separate the political and the religious; it is not just your religion but a combination of many other factors.

Almost all of the participants, whether the religious genre was their favorite or not, expressed their satisfaction with having women preaching and running some of these religious shows. They all talked about “the knowledge, calmness, precision yet [also] humor of the Soxna” on air. The participants suggested that bringing in female voices in the religious arena has definitely painted a new picture of Senegalese women in the religious domain. For Saly, a 40-year-old woman:

Having women who master the Koran and who host shows is a very important thing in a country where women constitute the majority of the population. If you compare the male Oustazs and the female Oustazs who host shows, you can see how much female Oustazs connect more to real females’ issues. The way these female Oustazs present their narratives, the way they tell the stories, the way they answer the questions, the tone of their voices is what really attracts me to the genre.

The participants had a lot to say about the religious genre. They seemed to enjoy its innovation and shift towards a more inclusive genre, one that takes into consideration language, politics, social issues and moves away from mere preaching. Many women were hungry for religious knowledge and eager to understand the very foundation of their lives and interactions.
The Health Genre

The health talk radio show genre is fairly new in the Senegalese media landscape. Health talk shows experienced a slow emergence in the last decade despite the boom of radio stations and the sharp rise of talk show genres and formatted shows in the country. The number of health talk radio shows in Dakar is extremely small compared to that of religious, music and political shows. As Bouba, a communications professor at the Senegalese school of Journalism (CESTI), asserted:

While it is almost impossible to find a radio station that does not broadcast at least one religious program every day, many of the radio stations do not offer health talk shows. Given the number of diseases that can be prevented with proper health education, I believe we need health talk shows very much. Of course, health education can be done using many channels, like school, but using the radio would be ideal given the reach it has.

In addition to being quite sporadic in the radio landscape, the health talk show genre is also very rigid in terms of formatting: the other genres, such as the political, religious, social and domestic, are structured in a wide range of formats including expert-focused formats, panel formats, grassroots formats and open-air formats. However, all the health talk shows are expert-focused. These experts are nurses, doctors, midwives and traditional healers. The shows cover a broad range of diseases like malaria, diabetes, cancer and gynecological diseases. They also address many other health issues like nutrition, pregnancy, birth control, drug use and smoking. In addition to talking about health issues, the experts on the shows try to deconstruct the social implications of taboos and stigmas associated with some diseases and social and cultural practices.

Despite its paucity in the media scene, the health talk show genre was popular among the participants. The genre also enjoys an enormous participation from its
audience, which is constituted by a mix of callers with health questions, health professionals and former patients sharing their experiences. The health genre represented 17% of the total number of shows the participants listened to. Of the five talk shows genres, the health genre is the third preferred category with 21% of the participants identifying it as their favorite. While only 21% of the participants identified it as their favorite genre, more than 70% of the participants enjoyed listening regularly to it and expressed their wish to see the genre expand to all the radio stations.

Three health shows particularly stood out to the participants: Wer Werle (Be healthy and have a healthy family), Fagarou (Prevention) and Dioko (Connection). Wer Werle airs twice a month on Manoore FM, focusing primarily on women’s health issues. According to Kumba, a 43-year-old woman, these health shows “also put a strong emphasis on traditional medicine because of its popularity among the many women who have abandoned the idea of conventional medicine.” Fagarou is hosted by radio Dunya FM and also addresses a variety of diseases and health issues. The show’s topics are geared not only to women’s health, but also to issues including men and children’s health. Like Wer Werle, Fagarou puts a strong emphasis on traditional medicine, which has become increasingly popular due to the high cost of modern medicine. Dioko is also a weekly health show hosted by radio Dunya FM. While the show addresses health issues and uses the same experts as Wer Werle and Fagarou, it tends to look at them from a public heath perspective. The show highlights the significance of raising awareness about healthy lifestyles and wellness and advocating prevention.
All the women I interviewed expressed their interest and satisfaction with these three specific health shows. Most of them highlighted the strong emphasis of prevention and personal communication that these various shows are pushing for. Because many people cannot afford to go see a doctor, the women explained that a stronger prevention message in the radio talk shows would be a helpful, positive thing. Mati, a 49-year-old married woman, said:

I love the health shows because they teach a lot about prevention and they educate us about how to avoid getting sick. That is extremely important because many of us cannot afford to go to the hospital. As the proverb says, “prevention is better than cure.

The same feeling was conveyed by many participants who were aware of their difficult financial situation and were searching for free or low-cost strategies to keep themselves and their families healthy. A 31-year-old participant, Awa, argued that:

The health shows are doing something really good for the citizens. They allow us to connect with our environment and our health. They also teach us how our behavior and decisions are intertwined with our health and our community. Since I started listening to the Dioko, I have stopped dumping water on the street because I now know the implications of these kinds of actions that spread malaria to the inhabitants of Gueule Tapee and I want to stop that…Also, another example is before I started listening to Dioko, I never made the connection between the pesticides that farmers use in the gardens with the vegetables I buy every day and our health. Now I know better. I can prevent it or at least reduce the amount of pesticides that goes into our food.

In addition to obtaining more information on how to prevent health problems for herself, her family and the community as a whole, the participant also valued the fact that these shows allowed her not only to discover the invaluable resources that exist in traditional medicine, but also to trust it more as it becomes a more organized and safe field. Kumba, a 43-year-old journalist, indicated that the shows on traditional medicine
are particularly important for the youth in the urban areas because most of them have lost touch with tradition. She added:

I was born and raised in Dakar and was not ever really exposed to that type of medicine. In my family, we always went to the hospital. One day, as I was driving home after work, I turned on the radio and there was a show on about “diabetes and herbal medicine”. Since I am diabetic, I listened to the entire show and was amazed by the number of people calling and sharing ideas. The guest recommended some herbs and I decided to purchase some. I started taking some herbs as tea for my diabetes and it is really working for me. Since then, I have become more interested in herbs and local remedies. As a result, I always listen to various health shows, especially when the expert is a traditional healer. Also, the hosts always invite knowledgeable people who share new, simple and effective tips. I recommend the health shows to all my friends.

Hadi, who is 51 years old and a French teacher, also attributed her increased use of traditional medicine to her listening to these health shows. Hadi claimed that:

My family has always used traditional medicine except for me. I have always been the most skeptical. I was always afraid to give it to my children. But since I started listening to Fagarou and Wer Werle, I trust the traditional medicine, which has become my first resource, especially with the certified traditional doctors. It is safe, cheap, and works very well. Thanks to the health talk shows, I have come to appreciate and value what we produce here. I still go to the doctor but not as often anymore.

One 56-year-old- female participant and member of parliament, Binta, a expressed a special interest on the pride the shows can foster vis-à-vis local knowledge production. For Binta,

There is a pressing need to reevaluate and revalue our traditional medical knowledge. The health talk shows like Wer Werle and Fagarou are doing a good job of giving more credit and value to that kind of knowledge. Also the fact that the field of traditional medicine has started to have laboratories and labeling will not only make the skeptics adhere more to the products but will help control the misuse. I know that many Senegalese use traditional medicine because they have most likely been using it since birth, but I think many also use it because they cannot afford modern medicine. However, I think people should use it because it is good medicine and it works. You know, Fanta, money is not an issue for me but I use traditional medicine for its effectiveness, especially the herbs.
Like Binta, many participants mentioned having used traditional medicine, but listening to the traditional healers on the talk shows helped them to value their knowledge and create a more trusting relationship with these products. The participants also liked the fact that modern doctors and traditional healers were working together to help the patients improve their health. As Hadi stated, “Collaboration was a must and the talk shows was a great avenue to spread the idea”. She added it was very important to hear a doctor say that “he often sends some of his patients to some traditional healers and these traditional healers also do the same. They send patients to him when they realize that their illness can be cured by modern medicine.”

Participants also liked how these shows are helping fight stigma and stereotypes associated with some diseases and women in particular. Penda, a 28-year-old woman, said:

On one of these shows, the doctor who was invited was talking about how women are sometimes stigmatized when they give birth to a child who has a disability. Many women called and shared their painful experiences. I cried too because that is the story of my older sister. She has two disabled children and the entire village blamed her, including some members of my family. Now I think it might be a disease that caused it and it might come from my sister or her husband. I grew up in a village so I know many of the tips the traditional healers are providing. My favorite aspect of the health show is fighting and eradicating the stigmas, stereotypes and superstitions. I have learned so much from these shows. For instance, now I know that even if someone has measles they can drink milk and eat meat. I grew up hearing that was wrong to do. Now I know.

The participants indicated that they enjoyed the health talk shows because they gave them the opportunity to engage with some of Senegal’s most respected doctors and traditional healers. They indicated that the shows reminded them of the power of prevention, the value of traditional medicine, the importance of going to the doctor early
when one is ill, as well as educated them about the danger of stigmas and stereotypes in dealing with controversial illnesses like HIV and AIDS.

**The Political Talk Radio Genre**

Political talk radio is the most vibrant genre among all the talk show categories in Senegal. The rapid development of independent media and the political liberation coupled with the state loosening its control over the media over the last decade has provided the ground for widespread use of media to promote democracy and a strong civil society. With more than 50 political parties and 100 radio broadcastings in Dakar, talk shows have become a platform used by all political tendencies to appeal to the masses (Panos, 2008). According to Amadou, a 40-year-old journalist:

> Political issues are at the center of almost all radio stations, especially the private ones. The role the radio, especially Sud FM radio, has played in the outcomes of the elections has made the nation recognize the power of the media in social, political and economic change. People are always talking about political issues in many formats in these shows. They have a panel with one political leader, panels with political leaders from various political parties, the *wax sa xalaat* (Give your opinion) format, etc.

As Bouba suggests, the political talk radio shows are extremely diverse in terms of format and broadcasting time and are regularly broadcasted on almost every radio station. The guests in the political shows tend to be politicians, government officials and leaders from civil society. These guests are rarely women and ordinary citizens. Although they are the most famous and perhaps most popular talk shows in Senegal, the political shows were not popular among the participants. They accounted for 10% of the total number of shows the participants were involved in and only 7% of the women identified political talk shows as their first preference. The participants attributed their lack of interest in the political shows to various reasons. These reasons included lack of
addressing real women, lack of trust toward politicians, and the nature of discussions. As Mati, a 49-year-old woman, indicated:

I don’t like to listen to politicians, especially on the radio. I feel like they never talk about issues that are of concern to me and women like me. For instance, a politician from my village was invited on Sud FM radio but he did not talk at all about what he has done so far for our community during the past 7 years that he has been a member of parliament. He instead talked about what he will do when re-elected. I did not want to listen to the show but I was forced to because everybody was listening and since I was sitting next to the radio, I decided to pay some attention to what he was saying. He had promised building a new health clinic for women; it never happened. All they say is just wind. They talk and defend their own interests. It is people like these politicians who say they will fight for us, but it is their wives who hire women like me, girls like my daughters, girls coming from my village or other villages to work in the city and they never pay us properly. How can you lead when you are incapable of telling the truth and doing the right thing in your own household?

Many participants like Mati expressed a growing frustration and lack of trust with the politicians, affecting how they view and value the political talk shows. Another 31-year-old participant, Awa, argued in the same vein. She believes that the political talk shows as they are now structured might bring some change for the nation as a whole, but the political progress is more likely to benefit the elites first, and men specifically. Awa went on and stated:

Of course there are women in leadership positions here and there but that is not representative of the number of women in this country. We are the majority, yet we make few decisions in the political arena. One can argue that we have a lot female ministers in the government, but what kinds of ministries are they heading? Have we had a female minister of finance or education? Not yet. We need political talk shows that address the needs of those whose vote is a must for any person to be elected in this country: women. That is what I say! We need to have more female politicians and leaders as guests on these shows. There are some but it is not enough. Until that happens, political shows will not be my favorite.
The majority of the participants seemed to be very disappointed with the nature of the discussions on the political talk shows. They did not think that real and meaningful discussion really took place for the most part. Soxa, a 46 year-old Arabic teacher, suggested:

Many guests in these political shows are not really there for insightful discussions. The guests are not interested in providing valuable information to the public. They pretend that they care but they cannot convince me. What annoys me about these shows is that they don’t provide solutions to the many problems of the citizens, especially women’s problems. They just talk, talk and talk. They never honor their promises but we don’t seem to learn. We always re-elect them. The only time I really enjoy the political talk shows is when they invite lawyers and university professors who really inform us about real issues and Senegalese laws vis-à-vis certain issues.

While the political talk shows were not the preferred genre for most of the participants, three participants enjoyed the genre and thought that it was a crucial platform to use to advocate and promote women’s issues and women’s rights. Hadi, a 51-year-old woman and politician, suggested that:

The political talk shows are very, very important for addressing national issues such as more electoral participation, less corruption, more transparent government and strong and democratic institutions. However, that is not its sole function. It is just one of many. Women like myself and many others are using the political talk shows to bring to light women’s issues like domestic violence, rape, teenage pregnancy, access to maternal health etc., the list is exhaustive and it is crucial to get politicians to implement laws and policies to address these issues. Women need to be more involved in these shows to tell the government, the politicians and all the elites who make all these decisions that affect us that we need to be taken more into consideration. It is not just guests or so-called experts who can bring change. I have never been invited to any of these shows as a guest or an expert but I always call to ask questions, challenge the guests and sometime try to make sure they stay accountable. All women and men need to be involved in these national debates. We cannot just turn our backs to it because we are not happy with what they are doing or how they are doing it. We need to get involved in the political shows and in politics in general to enact policy changes.
The same sentiment was conveyed by Binta, a 56-year-old woman member of the parliament, and Kumba, a 43-year-old journalist. These three women suggested that the political talk shows have become a renowned source of civil education and political information for all citizens. They saw the shows as creating both political and civic knowledge. These women also highlighted how the significant exposure to the political talk shows had boosted female participation in the 2007 elections. Kumba claimed that it is mainly due to the flourishing of the political talk shows that “politics is talked about in almost every Senegalese household. The conversations don’t stop with the shows; they begin there and keep going in taxis, offices, homes and even on the streets. They create dynamic social interactions.” As for Binta, she believed that:

The political shows are important because they allow the public, women included, to take part in the nation’s political conversations. Before, many women would not vote or would vote for somebody because they are somehow related… and a lot of men did that too. But now women are starting to understand their real value in the election’s outcomes and the politicians have always understood that and used it to their advantage. Now, thanks to the radio and talk shows in particular, many women have become better citizens and understand their rights better …. I cannot say for sure that happened solely because of the talk shows, but I have no doubt that they have immensely contributed to changing Senegalese politics and women in politics.

The political talk show genre was the least liked among the participants due to its failure to truly connect with their daily lives, needs and realities. It is obvious that these women have lost faith in political leaders and their rhetoric. Yet the small number of participants who favored the genre argued rigorously for its central role in changing Senegalese women’s lives.
The Music and Entertainment Genre

The music and entertainment genre has a long history in Senegalese radio. Its emergence can be traced back to the years following independence in 1960 and the coming to power of Léopold Sédar Senghor. An infallible defender of African culture and music, Senghor put forward a strong national cultural agenda which led to the creation of theaters all over the country and theater companies in schools and communities. Radio Senegal, the only radio station in the country at the time, played a central role in enforcing Senghor’s vision. At Radio Senegal, from 1960 to 1968, music and entertainment represented 26% of the programming; 5% was devoted to classical music and jazz, 5% to theater and 15% for educational music (Dia, 2002). The same trend continued years later but drastically evolved with the liberalization of the media in the 1990s. Liberalization brought more radios, more music and entertainment shows and most importantly, more diversity locally and globally. All kinds of music genres can be heard on the air with more ethno-regional specificities, from the local mbalax (local Senegalese music) to jazz to hip-hop. Another important change in the music and entertainment genre is its shift toward a model that includes not only more participation from the audience but also an integration of comedy shows.

While the host mostly made all the decisions at the beginning of the genre, now cell phones have revolutionized the genre, giving more voice to the audience with a greater involvement in what they want to listen to. Malick, a 52-year-old male journalist, believes that “music and entertainment shows draw a huge audience, especially with talented people like Khouthia and DJ Boubs, two very famous Senegalese DJs. People,
especially the youth, follow their shows religiously.” As a result, many radio stations, especially private radio, put forward these types of shows to attract a bigger audience.

The music and entertainment talk shows have a strong presence in the Senegal radio scene and are seen by many Senegalese as driving factors to the listening audience. The music and entertainment genre was somewhat popular among the women who took part in this study with 52 % of them declaring they listen to them both intentionally and unintentionally. The music and entertainment shows represented 17% of the number of shows the participants listened to and 14% of them identified it as their favorite genre. The 14% who favored the music and entertainment shows attributed their preference to factors such as enjoyment, stress release, humor and sarcasm. Mati, a 49-year-old woman, was one of the participants who really enjoyed the music and entertainment shows and the freedom to participate it gives to the callers. She indicated that:

It is not just the music that is drawing me toward the music and entertainment shows, because I can listen to music at my house; it is how it is presented that makes it very unique and appealing with the involvement of the audience. For instance, my best friend always calls on the RFM on Sunday nights during the Khouthia show to ask the host to play a specific Seereer song for me. That is really meaningful to me. Now people can choose what they or their friends listen to, which I find very important.

Another 35-year-old woman and fan of the music and entertainment genre, Daado, attributed her preference to three factors: the musical diversity of the shows, the structure of the shows and the jokes and humor from both the host and the callers. What makes some of these music and entertainment shows my favorites is that they can play any music you ask them to- Pulaar, Seereer, Joola-and if they don’t have it, they will try to look for it and get back to you, which indicates that we are important to them, too. The types of relationships we develop with these music and entertainment talk show hosts are very meaningful. This is due to the flexible nature of the structure which provides room for voice and choice, especially to
those who do not belong to the majority group. I also really enjoyed the jokes and
humoristic atmosphere of the shows. We need these settings to laugh and joke to
get rid of our daily stress. It is very therapeutic and healing!

Even the participants like Daado, who did not choose the genre as their favorite,
 enjoyed the jokes and the humor and found this genre to be therapeutic. In one of the
 focus groups, a 55-year-old participant, Aysata, strongly disagreed with the idea of
therapeutic function of these shows. She pointed out that these hosts often use jokes to
 stereotype and frame some ethnic groups. She went on to say:

   It is funny if you are the dominant group describing another group as thieves or
dirty and smelly because you don't know the feelings it created to whoever
belongs to the group being stereotyped. I enjoy the music and everything and all
the choice we have, but some of the jokes really make me angry.

Yet, Aysata still expressed her interest in the shows because of her customers. She
feels like she has to listen to them, despite her dislike of some of the jokes, because it is
what her customers want to listen to. She added:

   What bothers me even more is the kind of conversations and endless comments
that these jokes generate in my stand. Not always, but sometimes they irritate me.
From time to time, it creates some tension between customers.

Two other participants, Yacine, a 29-year-old, and Sata, 61, also expressed their
frustration of the genre in spite of their involvement. They both suggested that music and
entertainment shows do not do a good job of respecting women and valuing their dignity.
Sata said:

   Did you notice how some of these young girls talk about themselves on the air?
Sometimes, it is as if they are selling themselves on air. These women don’t
realize how much they are hurting men’s and society’s perception of women. I
have to say I like the jokes but some of them are out of place. They really mock
us! All women and men should use music and entertainment shows to empower
women. Music is so powerful in this country and should be used to value women
rather than cheapening them. The musicians and music talk show hosts should
know that they have a lot of responsibility in education and providing a good moral guideline for this nation.

Like Sata, Yacine enjoys the music talk shows and music in general, although she has a lot of problems with the messages these songs convey about women’s status and how they are perceived in Senegalese culture. For Yacine:

The talk shows should start a conversation about the content of these songs. I love when people call into the station. On one hand, I like the conversation that occurs between the hosts and the callers, and on the other hand, I also like the conversations between the callers themselves. These interactions fulfill various functions for various people. For me for instance, these shows not only help me maintain a positive mood but they also teach me so much about myself, the others and the community at large. I can hear the pain of many of these callers even when they don’t express it openly. While the structure of the music shows is good and interesting, they should start discussing the meaning and moral behind the songs.

Although it was not the preferred genre of the majority, the participants enjoyed the music and entertainment talk shows. They fulfill various functions for various participants. For some, they are meaningful, educational and play a role in their identity. For others, they serve as a platform that is contributing to demeaning the image of women in Senegal.

Summary

This chapter was divided into two parts. The first part presented the six main formats of radio talk shows the interviewees listened to or participated in. The participants listened to 29 different talk shows; each fits into one of the six formats. The first format is the “guest-expert” format, which 17% of participants identified as their favorite. In this format, an expert in a given field is featured on the show. The expert has an opportunity to share their expertise with the listeners and then the listeners get to weigh in on the conversation with questions. The second format is the “expert’s panel”
format was the most popular one, and 27% of the participants chose it as their favorite. In this format, multiple experts from different fields come together to discuss a common issue, each expert bringing their own unique viewpoint to the issue. This format is more like a panel discussion where the experts explain their stances and then the audience can ask questions and make comments.

The third format is the “Vox populi or community outreach” format and was second most popular after the Experts-panel format, with 23% of the participants declaring it as their favorite. In this format, the host goes out into the community and talks to the people about a specific topic. The information collected in the field is then compiled and condensed into a piece that is played on the radio. After the information from the community conversation is aired, the listeners are invited to call in with questions and comments creating a discussion on the topic.

The fourth format is the “Individuals Testimonials” format. In this format, a person who is not an expert in a field is invited to the show to talk about an issue. The guest usually has some personal connection to the issue, but are not experts on the issue. The guest shares his or her connection to the issue and then the phone lines open up for comments and questions from the listeners.

The fifth format is the “Open-Air Call-in Talk Radio” format. This format is a discussion between two different groups who are on different sides of an issue. There are two possible structures for this format. Either the host chooses the topic and invites people to call in and discuss it, or the host asks the first caller to pose a question that becomes the topic of the discussion. The sixth format is the “Call in: no set topic/ No set
topic Listeners Select” format. There is no set topic for this type of show; a caller can discuss one topic and the next caller can comment on the first topic or introduce one of his or her own. A lot of the participation in this format comes from callers telling their personal stories of success and failure. The “Open-Air Call-in Talk Radio” format and “No set topic Listeners Select” format both shared the same popularity with 10% of the participants selecting them as their favorite.

Each format serves a different purpose for each participant. Some allow listeners to gain knowledge from someone who is considered to be knowledgeable in a field on a specific issue. Others allow the listeners to share and voice their opinions. Regardless of the form or the purpose for listening, they all involve sharing information.

The second part of this chapter categorized the various topics covered by talk radio programs. These topics can be divided into five main genres: social and domestic issues, religion, health, politics, and music and entertainment. The social and domestic issues genre was established in the last decade, making it one of the newest genres. It was the most popular genre among the participants of this study and the second largest genre discussed. The social and domestic issues genre covers a wide range of issues that women face in their everyday lives. The participants enjoyed this genre because the topics discussed directly affect their lives and the lives of their friends and family. It also addresses issues they feel are important to talk about but are not discussed enough. Two of the women’s favorite shows were Èttu Jigeen ŋi (the gathering of women) and Akh ak Yelef (Rights and Obligations). Both of these shows have female hosts and regularly have
female guests, making them appealing to the participants. The social and domestic issues genre is important because it addresses issues that are important to the participants.

The religious talk radio genre is the largest and was the second most listened to among the participants. Radio stations have been broadcasting religious programs for as long as they have been broadcasting the news. Today, there are at least three religious shows a week on almost every station. Originally, religious shows were used for preaching but as people have become more involved in radio, the shows have become more participatory. Unlike many of the other genres, in the religious genre, the host is also the expert on the topic of interest, which in this case is Islam and the Koran. However, this does not mean that guests are absent in the genre. The participants liked two religious shows in particular: *Diine ak Jamono* (Religion and Society) and *Daraay Jigeen Ni* (Have translation here as well). Some participants believed the religious shows help them to become better people as well as help them become more connected to their religion. The participants also liked the fact that religious programs not only address what it means to be a good Muslim wife but also what it means to be a good Muslim husband in today’s society. The religious genre is important because it addresses how religion fits into Senegalese society.

The health genre is a relatively new and small genre; despite this fact, it was the third most favorite among the participants. All health programs are expert-focused and are used to educate people about disease and disease prevention, as well as other general health-related topics. Three health shows stood out to the participants: *Wer Werle* (Be healthy and have a healthy family), *Fagarou* (Prevention) and *Dioko* (Connection). The
participants particularly enjoyed the health shows because they discuss means of prevention, which is extremely important in a society where people cannot afford to see a doctor. Many participants found the shows on traditional medicine to be interesting and useful because they allow them to care for themselves while staying connected to their cultural traditions and also providing effective treatments that are more affordable than modern medicine. The health genre is important because it educates the public on options available to them to prevent and treat disease and to live a healthy life.

Since the development of independent media, the political talk radio show genre has exploded as a way to involve the masses in politics. The political genre is a very diverse and widespread genre in terms of format and broadcasting time. Political shows tend to be the most famous in Senegal, but were not popular among the participants. In general, participants do not like political shows because they dislike the subject matter, the shows do not address real women’s issues and many people do not trust politicians. Several participants indicated that politicians need to address women’s issues and do what they said they were going to do before they will listen to political shows. One participant pointed out that unlike other genres, the guests are not there to inform the listeners about their field but are there to just talk about their political agenda. The majority of the participants did not like this genre, but the few who did felt that it was an important tool for addressing national issues and that these shows allow more people to become active in politics. Although this genre failed to connect with issues in the majority of the participants’ lives, it is still important because it keeps society informed of the political climate in the country.
The music and entertainment genre emerged in the years following Senegal’s independence in 1960 and the coming to power of Léopold Sédar Senghor. Senghor wanted to promote African culture and music and used the radio as one of the main tools for spreading culture to the people. This genre has constantly evolved since the 1960s. This genre was somewhat popular among the participants. The participants enjoyed this genre because it provides stress relief, enjoyment, humor and sarcasm. The participants did not listen to these shows for the music in particular, but for the humor that accompanies the music. Some participants did not like these shows because they find the jokes to be stereotypical and offensive. Although the format of the genre could be less offensive and more empowering of women, the music and entertainment genre is important because it allows people to release stress and enjoy themselves. While these five genres differ in content and participant approval, they all have aspects that draw listeners in and create conversation.

In this chapter I have presented a detailed description of the 29 talk radio shows in which the thirty four participants were involved. In describing these 29 talk shows I offered a co-constructed narrative, weaving in the rich and diverse voices of the participants. Including their voices allowed me to elucidate their perceptions of the numerous talk show genres. Listening to the participants’ voices and looking at their involvement in these shows revealed that these women are in search of a diverse and rich knowledge and information. The sizable amount of time spent by participants listening and shopping for meaningful and thematically diverse talk shows suggests that the participants really think about the content of the shows and are therefore very selective
about which shows they want to be a part of. The findings also suggest that expert-focused talk shows were as attractive as non-expert-focused talk shows. One single aspect that most of the participants sought in all the shows they were involved in was connection. As they searched for some knowledge, some information, a voice, an identity, a community, the participants envisioned a strong connection between the guests, the hosts, and the audience as a necessary step for change to occur.

In the following chapter, I present the various reasons that have motivated the participants’ involvement in these talk radio shows. While this chapter offered some explanations as to why some women preferred some talk shows and not others, the following chapter explores in detail the factors that motivate women to listen to or call in during these radio talk shows.
Chapter Six: Beyond Listening

Introduction

In this chapter I present the various reasons that motivated the thirty women who took part in this study to become members of the radio talk shows’ listening community in Dakar. To uncover the motives that appealed to thirty Dakaroises to engage in radio talk shows and the forces that lie behind their motivations, I draw upon hours of focus groups and interviews and participant observations to articulate the women’s voices and stories. A careful examination and analysis of the data revealed that the participants were involved in the radio talk shows for five major reasons: language, information seeking, anonymity, social interaction and entertainment. Each of these five themes is discussed separately as it pertains to the participants’ specific listening motivations. In the discussion, the participants’ own voices are woven to illuminate their stories. This chapter concludes with a reflection which recapitulates the various themes and patterns that emerged from the participants’ stories.

Language

The theme of language runs throughout the data as an important motive for the participants’ involvement in radio talk shows. As Zeleza (2006) pointed out, “language is the carrier of a people’s culture, it embodies their system of ethics and aesthetics, and it is a media for producing and consuming knowledge, a granary of their memories and imaginations” (p. 20). Language is a central symbol and attribute of both individual and collective identity and is “related to thought processes and to the way members of a certain linguistic group perceive nature, the universe and society” (Stavenhagen, 1996,
Through language, the participants of this study found a strong motivation and unique means of expression to be active members of the talk shows community in Dakar. Yet, it was not just any language. Out of the twenty-five spoken languages in Senegal, the participants overwhelmingly identified Wolof as being the language at the nexus of their drive participate in/listen to radio talk shows. As the lingua franca of Senegal, Wolof is the first language of about one-fifth of Senegalese people and is spoken by more than ¾ of the population (O’Brien, 2003). It is however important to note that while French is still the official language of the government, the sole language of instruction and the language of “authority” as Gellar (2003) suggested, Wolof “is, without being imposed, becoming Senegal’s national language” (Gellar, 2003, p.18). The centrality of Wolof language in Senegalese daily lives was echoed in my participants’ voices as they revealed how Wolof fundamentally influenced what, when and how they got involved in the talk shows. Almost all the participants identified the use of Wolof language on air as a fundamental reason to engage in joint and for being part of the radio talk show community of listeners and callers. One of the participants, Awa, a 31-year-old who was forced to drop out of high school argued:

I can speak, read and write in French but I am not comfortable calling during the shows and speaking in French. Every day, I watch movies in French but I can go months without speaking it. I don’t think I would have been that attached to the radio in general if they were not broadcasting these shows in Wolof. Having these shows in Wolof allows me to not only connect with the people involved in them but to grasp the meaning of what they are saying and relate to my own experience. I cannot even imagine myself making the kinds of arguments I have made in these shows in any other language than Wolof.

34-year-old Bigué, another high school dropout and well known in the neighborhood for her mastery of Wolof proverbs and oral cultures made arguments
similar to that of Awa. Like Awa, Bigué believed that having these talk shows in Wolof is the best way to connect and get into people’s hearts and minds. She suggested that:

Connection is a must for any meaningful relationship and learning process, and for that connection to occur, the people who are communicating must share the same language. But I just don’t mean speak any same language. What I am saying is that when people communicate in a language in which they have deeply rooted in, a language in which they have mastered the culture and traditions, they can see and feel each other more profoundly. And that is what these talk shows are doing for us, at least for me and many of my friends. I know myself and so many people who would have not called in or listened with a particular attention or interest if these shows were not in Wolof. After all, that is our mother tongue, the language we have nursed and matured in. Wolof is the language in which we can truly express our feeling and emotions. It is the language in which we feel! Why should we use another language to talk amongst ourselves? You know Fanta, I speak some French, I am sure that you and I would never be able to connect in French the way we do in Wolof. See, you and I connected immediately the same day we met, because of our shared roots of first language.

Bigué’s statement speaks to the significance of connection through language. She highlighted how the “beautiful sounds which one hears and gets familiar with before being born, while in the womb, has such an important role in shaping our thoughts and emotions” (Guvercin, 2011, p.1). For many participants, being able to express themselves in Wolof symbolized a profound innate emotional connection between not just their language and their identity but also in how they displayed the essences of their experiences through their culture. Using Wolof further instilled more self-confidence in the participants, regardless of their level of education, as it created a sense of classless relationship between and among radio listeners. As Guvercin (2011) argued, “the sound of the mother tongue in the ear and its meaning in the heart gives us trust and confidence” (p.1). By giving its people more trust and confidence in themselves, the use of mother tongue, Wolof in this case, helped the participants discover, reveal and display not only
more self-confidence but also the hidden layers of ingenuity and inspiration deeply rooted in their cultural repertoire. Therefore, armed with self-confidence and pride, many participants considered Wolof to be an important part of the production and dissemination of knowledge.

Mati, a 49-year-old Seereer woman who has never been to school, pointed out that the only reason she felt included in the conversation is because it was being conducted in a language she understood and could comfortably express herself in, despite it not being her mother tongue. She noted:

I am Seereer, I am not Wolof! Seereer is different from Wolof but we have a lot in common, for instance how we communicate some things, etc.! But I enjoy all these shows because they are in Wolof. I would have enjoyed more if they were in Seereer but Wolof works for me as well. It is really valuable that these shows are in Wolof. This is very important especially when they invite doctors and people who are knowledgeable. Many people like myself need a lot of information, especially health information, because we did not go to school … and we need to know how to better protect ourselves and our children. Therefore, having people talk to us in our languages is really, really important. I don’t speak French so I cannot even imagine saying the things I say if it were in French. And without that I would not be as knowledgeable as I am today and I would not listen to as many shows as I do… Otherwise, I would have been just involved in the music and entertainment talk shows because these people always sing and joke in our languages. It is really important that serious shows like the health shows be carried out in our languages.

Mati clearly values the ability to be an active listener as a result of language accessibility. While she wished that she had access to the knowledge and information given during the talk shows in her mother tongue, Seereer, she seemed to accept and, to some degree, embrace Wolof as another language she connects with. Like Awa, Bigue and Mati, the participants with a lower level of education highly appreciated the use of Wolof, a language that they mastered and are able to connect with. For this group of
participants, using Wolof was not just an important motivation but an essential condition for their participation. It provided thirty percent of the participants with no formal education more visibility and voice while increasing their participation in discussions they would have otherwise been excluded from. In doing so, the use of Wolof enabled the participants to avoid marginalization, to talk to and talk back, address and respond to a community of listeners. The use of Wolof during the radio talk shows allowed many to address their needs and problems in very personal ways and enabled the so-called “uneducated” women to be involved in conversation outside of their immediate environment, be it the home or the neighborhood. By being able to use Wolof and talk back, these women are doing more than just communicating; they are actively constructing, de-constructing and creating new meanings through dialogue. Being able to use their own language rather than that of the colonizer (even if they speak it) allows people to break away from silence and to voice their opinions, talkback with ease and ultimately transform others, transforming themselves in the process. As Bell Hooks argued:

Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance, that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech of “talking back,” that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is, the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice .(hooks, 1989, p.9)

Talking back and moving toward any meaningful speech that can engender new growth can only happen in a language which permits individuals to reexamine who they are as holistic beings whose lives are ingrained in social, cultural, spiritual and linguistic realities. For the participants, speaking in and “talking back” in Wolof is far beyond
“empty words, it is a transformational and empowering experience for them. The power of naming their world and experiences in ways that allow them to incorporate and put forward their ideologies and social and cultural values are indicative of a possibility for social change” (Freire, 1996). For many participants, the power of naming their world allowed them to gain back agency and revisit their experiences on their own terms.

It is, however, important to note that language was equally important motivation for well-educated participants being engaged in talk shows. These participants recognized the very important role Wolof played in the Senegalese society. As the main language of discourse in various spheres of the Senegalese society, Wolof has been and continues to be an influential instrument in fostering a Senegalese perception of reality. As such, Wolof plays a critical role in many Senegalese peoples’ full participation both in public performances and public affairs. Binta, a Member of Parliament, believed that:

Until we get everybody educated, we have to keep broadcasting these issues and having these conversations in our [own] various languages. And even when we achieve education for all, I don’t think we should change that trend because in school, we speak and think in French, which does not prepare [us for] the way we speak at home. As a politician, I am very comfortable with French, but I can see that I can touch many people heart I can connect better with women and all Senegalese in general by using Wolof.

As a politician, Binta is very well aware of the crucial role Wolof plays in various aspects of Senegalese society, including political, economic, religious, social and artistic spheres. Sheldon Gellar, a renowned scholar of Senegal, observes that “Wolof has become the primary language of most young Senegalese in urban areas, regardless of ethnic background” (2003, p.18). Due to the rapid urbanization alongside the exposition of radio stations, the Wolofization of Senegalese society has considerably increased
(Gellar, 2003; Ngom, Gaye & Sarr, 2000). “The recognition of Wolof as a unifying language has persisted over time,” (Ngom, Gaye & Sarr, 2000, p1.) which in return has created a notion of shared identity among many participants that allows them to act collectively and effectively as agents of change. Furthermore, since “Wolof, as a national language, has sealed inter-ethnic relations in Senegal over the past century….. [it] has also constituted a cultural magnet for other ethno-linguistic groups” (Ngom, Gaye & Sarr, 2000, p1.). The acceptance of Wolof has indeed provided the participants with unity, harmony and more cultural consciousness, and perhaps even among Senegalese society as a whole. Even Kumba, a 43-year-old journalist who attributed the use of Wolof on the radio as a very important motive to be involved in the talk shows, recognized the great difference that using the “language of the people” can make. Kumba went on to state the following:

For me, I am not sure if the fact that these talk shows are in Wolof is the most important reason why I get involved in them. I have been educated in Catholic schools and I am really comfortable speaking in Wolof. But having followed the phenomenon closely at least the past five years, I believe it is extremely important we keep broadcasting in local languages for two reasons. One, when you pay close attention to the level of interaction and audience participation between the shows in French in those in Wolof, or any other local language, you cannot even compare them. The talk shows in local languages are far more interactive, friendly, and you can even tell that people feel more comfortable. Second, for some topics the topics discussed during the shows, the fact that Wolof is used allows people to communicate in very sophisticated and culturally appropriate ways. I am amazed by how people use Wolof proverbs to say so much in so few words and everybody gets it! It makes it easy for people to not only to talk about these burning issues, but most importantly, to think critically about these issues.

As Kumba is suggesting here, the cultural competency and ease that comes with speaking one’s mother language or a language that one is culturally immersed in is immensely valuable for any critical consciousness of the ideals of one’s culture and for a
reexamination of one’s positionality within that culture. Expressing oneself in one’s own language can play an important role in the process of critical self-reflection, which helps the individual to better recognize hidden ideals and values while identifying injustices and prejudices in the process. Such a process could be a significant beginning of thoughtful transformation and liberation. This idea of cultural competency embedded in language and its capacity to allow insiders to navigate and articulate culturally-sensitive issues in public echoed by many participants.

Saly, a 40-year-old primary school teacher highlighted the significance of using Wolof especially on health talk shows. She pointed out the fact that one needs to be culturally competent in the language in which the radio is broadcasting to be able to participate in some of these shows without sounding arrogant and obscene. She stated that:

For talk shows that discuss issues like sexuality, one must know how to avoid or substitute some terms that you cannot use on-air with culturally accepted terms in order to appropriately participate in the conversation or to even just ask some kinds of questions. For example, I have no problem talking about genitals in French but I could never do it in Wolof. Just thinking about it, I can feel the lack of comfort. But since I am Wolof, I know how to avoid using such terms in public and it’s not just me. Everybody does it. When a doctor talks about genitals on the air, she/he calls it “face” and if you are not part of the culture you cannot get it. We all have ways of communicating in Wolof that only members of our culture or people who are well immersed in the Wolof culture can do. Also, given the number and severity of the sexually-transmitted diseases in Dakar especially, we have to talk about sexuality, among ourselves as women but also to our children and the entire nation. It’s not easy but we have no choice but to engage in the discussion with our children, husbands, parents, everybody. And I believe using Wolof is the best way to make the process successful and respectful.

As Saly’s statement stressed, talking openly about anything that is sexual or sex related is extremely difficult among people of different genders and ages, let alone on the
air. In Senegalese society, like in most African societies, “human sexuality is still
enshrouded with great secrecy and hedged in with taboos that carry serious consequences
if broken. To talk openly about sex among people of different ages and in public is not
easy” (Amanze, 2002, p.84). Therefore, using Wolof language during these talk shows
provides the audience, especially women and young people; with appropriate ways to not
only receive information but also to ask questions and to be part of the conversation. It
provides the participants with the capacity to function in ways that are unique to them
that enable them to address complex and culturally-sensitive topics within socially and
culturally accepted frameworks. As Wierzbicka (1985) argued:

It is not impossible (though very difficult) to leave the experiential world of one’s
native language for that of another language, or stretching the metaphor to the
limit, to inhabit two different worlds at once. But when one switches from one
language to another it is not just the form that changes but also the content (p. 187)

It is without a doubt that the use of Wolof on air was a strong motivation for most
of the participants’ involvement in the talk shows and an important instrument that
brought listeners together and cemented their common identity. Yet not all of the
participants accepted without criticism the overwhelming use of Wolof in almost all radio
talk shows. Four participants, from outside the Wolof ethnic group, particularly expressed
their desire to see more talk shows broadcast in their own languages. While recognizing
how beneficial these talk shows are to them, they all felt that not broadcasting such
important issues in their own languages leave out so many people and, as Mati, a Seereer
woman said, “maybe those who need it the most.” She added:

You cannot imagine how much I have learned from the radio. … I understand
Wolof very well. It is like a mother tongue to me. I am Seereer but I think now I
have become Wolof after living in Dakar for years. But the people who make these shows should know that there are so many more people who could benefit more from these shows if they were in their language. For example, here, on my stand [where she works], I have many friends who listen to the shows and understand Wolof but don’t feel comfortable enough in Wolof to be part of the conversation. I can tell for sure… that some of them would love to share their experiences if the shows were in Seereer. There should be similar shows in other languages such as Seereer, Pulaar and Joola, but I know that they know that most Senegalese speak Wolof.

The same recognition of the need to have on-air conversations in as many languages as possible was echoed by Rakki, a Joola. Rakki explained that she really wants to call during talk shows but has never done so. She believed she will never call in as long as the shows are in Wolof, despite the fact that she enjoys them greatly. She added:

I love the radio talk shows and radio in general. I have certainly learned a lot from the talk shows. Now I understand Wolof very well and the radios have definitely played a crucial role in my learning of Wolof. To the truth, I have profited a lot from the shows because they broadcast in Wolof, a language I understand and a language that opened many doors for me. But I have to admit that these shows would have been more beneficial for me and many of my friends who are not yet fluent in Wolof if these shows were in Joola. Also, even though I speak Wolof, if these shows were in my own language, it would have allowed me to participate more. I don’t want to sound like I am complaining; I have to be grateful for many things… But shows in Joola would have given me more confidence to call and give my opinions like many [other] people do. I am not old but I believe I have a lot of advice that could be used by many of the callers and listeners. Although I speak Wolof, there are some things I don’t understand, especially the proverbs and when people speak deep Wolof. Also, I think speaking Wolof has helped my restaurant and allowed me to interact and joke with my customers. I am sure that owners of the radio do these shows in Wolof because most people speak Wolof, but they should not forget we are [also] here and we are part of the country and would be pleased if our culture and language were more present in the media.

Rakki’s statement seems to send a mixed message. There is an appreciation of the Wolof language and the kind of opportunities being able to speak Wolof has offered her. Yet her statement also illustrates her lack of confidence to participate in a conversation
spoken in a language in which she is not fully immersed. It also highlights the lack of exposure of the Joola culture and language in the media. For Rakki and many of her fellow Joola, language remains one of the most significant aspects of her collective cultural identity, as they try to resist the “image of the Diola (Joola) as a primitive savage” (Gellar, 2003, p. 19). Gellar (2003) goes on to argue that “the older Diola in Dakar prefer to speak French with non-Diola rather than Wolof and resent the fact that their children, like most of the younger generation in Dakar, prefer Wolof to their maternal language” (p. 19). Many young Senegalese from the minority ethnic groups such the Seereer, Joola, and Pel/Fulani seem to accept Wolof as representing a common Senegalese cultural identity, despite some frustration from their parents.

While that feeling seems to be to some degree visible with Rakki and Mati, the third participant who mentioned being unhappy with the lack of representation of other languages on the air, Daado a Pullo woman, vigorously rejected the Wolof identity. As Daado contended:

You know, these people (the radio programmers/owners) know what they are doing. It is not random, as many of my friends and relatives believe. They are forcing Wolof on everybody. Look at what is happening to our children—everybody is not just speaking Wolof, but they are becoming Wolof. I do listen to the shows in Wolof because I have no choice. While it is true that the shows are very important and are impacting how we all believe and see things, I have to say that if I were to choose between Wolof and French, I would go for French because that would put all the language on the same level. The Wolof culture is eating all [other] cultures and we cannot let it happen. A lot of my Wolof friends tell me that I am too conservative when it comes to languages. Do any of your Wolof friends speak Pulaar? But all my Fulbe friends speak Wolof. What does that say to you? I think people minimize [the importance of] language and don’t realize all the loss that comes with losing one’s language. I hope you will make sure your daughter speaks Pulaar. No one will preserve our languages and cultures for us! And these big radio stations have a huge role in helping us achieve that goal. That
would not hurt them. It would rather widen their audience and help more people in the process.

Daado is obviously more concerned with the Wolof hegemony and the Wolofization of Senegalese society among participants who are not Wolof. As McLaughlin (1995) argued, Wolofization:

is a vigorous and ongoing process which accompanies urbanization and which encompasses both linguistic and ethnic acculturation. As such, it constitutes an overt threat to the identity of non-Wolof urban dwellers, the majority of whom are ethically Tukuloor and Fulbe, the two main Fula speaking ethnic groups in Senegal.

As the most important element of their identity—language—is threatened by Wolof, many Pulaar speakers like Daado have become even more language-centered as they strongly believe that their survival as a cultural and social entity is heavily dependent upon the preservation and safeguarding of the Pulaar language. Therefore, for many Pulaar speakers, resisting Wolof hegemony remains an important step for their existence.

It is important to mention that while the use of Wolof is increasing participation and allowing the majority of Senegalese to be able to talk to each other about issues that are important to them, it nevertheless spreads and passes on information and knowledge from the Wolof lens and worldview. With the media vastly using the language of the dominant group, Wolof is able to gain more power to acculturate the other languages and further marginalize those who are already marginalized. As Mohanti (2009) suggested, “when language becomes the basis of power, control and discrimination, socioeconomic inequality is perpetuated; the language(s) that people speak or do not speak determine their access to resources” (p. 121). It is therefore extremely important to recognize the
critical relationship between language and power, particularly how such a relation connects to hegemonic structures, discourses and practices. Failure to recognize these dynamics as expressions of power can lead to further marginalization of not just women, but whole groups of people, and therefore contribute to perpetuating the status quo.

As an important factor that frames and is framed by our understanding of reality, language is a critical and important motivation for many participants’ involvement in talk shows. For some, it was a sensitive topic but an essential one. Whether participants embraced Wolof as a necessary tool for their empowerment and education, or whether they saw it as hegemonic, all of the participants seemed to value the centrality of the local language for any meaningful change to happen given the high literacy rate, especially among women. All participants voiced the need to express themselves in their own languages in ways that not only allow them to name their own world but also to encompass their ideas and values. In doing so, they can examine their realities on their own terms and transform their world in the process.

Seeking Knowledge and Information

Seeking information was another important motivation for the participants to tune in during the talk shows. The concepts and processes of information seeking and gathering have been vastly studied across numerous disciplines, including communication studies, information studies, media studies, health and education (Atkin, 1973; Case, 2002; Johnson, 1997; Zerbinos; 1990). As a result, there exist several definitions of information seeking, most of which highlight two key elements: “purposive information seeking” and/or “information encountering” (Palsdottir, 2009, p.2). For
purposive information seekers, information seeking is an activity in which they seek information or pursue knowledge as “a consequence of a need to satisfy some goal” (Wilson, 2000, p. 49). Prior to searching for information, the individuals must recognize a knowledge gap which results in their decision to take action by embarking on a quest for what they have identified as lacking (Atkin, 1973; Case, 2002; Johnson, 1997; Kuhlthau, 1991; McKenzie 2003; Palsdottir, 2009; Wilson, 2000).

Contrary to purposive information seekers, who intentionally search for information, the information encounters are individuals who find or come across information unexpectedly (Erdelez, 1997; Rioux, 2000; Palsdottir, 2009). Erdelez (1997) argues that individuals often discover information when they are not searching for it “or are not involved in looking for the particular information they happen to find” (p.1). He further suggests that such occurrences “may provide unexpected but useful information that was not sought” (p.1), which in return can be used or shared by the encounters for fill some knowledge gap although accidental. Such experiences were recounted in many participants’ interviews and during the focus group discussions. Yet all the participants who identified information seeking as a motivation for involvement in talk shows described themselves as purposive information seekers. These participants asserted that they engaged in the talk shows with the goal of finding some types of information or knowledge. While they exhibited different motives behind their attachment to different talk shows, it was apparent that information and knowledge seeking was at the heart of their motivation to be participants in the phenomenon.
A large number of the participants, saw seeking information as the most important motivation for their involvement in the talk shows. More than half of that group (59%) had little or no formal schooling and were mostly illiterate. In talking about what motivated them to get involved in the talk shows, this group of 13 women highlighted their low level of education and their inability to read and write in any language as important reasons for them to rely on the radio talk shows as an instrument to seek and acquire information. As Mati, a 49-year-old woman who cannot read nor write in any language, highlighted:

I have never sat on a school bench. I am not like the educated people who can read books and the news. All I can do to increase my knowledge is talk to people or use the radio or the television, and you know I don’t have a television. That’s why the radio is an irreplaceable instrument for people like me when it comes to searching for information and knowledge. I know at least that I can speak for myself and my friend Penda; the talk shows are where we turn to seek information. I will not say all I know I learned from the radio, but one thing is clear: I have gained true knowledge from talk shows in the past five years. Also, there are so many programs; there is always a radio talking about important issues, if it is not religion, it is health, or politics. What is even more important for seeking information is that when you listen to a show and you have a question that is not relevant to the topic, you can always ask them to organize a show that deals with your question. There is always a way to find out about something. People like me, who used to be clueless about so many issues, now know something. I don’t know everything but I can see where I came from and where I am in terms of knowledge. I cannot read or write but I am not blind anymore and if God gives me long life I will see even clearer know and understand more issues.

Mati clearly expressed her awareness of the obstacles her lack of education presents, and she is determined to seek information to increase her knowledge and understanding of many important issues. While she recognized that the talk shows are not the sole instrument for information seeking and knowledge acquisition, she did not doubt the ability of the talk shows to provide her with a plethora of necessary information. As a
constant radio listener, Mati is now able to develop strategies that enable her to seek a variety of information and to get her questions answered. The same desire—motivation to seek information and knowledge as a result of feeling less knowledgeable due to a lack of education—was also noticeable among many participants within the group. Kolle, a 49-year-old widow who has never attended school, was one of them. Kolle is a woman whose husband and aunt died of diseases, and she claimed to have learned “so much about their gravity, but most importantly treatability, from the talk shows, long after losing the two family members”. Especially since her husband passed away, Kolle sees the radio talk shows as “a school for her” (Kolle). She went on to indicate:

Seeking information is an important reason as to why I listen to the radio talk shows. You know that I have never been to school, so that’s why I need to learn from various people and settings. As you noticed, my radio is always on. I don’t always pay attention to all the shows but I target specific shows in search of knowledge and information to help myself, my family and my friends. I am always seeking health information in particular. One of my aunts died of syphilis and I used to be so horrified by the disease. But I am not anymore since I listen to the doctor on the radio explaining how simple it is to treat if you go to the hospital early. My aunt and nobody in my family knew that until it was too late. It was very painful to watch my aunt become very aggressive at the end of her life. As I told you earlier, my husband also died of a preventable disease… Seeking health information is a huge reason for my love and attachment to these talk shows. Having health information for free is priceless for us, the poor people, because we can afford to prevent many diseases but we cannot afford to cure them. I know many people listen for many reasons and I can give you a list of five reasons why I listen to these shows, but for me, seeking information is the primary and most important reason. I try to understand even diseases that I have never heard of just in case. I am not educated, so the radio is my school. It helps me to prevent and solve my own problems and to help others prevent and solve their problems. I just don’t seek information and knowledge for myself.

Like Mati, Kolle is a purposive information seeker who is not only well-aware of what the talk shows can provide her in terms of information and knowledge production, but she seems to be troubled by the feeling of not knowing, of not being able to prevent
disease and protect herself and her family. Kolle feels more than just wanting to listen to the talk shows; she needs the radio to expand her repertoire of knowledge. Kolle uses talk shows to search for answers not only for her personal problems and challenges, but she also for others. Kolle’s difficult life experiences have created a sense of fear, and uncertainly which makes her see the radio as a constant and valuable information provider. As Atkin (1973) suggested, people respond to uncertainty by searching for more information; therefore, to increase her knowledge and reduce her fear and uncertainly, Kolle is constantly in search of information. This constant need for information allows her to make sense of her situation and environment. As Dervin (1982) suggests, when “the individual in her time and place, needs to make sense …she needs to inform herself constantly. Her head is filled with questions. These questions can be seen as her information needs.” (p.170). Although Kolle’s case can be viewed as unique due to her special circumstances, a somehow similar purposive information seeker behavior was manifested in another 34-year-old participant, Bigué. Bigué, who has never attended formal or Islamic school, is determined to use the talk shows to learn more about her religion. As a purposive religious information seeker, she explained why she relies on the talk shows to seek and acquire religious knowledge:

The reason why I really listen to the radio talk shows is because I am searching for knowledge to become a better person, especially a better Muslim. The little I knew about my religion used to scare me, especially after I listened to preaching and realized how little I knew. I know life is so busy and we run every day like crazy people to find ways to feed our families. We don’t even have time to sit down and learn and gain knowledge from each other. My husband is out most of the day, every day. The same is true for my children. They barely have time to teach me anything. Plus I am not educated. I cannot read nor write, so I have to
rely on the radio to seek more knowledge about my religion. We have a Dahiras\(^4\) in the neighborhood and we meet often and talk about religious issues, but it is not as often as it is on the radio. Also, the fact that you can call and have any question you want answered makes it a real learning process. It is true that we learn with the Dahiras, but when we meet, we usually talk about just one theme. It is good, but not as good as on the radio. Also, there are so many talk shows on religion, so I get to learn different topics from different Imams. I don’t think I can go back [to school] and be a doctor or a teacher, but I have become a better Muslim. I want to increase my knowledge in other domains, like health, but it is easier to find information in these domains than in religion. Sometimes, given my age, I am ashamed to ask some questions, because people might wonder why I don’t [already] know these things as a Muslim… What makes the search for religious knowledge on the radio even easier is that there are no taboos anymore and no topic is left to rest. The calling and asking questions on-air makes me really motivated to not want to miss any of the religious talk shows. I even record some of them so I can listen to them again and make my children, friends or husband listen to them. I am proud I know better now and I am not as scared as I used to be.

Bigué’s statement speaks to her commitment and determination to become a better Muslim. While she recognizes her illiteracy, she is not willing to remain uneducated in her religion. Rather than passively accepting her situation, Bigué has identified the talk shows as a platform to seek and acquire knowledge. Her recognition of her lack of education is a far cry from passively accepting her fate as final and unchangeable. It is rather a sign of consciousness and a necessary first in transforming her reality and attaining her goal. In identifying her needs and reaching out to the talk shows to seek information, Bigué was able to increase her sense of knowledge and develop more agency by realizing that her goal is attainable, despite some initial fear.

Bigué, Kolle and Mati, like most participants in the group of mostly illiterate women, were purposive information seekers who were well aware of their lack of education, yet
did not let their fear stop them from seeking more information and acquiring more knowledge. As Freire would argue, the decision these women have made to pursue their quest for knowledge, despite some fear in the process, is a sign of courage. For Freire:

Indeed, fear is a right, but one to which corresponds the duty of educating it, of facing it and overcoming it. Facing a fear, not running away from it, implies analyzing its reasons for being and gauging the relationship between what causes it and our ability to respond. Facing fear is not hiding it; this is the only way to conquer it.” (Freire, 1998, p. 48)

Through the talk shows, Bigué, Kolle, Mati and most other illiterate women seek information to conquer their fear and lack of knowledge. They have found that talk shows have opened up possibilities for them to generate new strategies of knowing, conquering fear and acting in their worlds. While the types of information they sought and the process they utilized differed, these women felt some knowledge insufficiency and decided to “to educate [their] fear, from which is finally born [their] courage” from the radio, their “selected information carrier” (Johnson & Meischke, 1993, pp. 343-344).

There was, however, one illiterate participant, 52-year-old Astou, who viewed herself as a purposive information seeker yet was the only one who did not target any specific type of information. She did not identify nor recognize any particular knowledge gap to fill. While most women in this group searched specifically for health, religious, legal and civic information, Astou indicated that she was searching for all forms of information. She did not feel the need to single out one type of information. She believed that whether she intentionally seeks it or not, she will learn from the radio. She went on to indicate:

All I need is to turn my radio on. I know once I open the radio and start listening, I will without doubt learn something. I am interested in what is going on here and everywhere. I never attended school and that is why I listen to the radio a lot— to connect with what is going on around the world and here in Senegal. I know a lot.
I have always been a curious person and especially since I became a constant listener, my knowledge has increased a lot. And also today’s radios don’t leave anything un-scrutinized. The talk shows especially talk about politics, poverty, the children, immigration—they don’t leave out anything. Every single day, I learn from these shows. That’s why I told you, I don’t target any specific topic and I am convinced I am learning a lot of things. You know, as long as you are willing to listen, you will learn, and that’s what I do. I just don’t want one type of knowledge; I want to learn as much as possible. You know, when you are not educated, you should not restrict yourself regarding what you want to learn or not. In life, everything is important and useful.

As her response indicated, Astou displayed confidence about her state of knowledge and expected to encounter more information in the future. For Astou, the information she had come across was not accidental, although it was unpredictable. Her experience listening to talk shows convinced her that her acquisition of information and knowledge was dependent simply on her willingness to turn her radio on and listen.

While Astou’s views on her own state of knowledge and lack of selective information strategy sets her a little bit apart from this group of 13 women, she remains one of them vis-à-vis their level of education, but also vis-à-vis their desire and interest to seek information. The narratives of these women suggest illiteracy as an important element that almost forced these participants to reach out to radio talk shows for information, enlightenment, and most importantly, to acquire some knowledge needed in their daily lives.

Given the number of participants who identified information seeking as the most significant motivation to engage in the talk shows, it is evident that the less-educated and non-educated participants were not the only purposive information seekers. Many well-educated participants also used the talk shows as a platform to seek targeted knowledge and information. However, contrary to the first group of 13 women with little to no
education, these nine educated participants did not feel a deep sense of lack of knowledge as a primary motivation to tune in during the talk shows. Due to their education level, they displayed a high level of self-confidence in some areas. They knew they possessed some knowledge and were purposively searching for more knowledge. Some were seeking to deepen their knowledge in specific areas, while others were interested in discovering new forms of knowledge and information. Soxna, a 46-year-old married woman with a bachelor’s degree in Arabic, was one of the participants who particularly sought to deepen her knowledge in her area of expertise while being open to learning more about other issues. She pointed out the kind of knowledge she was searching and the reasons behind such motivation and engagement in the radio talk shows:

There are many reasons as to what motivates me to participate in the talk shows, but the most important one is searching for information and knowledge. As the Wolof proverb says “before you truly know something, ignorance will kill you”. So every human being must seek for knowledge. It is even mentioned in the Koran: “Seeking of knowledge is incumbent upon every Muslim”. As you know, I am well versed with the Koran, but I don’t know everything, and that why I turn to the radio, and radio talk shows in particular, to gain new interpretations and perspectives on Islam. As somebody who aspires to be an example, a model, I make it my duty to constantly search for knowledge and the talk shows are a great setting where knowledge is produced and shared. Also, I seek other forms of knowledge on radio, not just religious, although for me everything has a religious connection. For instance, I seek health information, especially new diseases, judicial affairs and family law; that is why I just don’t get stuck with one radio station. I target many radio stations so I can have access to as many topics and interpretations and perspectives possible.

While Soxna is self-confident and aware of her knowledge, she is not satisfied with the amount and kind of knowledge she possesses. She is eager to be exposed to new interpretations and understandings of Islam through the talk shows. As a determined purposive information seeker, Soxna has involved herself in as many radio talk shows as
possible and throughout these processes she has engaged in transforming the state of her knowledge (Gary, 1997). Such a process Marchionini & Komlodi (1997) argued:

is inherently interactive as information seekers direct attention, accept and adapt to stimuli, reflect on progress, and evaluate the efficacy of continuation. Information seeking is thus a cybernetic process in which knowledge state is changed through inputs, purposive outputs, and feedback (p.6).

By moving from one radio talk show to the other, Soxna is able to not only increase her knowledge, but at times alter her perspectives and move toward newer understandings of many issues. Soxna reiterates the importance of updating and reconstructing her outlook when she remarks:

I did not used to think about the husband responsibility vis-à-vis Islam because of the way I was raised and socialized. When reflecting on the social problems in our society, I would always think that women were the problem. I thought that they needed to be more obedient and value themselves, which I still think is very important, but now thanks to the radio I have come to understand that the men and their behaviors are also part of the roots of the problem. Now, because I seek legal, religious and all kind of information and knowledge, I have a better understand of many issues, not just religious ones. Also for the religious matters, as a result of being exposed to many discussions on Islam on the radio, I have come to a better understanding of *ijtihad*, which I have started applying more often on a variety of issues.

Hadi, a 51-year-old French teacher, was another example of an educated participant who expressed the need to seek information and knowledge on the radio, although she was different in nature. As an educated woman, Hadi does not see herself as a person who is not knowledgeable. She rather sees herself as somebody who “knows a lot, has seen a lot, has traveled a lot and met a lot of smart people” (Hadi). Yet she recognized that she has a lot to learn in many areas, such as traditional medicine. For Hadi, seeking traditional health information was one of the very important motivations

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5 Ijtihad: “the process of employing individual reasoning to interpret the law from its sources” (Scott, 2009, p.2).
for her involvement in the talk shows. Rather than using the talk shows like Soxna does— to expand and deepen her knowledge in a field that she is familiar with— Hadi is more interested in using the platform to gain information on issues she has not been exposed before. In explaining her motivation to search for health information, Hadi said:

I am diabetic and I used to take a lot of pills. But now I don’t anymore. I still go to my doctor every month but he does not prescribe me medication because my sugar is under control. I heard a remedy on the radio and that’s what I used and it worked for me. Also my mom has high blood pressure, but she also uses traditional medicine. It is very cheap and more efficient. It works for us. In my armoire, I have a notebook full of traditional recipes and remedies for my diseases. Running after health information is one of the most important motives why my mother and I listen to the radio. Even when I have to miss a health talk show, I make sure my mother listens and reports to me all the new information she learns. People know me for that; many come here to ask me for information because they know I write it down. At first I would just listen without any real intention and desire to acquire information, but now that is all I do. Since I heard about the remedy for diabetes and it is working for me, I started to seek more health information and pay serious attention [to the talk shows].

Hadi, like many educated participants, was a purposive information seeker. After starting to purposefully and systematically seek for health information, Hadi did not stop there; she began to develop strategies to acquire, keep and share her information with others. She became a repertoire of health information people go to when they miss or cannot access information. In her statement, it is however visible that she was not a purposive information seeker at first, but rather became one. She recognized her initial “passive attention” state (Wilson, 2000, p.1) in which she just happened to come across information about diabetes, information she acquired without turning on her radio with the expectation to learn and obtain such information. Her encountering of that information increased her curiosity and motivated her to seek more specific information. Hadi’s “unexpected discovery of useful or interesting information that has
not been sought, or … [the] discovery of unforeseen characteristics of information that had been sought’’ (Erdelez, 1996, p.102) generated the click that led her to move beyond the “passive attention” state and become an information-seeking person. Many educated participants acknowledged becoming purposive specific information seekers as a result of information encounters, whether from direct exposure to the talk shows or from somebody who has heard from the radio.

During one focus group discussion, all educated participants acknowledged that at first, they saw the talk shows as a platform to obtain information and gain knowledge. They argued there was a click that made them realized how much they were missing out. In recounting how she shifted from an information-seeking listener to an information provider caller, Sally, a 40-year-old primary school teacher, explained:

At first, I did not pay attention to these talk shows. I have always listened to the radio since I was young, but mostly for the news. So one day, I took a taxi and I was going to visit a friend and there was a talk show on the radio and the guest was a female Islamic scholar. I was so struck by how she articulated some of issues we faced that after [arriving], I did not want to get out of the taxi. And when I asked the taxi driver about the show, he told me that it was a weekly show and it [had] been going on for some time. Since that day, I have become a constant listener and have made many of my friends constant listeners… Now not only do I seek information by targeting specific shows, but I call in very often.

For Sally, her experience in the taxi was the click an awakening that something important, informational and educational, was taking place on the air.

Oumou, another 48-year-old participant who attended college through her sophomore year, also had also similar experiences vis-à-vis being a regular listener but not necessarily a purposive information seeker. She recounted how she started paying more attention to and trying to gain information and knowledge from the radio:
My brother-in-law was very sick and the doctor told him that they could not cure the disease. We thought he was going to die, and one day my neighborhood suggested that my mother listen to a talk show on which the guest was a renowned traditional healer. My mother called me and my sister, and we all listened to the guy. He was giving simple and very important remedies. My sister called during the show and he said he thought he could treat him. We took him there, and after 3 weeks my brother-in-law was eating and working by himself. Since then, I listen more carefully to many shows. Now I am more motivated and I pay more attention. I like to seek health and religious information in particular.

Both Oumou’s and Saly’s examples show that although they do not run to the talk shows when they need help or information, their interests have stimulated their curiosity and even compelled them to intentionally turn to the talk shows to search for specific information. The acquisition of unsolicited information sparked in many participants the desire to become an active information seeker in order to tackle their daily challenges (Savolainen, 1995). Whether it was a personal decision to seek information on the talk shows, or whether it was a “click” that originated from a third party, many participants claimed to be purposive information seekers.

Seeking information and knowledge was the most frequent motivation mentioned by the participants regarding their participation in the talk shows. The majority of the participants of this study identified information seeking as the most important motivation for being part of the listening community. These participants showed determination and motivation in being purposive information seekers. In pursuit of knowledge, they developed specific strategies and processes to acquire information in specific, targeted domains. A close look at the interviews and focus group transcripts revealed that all of the participants, whether they sought information purposefully or not, encountered and acquired information at some point. The information encountered in many occasions was
the “click” that enabled many participants to become more vigilant and inquisitive in using the talk shows for information and knowledge acquisition. While their interests and needs ranged across a large spectrum, as they were all deliberately and inadvertently exposed to a myriad of information, almost all participants acquired some information and knowledge that they found central not only to their self-discovery, but also to their abilities to make meaningful decisions in their daily lives.

**Anonymity**

Anonymity was the third motivation mentioned by the participants as a reason to engage in the radio talk shows. The participants’ responses to the question of what motivated them to be involved in the radio talk shows revealed that anonymity was of great importance. As Grijpink & Prins (2003) explained:

> Anonymity is not a fixed characteristic of a person. Anonymity is … in the eye of the beholder … .Transactions [are] anonymous if it is not possible to establish the true identity of an acting party because he has left no traces behind whatsoever, or has disguised all traces using a pseudonym from which his real name cannot be derived (p.251).

As such, anonymity entails both protecting the confidentiality of the user by not disclosing their identity at all, or by altering or eliminating all features that could be traced back to the user’s pseudonym or real identity. In settings like talk radio shows, anonymity allows any of the parties involved to hide their true identity in order to allow participation in group conversations. Anonymity enables unlinkability by preventing any third party listening to the talk shows from identifying the caller or the guest.

The literature on anonymity distinguishes quite a few degrees of anonymity, which range from absolute anonymity, to traceable anonymity, to pseudonym based
anonymity (Brazier et al, 2004; Froomkin, 1996; Grijpink & Prins, 2003). These levels or forms of anonymity differentiate themselves with the degree to which the identity of the person sending the information is hidden. An examination of the data generated by the participants who identified anonymity as a motivation to be involved in the talk radio shows revealed that they utilized two degrees of anonymous calls: absolutely anonymous and spontaneous, semi-anonymous calls. While both degrees guarantee some level of anonymity, in the absolute anonymity case it is impossible to trace back to the caller, whereas for the semi-anonymous calls, there are clues that make it possible to retrace the callers’ identity (Grijpink & Prins, 2003).

The participants highlighted the significance of both degrees of anonymity, with a slight preference to absolute anonymous circumstances. Many participants indicated that not disclosing any aspect of their identity was a key factor in giving them the courage to express some of their deeply painful and personal stories. According to Fama, a 32-year-old cyber café owner who is constant listener of talk radio but not a persistent caller:

I call [the talk shows] rarely, but sometimes I feel the need to call. When I do, I am able to do it because I have the option not to disclose anything about me. I don’t give my name, or where I call from, and that makes me more comfortable and relaxed. It gives me the courage to speak without worrying that somebody will know me. Last month there was a talk show where they were talking about marriage and how young women now don’t want to get married and just want men to spend money on them. I decided to call to share my experience because I have a six-year boyfriend who is not taking about marriage. I wanted to tell people that there are so many women who are willing and ready to be married. But because many people know me and my boyfriend, I was afraid somebody might hear it and tell him or tell his family. The fact that I was provided with anonymity made be courageous in expressing my thoughts on the topic.
Fama’s response illustrates the courage that being able to speak anonymously provided her. It allowed her to give her perspective on a topic that was important to her, while still remaining in a zone that she felt was safe and secure.

That same feeling of being in a comfort zone which allows transgressing social and cultural boundaries was articulated by Awa, a 31-year-old housewife:

Because of the culture, we cannot always say directly what we think. We have to have Soutoura (discretion) when communicating and interacting with other people. You know that when you are in front of a person, you cannot tell that person that they are lying, even if you know and they know that they are lying. It is not seen well when you argue with people and disagree in public, especially [for] us women. But when you don’t give your name and where you live, you have more courage to say what you really think. Personally, even when I call and I don’t tell them my name, I cannot say things like, “you are lying,” even if the person cannot see me, but I can say what I think without fear. When I call under anonymity, I don’t fear saying things that I know many people would disagree with. Also, because of that, I dare to ask questions that I would not have asked if I was told to reveal my name or even my neighborhood. People need that privacy so they can truly express their opinions and also not be afraid to be known by people who are listening.

Just like Fama, Awa recognized the protection and courage anonymity provides for the ability to transgress social norms while remaining a part of the community. They also highlighted their awareness of the risks it entails in challenging social norms. Therefore, through the anonymous status with which they call during the talk shows, the participants can resist social and external pressures. Armed with courage, they create “the possibility of changing their beliefs, ideals and understanding of themselves throughout their lives” (Medina, 2008, p.9) while carefully navigating within their own realities to still "oppose the pressures exerted on them and remain faithful to their ideals and themselves"(Kohut, 1979, 5). As individuals who understand the dynamics of their societies and cultures, these participants saw anonymity as enabling them to exhibit
dispersed yet powerful acts of resistance. Although it was not displayed openly, the
courage they gained through anonymity was central in informing their decisions to act on
their conditions and ultimately stimulate some social change. Courage was not the only
element the participants felt they obtained from anonymity. Many talked about shame
and sharing and the role that anonymity played in their ability to openly discuss issues
that they felt were shameful. Explaining how she appreciated being anonymous when
calling during talk shows, Aysata, a 55-year-old divorced mother noted:

_Soutoura_ (discretion) is extremely important, not just on the air. If I do not want
to, being able to not tell people who are listening my name and who I really am is
very important. It is also good to use your name if you want to. Most of the time I
use my real name, but when I really want to be critical and say what I really think
regarding some issues, I utilize a pseudonym or refuse to provide a name at all.
One day, there was a talk show on domestic violence. I had already gone through
almost all the experiences that a woman whose case was being discussed on air
was going through. At first I did not want to call at all because I was ashamed and
did not want people to recognize my voice, but I could not resist calling because I
was in a very abusive relationship. I had nobody to talk to; my own family even
tried to blame me. That day I told myself that, “this was the day, the day God was
waiting for me to disclose my pain with the world.” But as I said, I believe in
_Soutoura_. So here I was, one half of me was telling to share and scream and the
other half was telling me, “don’t expose yourself.” So finally I decided to call
without giving any information that I thought could make people know who I
was. It was painful and shameful but it helped me a lot. So for me to be able to
speak with honesty about the kind of abuses I endured, I had to speak with
maximum anonymity. In my opinion, the fact that the radios allow us to call
without disclosing who we are is a very important reason as to why people have
the audacity to call and share their shameful and painful experiences.

The possibility of calling anonymously gave Aysata the determination to come
out and disclose what she considered to be shameful. Through anonymity, Aysata was
able to, for a moment, get rid of her negative perception of herself and open up to the
listening community. In doing so, she was able to delocalize the shame she was feeling
in the public domain as she struggled to negotiate between her belief in _Soutoura_ and her
need to voice what was burning inside her. As someone who might be feeling powerless, while desiring discretion and apprehensive about the audience evaluation of herself, Aysata utilized the anonymity alternative as a way for her to claim agency. Although done behind a mask, the telephone in this case, Aysata was able to use the talk show platform as a space to express her long-hidden painful emotions of shame and anger (Scott, 1990). Consequently, the talk shows became, as Scott (1990) argues, “the social sites of the hidden transcript …. in which the unspoken riposte, stifled anger, and bitten tongues created by the relations of domination find a vehement, full-throated expression” (p. 120–31) for many of the participants like 30-year-old Khoudia, as society forced them to keep such experiences to themselves. Khoudia believes that anonymity should be encouraged more and “diversified by allowing people to write or record their stories and send them to the radio because that enables women especially to talk about a variety of challenging issues, not just domestic violence”. She went on to argue:

For some topics, people should be given absolute anonymity. That makes people comfortable to talk about true and personal stories publicly and when that happens, everybody can learn from them. When we do that, it can make people worry less about the damages the story they are sharing with the public can cause them or their family. You know Soutoura is important here. We have to do these things with Soutoura. Look at what happens when people with HIV call and share their sad stories. It is heartbreaking, but people learn from them. Do you think these people would have called if they had to disclose their names or things that would make them recognizable to the listeners? No, never. No Senegalese would do it!

Khoudia highlighted the social importance of anonymity and how it can contribute to controlling the cultural damages talking openly about some of these issues can generate. That fear or concern of not causing trouble was echoed in many participants’ narratives. For them, the sensitive nature of some issues makes anonymity a
fundamental option that each and every caller should have. As mentioned by many participants when discussing anonymity on the air, the concept of Soutoura is deeply rooted in Senegalese culture and still resonates with most Senegalese. As Ndiaye suggests, (2008) “the most important aspect of keeping Soutoura is preserving the family’s name and reputation” (p.156). Therefore, providing anonymity when talking on the air about issues such as rape, HIV/AIDS, or domestic violence offers callers who have to protect not only their own name and reputation, but also that of their family, the opportunity to control, share or withhold information that could make them known. As such, anonymity falls into the cultural boundaries of Soutoura and “it serves both the need of the individual and the family in which they belong” by allowing “a family member [to] control the secret to avoid personal embarrassment or to honor the family bond” (Ndiaye, 2008, pp.29-30). In conjunction with the concept of Soutoura, anonymity provided in the talk shows could play a powerful role in the fight for the elimination of stigma.

Many participants also indicated in their interviews how they believe anonymity can facilitate information sharing, especially regarding sensitive issues. In explaining how having the possibility of remaining anonymous can stimulate the listeners’ desires to speak up and share their experiences and ideas, Saly, a 40-year-old primary school teacher noted:

If the people trust that they can talk about these issues without forfeiting their Soutoura, it makes them want to share more. I don’t want to talk about my mistakes in the past because I am afraid people will judge, because most people do. But if it is safe for me to talk about my mistakes without hurting my family, friends and myself, and especially if I know it can help others, I am more than happy to do it. What I am trying to say is that the fact that the talk shows don’t
force you disclose any information that could identify you added to the fact that people don’t see you makes people more motivated to share ideas, mistakes and advice so other people don’t commit the same mistakes.

As Saly’s statement suggests, some participants will not expose or put themselves or their families at risk to help spread valuable information to others. But if they realize that they can perform positive actions within their communities without compromising their own reputations, they become more motivated to share information and knowledge. Knowing that sharing their stories is not just about them, realizing that what they have to say could help many of their community members prevent and solve some problems, contributes to motivating more people to share their stories. Providing anonymity as a protective barrier is very conducive to knowledge and information sharing.

While most of the participants associated having anonymity with an avenue to talk about difficult issues such as rape, shame, domestic violence, and stigma, one 28-year-old divorced woman, Penda, observed that providing anonymity to people who are shy, especially women, is the first step in them learning how to communicate with other people.

I have never spoken in public. I don’t like to talk in public at all. Even with the talk shows, I prefer to listen. I don’t like calling but slowly, very slowly, I am getting used to calling if I need to. Last month, I called twice to ask Imam Tahib Soce questions. There was this question that was in my mind for maybe more than a year now. I could not get it answered because I did not know how to ask it. So one day, after hearing many people calling, asking questions and giving their opinions, I decided to call to ask my question. When my call went through, I was shaking so much that I could not ask my question. I called again but I barely greeted Tahib and asked my question very fast. I did not tell who I was and where I was calling from. I was really quick. I hung up and then waited for the response. Then I felt good and the second time was easier and it became more and more normal for me to call. The fact that I knew I could choose not to give my name…made me do it. It motivated me a lot. I could have never initiated a conversation on the radio, with an Imam in particular, if I had disclosed my
name and where I was calling from. I would not have succeeded. That I know! I never gave my name and I never will, no matter the talk show.

As a shy person, Penda felt some anxiety interacting on the radio, even from behind her telephone where there is no face-to-face communication. Due to her shyness, she had difficulty expressing her ideas. She believes that without the cover of anonymity, she would have failed in her attempt to communicate with the Imaam. Her fear of face-to-face communication explains her preference of systematic use of anonymity, regardless of the shows or the issues being addressed, because it enables her to act less shyly. Brunet & Schmidt (2007) explain that shyness is “an anxious preoccupation of the self in response to real or imagined social interaction” (p.939) resulting in possible disruption of behaviors (Carver & Scheier, 1986). In Penda’s first attempt to make a call, despite the fact that she had already decided to communicate on the air with absolute anonymity, her heightened self-consciousness may have obstructed her verbal communication and prevented her to even initiate a conversation. Then, in talking about her fear of talking in public and how she overcame some of it, others layers of fear emerged in Penda’s response. She seemed to develop shyness also talking to leaders like the Imaan, especially as a woman. This suggests that she has developed and internalized some hierarchical status perception towards the Imaan which might have increased her fear of calling.

However, she opts for the use of anonymity because it has the potential to “minimize status differences, liberate team members from a fear of retribution, and make members feel more comfortable contributing to discussions” (Rains, 2005, P.131).
Through anonymity, callers are encouraged to separate the virtues and qualities of the hosts and experts, as well as the significance of their contributions from their respective socio-economic and gender statuses, in order for them to participate effectively in the discussions. Anonymous conversations are critical in fostering free, classless and democratic communication by establishing opportunities for all groups to develop assertiveness and engage more in discussions (Scott et al., 1997).

While it is true that many participants enjoyed and praised the use of anonymity and felt that it was an important pillar for willingness and ability to speak up, a small number of participants seemed to not just be critical of the use of anonymity, but also angered by some callers’ insistence on hiding important pieces of their stories. Awa was of them, and she did not seem to appreciate people not disclosing their names. She noted:

We don’t need to hide behind the telephone to talk about some issues like rape and HIV. We have to face them. People should not feel ashamed to the point of not wanting to disclose their names and those of people who have caused them to feel what they feel in their hearts. We have to “break the bone” and reveal … It is people who have done bad things who should feel ashamed to talk about them. If I was raped or contaminated by a cheating husband, I would call and expose of the man who did it to me. Sometimes, by giving your name, you make people believe more in your story. Sometimes I doubt some of the stories people share, not because I am a bad person or I don’t have a good heart, but I want people not to let other people be victims like them. If a person has taken the step to call the radio and tell their story, if it is a story that is related to violence, injustice, or something that can affect us or our children, they should at least tell us their names, or at least that of the offender.

Awa’s statement clearly shows that she is not satisfied with people sharing stories without providing proof of the who and sometimes when and where. She defends herself and rejects the assumption that she is a heartless and careless person. She displayed skepticism vis-à-vis some of the stories shared on the air without the callers disclosing
who they are. For Awa, when these stories are done anonymously, it makes them “suspect because it [is] difficult to verify the source’s credibility” (Dennis, 1996, p. 450).

In the above statement, Awa shows a lot of concern for credibility of the stories as she emphasizes the necessity for callers to reveal their real names and those of the other people involved in the stories. After that statement, she went to share with me a story of an HIV positive woman:

This woman was married to a man she said was well-known and well-respected within the country. The guy married her when she was 13. At the time of their marriage, the guy was travelling back and forth between Europe and Senegal. She claimed that the husband knew he was HIV-positive but went ahead and married her. Later on she became sick, lost a lot of weight, and after some medical exams found out that she was HIV-positive. After her discovery, she told only her father and divorced her husband. You know what the guy did? He went and remarried again and again and lives a “good” life in Dakar. Despite all that this, the woman categorically refused to give the name of the husband. She let him contaminate other women. I believe her, yes. I truly feel sorry for her. The journalist who was interviewing really pushed her to tell the name of the guy but she insisted on keeping it a secret. That’s a crime. I understand why she does not want to give her own name but why not his? Even retelling the story makes me angry. The woman who was sharing her story is responsible for the other women being infected, too. The government should do something about it. The law should be enforced! I even wonder how she kept it to just her father and her doctors for so long. Enough is enough.

Awa was outraged by the story and she believes it shows a lack of responsibility the part of the woman. For her, this was not about only the woman’s life any longer; it also involved the lives of two other women and maybe their children. What Awa did not realize, however, is that even just revealing her husband’s name could blow the woman’s cover. The woman is protecting herself by protecting her husband. Revealing the information that would divulge her husband’s identity would make it possible for people
to find her, since neighbors, friends and family knew that they were married and had children.

Also, for the victim to act responsibly in this situation, she had to first be convinced that she could act effectively; she needed some agency before she could take on her responsibilities. When “individuals do not perceive themselves to be able to act effectively, the sense of responsibility is weakened because, without impact, individuals acts are felt to be futile” (Bickerstaff, Simmon & Pidgeon, 2008, p.1314). But Awa’s disappointment did not stop with the woman. She believes that the state has a huge responsibility and should get involved, since other innocent people’s lives are at risk. She insisted that the state has the duty to fulfill its responsibilities and to act responsibly to protect all citizens. While Awa’s frustration vis-à-vis the refusal of callers to denounce at least the identity of their offenders or abusers is understandable, it would be challenging to make both individuals and the state bear responsibility for issues that involve citizens’ rights to privacy. While citizens should expect protection from the state, the state’s unrestricted access to information is not desirable, even for the most basic information.

As Bouba, a 54-year-old communication professor explained:

We cannot blame everything on the state, especially on sensitive issues like that. But I am not also saying that the government should not bear responsibility. The government has responsibility, the citizens have responsibility, the community, the religious leaders...all these entities have responsibilities that should be acted on collectively if we want to change things. Each and every individual, leader, group, and institution should examine itself and together we can bear and share responsibility and act collectively for change. Having said that, it is also crucial that individuals have rights to their privacy. If they don’t want to share [their information] for any reason, they should be granted the possibility to be anonymous. We have to respect their decisions and choices.
Unlike Awa who, wants to hold the individuals and the state responsible, Bouba believed that a collective and shared responsibility should be called upon for change to take place in such issues. Bouba’s response also makes it clear that developing a sense of collective and shared responsibility should not bar individuals from being selective and careful when it comes to what they want to share with the public. In her opinion, the anonymity and confidentiality desired by participants when calling during the talk shows should not be seen as incompatible with these individuals’ abilities to adhere to some type of collective and shared responsibility. Collective and shared responsibility could connect and bind individuals together and consolidate their relationships, thus enabling more understanding, trust, collective trust and less leaking of information.

While anonymity was cited by many participants as an important motivational element in their participation in the talk shows, it was those who called during the shows who especially spoke of it as an important piece that prompted a greater incentive for them to engage with the listening community and share their stories. While only 11% of all participants identified anonymity as their most important motivation, 63% of callers saw it as the key reason why they desired to call. Yet it meant different things to different callers. For many, it meant the courage to speak up, to challenge the norms, and to disagree with authority, while for others it meant the courage to articulate shame, to share the personal and the political, and for a few, it was seen a way to cover up for those who committed injustices, a lack of responsibly and hopeless for bringing about any meaningful change. Whether used as a tool for covering up injustice or an instrument for
transgression and transformation, anonymity allowed the participants to be part of many difficult conversations.

**Social Interaction**

Social interaction was another significant motivation which the participants associated with their involvement in talk shows. As an essential element of socialization, interaction enables individuals to communicate through “a process by which human beings come to know, believe, and act. [Such] communication is a complex symbolic process in which meaning is created and negotiated as the persons in conversations co-construct their social realities” (Berger & Luckmann, 1996; Carey, 1975; Dance, 1967; Harper, 1979; Mead, 1934; Pearce & Cronen, 1980 cited in Comeaux, 2002 p, xxvii). In other words, when individuals interact, they enter into mutually constructed and interwoven relationships to create and shape their own realities. Such interactional relationships lead to the creation of networks within which people engage in mutual relationships, co-create knowledge, and share values and norms, all while forging their identity in the process of the continuous flow of information.

The literature on social interaction has been heavily discussed and it addresses multiple types, degrees and levels of interaction. Some of these types of interaction include face-to-face interaction, human-technology interaction and technology mediated interaction. Within each of these categories of interaction exist subcategories. Some focus on people-to-people interaction, others focus on people-to-content interaction (Moore, 1989) while others still focus on people’s interaction with the technological instruments they utilize to communicate (Hillman, Willis & Gunawardena, 1994). A review of the
data gathered through interviews, focus groups and participant observations revealed that
the participants of my study were involved in various types and levels of interaction
which they opined to be a significant motivation for socializing and being part of the talk
show community. The participants indicated that they turned to the talk shows as a social
resource and an avenue which provided them a unique context for social interaction.
Especially during focus groups, the participants drew attention to the particular
motivational function social interaction held for many Senegalese’s involvement in the
shows. Awa, a 31-year-old married mother indicated:

Interacting with other people, talking to each other, is one of the most important
reasons as to why many people listen, but most importantly call into, these shows. I
don’t like to talk for other people because as the Wolof say, “you cannot know
your own dream or someone else's” but I can safely say that the interactions,
exchanges and discussion people are having on the air is a key motivational factor
for me and many of the listeners. Like what I say about language, interaction is a
very important motivation as to why many people like me are so captivated by
these talk shows.

The same sentiment was conveyed by 29-year-old Yasin, who argued that the
interactions that are taking place on radio talk shows are what is really drawing people to
either become constant callers or ritualistic listeners.

Interaction is what attracts many people to be involved in the talk shows. I don’t
call a lot but I am really interested in listening to what comes out of other people
discussions and interactions. There are many people like me and my sister and my
mother; we are really interested in listening to people interact. I also know people
who are really into calling to make to make their voices heard, to make friends or
to make a name for themselves. But whatever the reasons for involvement in the
radio talk radio shows are, one thing is clear to me: people enjoy the interactions
that take place! I know for a fact that many of my friends who call do so primarily
because of the interactions they take part in.

Bigué and Yasin’s responses illustrate the significance of interaction in
motivating them to engage in the talk radio shows. In their respective statements, both
Bigué and Yasin seem to be convinced that interaction is not just a significant motivation for radio talk show participation for them alone, but for the entire calling audience. For them, the attractive nature of interaction on the radio talk shows to the vast majority of people is evidence of the role of interaction in Senegalese people’s lives. In their accounts, despite their use of proverbs which indicate some reserve for speaking for other people, it is with confidence that they articulate their belief in the significance of interaction in the audience motivation for participating in the radio talk shows. Such feelings were confirmed by almost every participant. During the focus groups in particular, the participants referred to the interactions they had during talk shows as a “thread” that held them together. For most participants, like a thread, the interactions that occurred during the radio talk shows held them together and made their experiences more meaningful, whether they participated actively in them or not.

Throughout the course of their interactions, the participants were able to build connections with others and strive to unpack their own realities. What is even more interesting is how, in the first focus group I conducted, most participants connected these interactions to language (the use of local languages). They saw these two elements as vital elements for the relationships and exchanges the audience experienced, helping them to share their individual stories while preserving their collective memories. As the result, they have been able to “bridge their sociocultural experience and their linguistic and discursive resources by constituting those linguistic and discursive forms as indexically tied to features of their socio-cultural experience” (Kroskirty, 2000, p.507). With language as a vehicle of communication at the heart of their socio-cultural
experiences and narratives, the participants’ interactions during talk shows provided them with real possibilities for caring and sharing with the larger community, potentially stimulating friendship and solidarity as suggested by a few participants. In stressing the significance of their experiences of interactions, some participants drew attention to the connection and care they were able to give and receive. They stressed how the interactions enabled them to reach out to different sets of people and expand their network of friendship. As Roxeya indicated:

The discussions and interactions we have during the talk shows have helped me and many people like me to have new friends...very good friends. I had friends before I became a fan of *Ettu Jigen ni* and radio WalfFajri--very good friends--and they are still my friends. But the new friends I met through the radio are unique because I chose them or they chose me. We chose each other because of our stories, our common love of someone or something. And sometimes, we might talk to each other through the radio or over the phone long before we meet in person. They are different from the friends I grew up with, like my best friend Abibatu. God gave her to me! (Xarit, she is my other self) It just happened! We grew up together; we know each other well and each other’s secrets. But it is different! My friend Lalla, the one I was telling you about, I met through *Jooyu Xol (Cries of the Heart)*. I reached out to her because we had the same story of abuse and I wanted to help her. Of course Abibatu knows of all my stories and secrets. But Lalla knows what it is like to be abused- I can talk to her without shame or fear of being judged. I know Abibatu will not judge me, she is my true friend, but you know sometimes, I fear that. It is like she has a weapon against me. I share with each of my friends but it is different with each one. For each of them, I have a specific domain where I connect well with them.

Roxeya is making a clear distinction between the friends “God gave her” and the friends she chose based on shared experiences. Although she values her friendship with her best friend, and was quite comfortable to share some of her “deep secrets,” she still fears and feels some guilt. To share her guilt and fear and reach out to “people who can hear her” as she puts it, Roxeya saw the interactions on the radio talk shows as an opportunity to connect to “friends” she selected using specific criteria. For Roxeya, such
a person had to be an outsider of her immediate environment and at the same time an insider to her “secret” experience. The search for an outsider/insider friend based on criteria such as location, experience and inside information was also of a great interest of few other participants like Aminata who argued:

You can live in the same neighborhood or even be related to people who have the criteria or the story I am looking for or that are of interest to me, but if they don’t interact with you, or if you don’t hear them interact with others or share their stories, how can you approach them to be their friends? You might want to be friends with them because they are nice but not because there is something special or interesting about them that is appealing to you. I have a lot of friends but I do not want to share all of my stories and secrets with them. And sometimes, even your own best friend or sister cannot really understand what you experience unless they themselves go through the same thing. Sometimes, it is your close friends and relatives who fail to believe in you or to support you. Sometimes they want to but they are afraid. That is why some of these shows are so important—because the interactions we have with people who do not know us well enough to judge us is very important. It is very important. It is important to have somebody say that they know what you are living through because they have lived through it as well. It is very sad, because you do not want a lot of people to have difficult experiences but that’s God’s willing!

Aminata statement is indicative of a desire for selective friendship during the interactions on the radio talk shows. Like Aminata, some women are in search of friends not because they lack friends in their lives, but instead they target mutual understanding coupled with an absence of judgment, which they seem to lack in their immediate environment. They are seeking to gain not necessarily more valuable friends, but different types of friends with whom they foster relationships that encompass care, concern and connection (Martin, 1994). They are in search of “the voice of concern, connectedness, relatedness over time, and caring” (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 1997, p. 122) which, when discovered, give them the capacity and drive to engage in mutually advantageous friendships. As Roxeya mentioned in her account, in such relationships the
people involved have no intention of fully disclosing their stories but rather are more
drawn toward a more selective approach with targeted personal disclosures. Yet, many
participants acknowledged that these friendships developed as they involved more
physical interactions. While they indicated that the physical presence was not
indispensable to create and enable connection, many of the relationships that have been
formed on the air translate into face-to-face interactions. As these relationships evolve
through the talk shows and sometimes through radio fans’ club meetings and personal
telephone exchanges, self-disclosure and mutual trust amplify, transforming the
friendship into a more personal and intimate relationship. As Penda, opined:

When I told my divorce story on the radio, many people who had the similar
painful experiences called, shared their stories and how they overcame them. But
most importantly, more than 10 people gave their names and phone numbers to
the talk show host for me to get in touch with them. It was 7 women and 3 men.
All of them wanted to help me. Right now, two of them have become very, very
close friends to me and they know my family members and I know their family
members as well. Today they still support my family financially. Because of
what happened to me, I listen more than ever and pay more attention [to radio
shows]. I don’t have the money to call often, and I try to save my money for
stories with which I can make a meaningful call. My hope is that no one has to
experience what I went through, but I have to pay repay the debt. Now I am
paying more attention to people in ways which allow me to help other people. I
think I was always like that but it has increased since my story aired on the radio.
One day, I am sure I will help another person, inshalla.

Like many other participants, Penda did limit her interactions with the friends she
met on the talk shows in the virtual sphere. What is interesting in this story is the extent
to which these friendships evolve and came to involve family members. These
collaborative and synergic relationships that began on the air led to face-to-face
interactions. Penda extended her interactions to a more personal and private level. For
Penda, these friendships are not always mutually beneficial relationships, especially when
they involve financial support and help beyond just sharing stories and experiences. As Penda’s story suggests, the extent to which she has developed relationships with the people she met through the radio talk shows has created in her a sense of moral contract whereby she feels indebted not just to her helpers but to anyone in need. While Penda seemed to accept that she might never be able to adequately give back to those who reached out to her when she was in need of help the most, she firmly believes that the interactions have made her want to help other individuals in need, to care for them and share her story with them. Penda and all of the participants who have taken on that moral contract have exemplified the ethics of care which embodies a relational perspective to caring while contributing to developing their full humanity. In emphasizing relationships and responsibilities through mutual interactions and human connection, these participants have embraced a “moral life… populated by caring relations in which the interests of self and other are mingled, and trust is crucial” (Held, 2004, p.144), a “level of caring that honors the dignity of each person and desires to see that person enjoy a fully human life” (Starratt, 1991, p. 195).

While Penda’s interactions led to more personal and face-to-face interaction, she never felt the need either to join the radio fans clubs or to identify herself as a loyal fan as did some women I interviewed. Two participants in particular, Salimata and Khoudia, referred to themselves as loyal fans of the radio RFM and radio Dunya respectively, and spoke of the fulfillment they felt when interacting with their fellow fans on air as well as off air. However they appeared to prefer the interactions they had while being involved with their fellow fans outside of the talk shows framework. As Salimata argued:
I am a big fan of radio RFM. I call frequently and many people know me as a true fan of radio RFM. I call to participate, share information with the fans and give dedications to my friends and family. At lot of fans also call to give me dedications. I go to fans’ houses for events like weddings, naming ceremonies, and funerals, and we call each other. We call to wish each other happy birthday. We do interact and share information on the radio, but we the fans expand our relationships beyond the radio. We truly interact and connect through these events. Everybody knows me. Something else that is very important is the fact that because of the relationships and connections we are able to reach out to important people who are not fans but are mothers, fathers, husbands, wives or close friends of fans. Also being a loyal, known fan and belonging to the club makes it easy to get access to talk show hosts and celebrities working on the radio. Another thing too: it is because of my being a fan that I now know many celebrities personally and even have their cell phone numbers. It feels good when they refer to you on the air. I do love and enjoy interacting with people on the radio but the interactions we have off air are far more interesting and rewarding for me. But, I have to admit that all this has its origins on the radio and that’s why I have to hold onto the talk shows. I cannot forget that!

Salimata is evidently excited about the fame she was able to acquire by being a fan of radio RFM. She seemed to be displaying some pride as a result of the bonds she has created with radio talk show hosts and celebrities. The same excitement toward the interactions with the fans was manifest in Khoudia who, when asked whether she preferred interacting with fans during the talk shows or outside of the talk show milieu, said:

Right now, I cannot tell whether I prefer interactions I have on the air with the other fans to those I have off air. Hum! But I think the communication and interactions I have with others fans are very important for me. Interacting on air, and especially those who are not fans, is very significant because it is maybe the only opportunity a person has to talk to them. But the fans clubs, they introduce us to ordinary people but also to personalities, radio talk hosts and musicians like Youssou Ndour. And I don’t believe that would have ever happened if it were not for the fan clubs. What is even more important is that we become very close very these people. You know my friend Maam; she got a job in SONATEL right after joining the club. One fan that has connections helped her. Yes! We the fans help each other. The interactions we have when we gather during the meetings-- only God knows how helpful they are.
Like Salimata, Khoudia seemed to value her belonging in such clubs, which has provided both some privilege and access to radio hosts and celebrities. The formation of the fan clubs has given these members an interestingly new dynamic to nurture their interactions both on the radio talk shows and during the fan clubs’ meetings. Their statements demonstrate that they have cultivated some sense of genuine relationships between fans and especially people they believed they would have gotten in contact with without the fan networks. Such a sense of sincere relationships is illustrated by Salimata when she argued:

It is not just about talking to these famous people on the radio or the phone. We sit on the same couch together; we joke together and shake hands. It is not like me being their fans without them being my fan. Getting close to and talking in person to the talk shows host shows that “it takes two parties to keep a healthy relative relationship going on”. That also shows that the interactions and relationships are not always fake and unreal as one of my cousins thinks. She thinks we chase these people and force our friendships, but that is not true. We gain a lot of from them. I have gained a lot from them and I know most of these relationships, interactions, friendships and the familiarity and sometimes intimacy that emerged from them are real.

The participants and Salimata in particular, believed to have developed with radio celebrities and other fans relationships grounded on commitment, closeness, affinity, interaction, and confidence. She rejected her cousin’s notions of artificial/insincere relationships between radio celebrities and fans, and claimed having gained something from these interactions. For Salimata, having the ability to connect with radio celebrities and some radio talk show hosts and establishing, to some degree, two-sided relationships was really enabling. In fact, these gatherings and interactions between fans and radio show hosts and celebrities can play a significant function in promoting mutuality which in return “can facilitate an egalitarian relationship, which is
associated with greater satisfaction (Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 2009; Walsh, 2006 cited in Fishbane, 2011, p.339). In establishing egalitarian interactions among privileged and underprivileged fans as well as celebrities, although ephemeral at times, the fan networks can enable a meaningful, multi-dimensional process for all the parties involved.

As Oumou, a talk radio hosts said:

The phenomenon of radio fans is very interesting and very useful to the radio and to the fans. They need each other. For many fans, being a fan gives them some status, especially those fans who are well-known. It gives them connections and opens doors for them, doors that allow them to obtain a lot of privilege. Many fans talk about how the radio has given them a sense of being on the same level with some important person due to a type of discussion or interaction they had with that person whether on air or off air. Also, not one, not two, but many times, I have helped fans get a job, get an appointment with a specialized doctor, connect them with somebody, etc. And that is very significant for me. It makes me realize how useful I can be to many individuals. I know my influence is very connected with my fame and my talk shows which have given me my many loyal fans that call and listen to me. My show is famous because of them. We take pride in them the same way they take pride in us. Being a fan is really uplifting!

Oumou’s statement reiterates the enriching and enabling nature of the interactions that occur not only between fans and radio celebrities, but also among fans themselves. Driven by enthusiasm, these off-air talk show fan networks allow a number of fans to consolidate their relationships while utilizing the interactions that take place as an opportunity to develop solid group dynamics. Most importantly, these relationships give the radio celebrities an opportunity to feel useful, which can contribute to boosting their own self-esteem. Such dynamic interactions where “both (or all) people feel seen, known, heard, and respected in relationship, they begin to generate mutual empowerment” (Hartling & Miller, 2004, p.2) In other words, these interaction processes where both fans
and celebrities are involved in reciprocal, compassionate and respectful relationships, will ultimately benefit both parties.

Interaction was a driving factor in the participants’ involvement and belonging to the radio talk show community. Interestingly, while social interaction was not most important motivation for the participants’ engagement in the radio talk shows, all saw it as an indispensable element for their involvement. For the participants who identified interaction as their most important motivational factor, the various interactions they participated in offered them endless possibilities beyond the boundaries of the radio talk shows. For some, just interacting with others on air was sufficient and fulfilling, but for many others, the interactions that occurred outside of the radio realm were equally significant, perhaps even more meaningful and empowering at times. Whether or not they limited their interactions with the listening community during the radio talk shows, they all undeniably recognized the enabling capacity of their interaction to establish relationships. Building relationships, seeking friendships—these aims were at the core of their encounters. Building relationships, whether, real, imagined, selective or “God given” as Roxeya argued, the core of their encounters.

**Entertainment**

Entertainment was another significant motivation for many participants to tune in during radio talk shows. Defined as “any activity designed to delight and, to a smaller degree, enlighten through the exhibition of the fortunes or misfortunes of others, but also through the display of special skills by others/or self” (Zillmann & Bryant, 2002, p.303), entertainment has always had direct effects on an audience’s perceptions and feelings
(Bryant & Vorderer, 2006; Zillman & Vorderer, 2000). The scholarship on entertainment is not new at all, especially in the fields of communication and media studies. However, as Katz & Foulkes (1962) argued, communication scholars were at first reluctant to give entertainment the attention it deserved, even though it held a significant role in society. Instead, Katz & Foulkes (1962) claimed that “the choice was made to study the mass media as agents of persuasion rather than as agents of entertainment” (p.378). Recently, more scholars not only have shown more interest in entertainment itself but have begun to recognize the potential entertainment holds for social change. Such interests have led to the emergence of concepts like edutainment and politainment, which highlight the intersections of entertainment and education, and entertainment and politics, respectively.

With the development of technology alongside the emergence and accessibility of media programs like talk shows, the public’s consumption of entertainment has not only significantly increased but has “become a more integral part of people’s shopping, traveling, eating, driving, exercising and working experiences” (Singhal & Rogers, 2002, p.119). The same was true for many participants in this study, as consumers who seek to entertain and enjoy themselves in a variety of ways and for various reasons. Therefore, many participants listened to and actively participated in talk shows in their search for gratifying experiences. According to 49-year-old Mati, whose motivations for listening to talk shows include entertaining herself:

Enjoying myself is a very important reason as to why I listen to the talk shows, especially when I am not in a good mood or happy. As I told you, I love listening to shows like Koutia’s. It makes you happy, laugh and enjoy life, even it is for a short period of time. You know Koutia. No one can resist him. He is so fun. He can imitate everybody’s voice. I really like that. Also something else that is meaningful and enjoyable to me is the Seereer music. I like radio RFM a lot, but
sometimes I target other programs like RTS, just to listen to Seereer music. It makes me feel good and really nostalgic. Something else too, which makes me even enjoy some of the shows is when my friends call to give me dedications. It fills my heart with happiness. So… yes, to enjoy and entertain myself and my friends is a key in my being a loyal listener. Kouthia is so humorous; he keeps everybody happy and laughing. Nobody can listen to him and still be in a bad mood.

Similar feelings towards the motivational factor of entertainment were expressed by 29-year-old Yacine, who although critical of some of the messages conveyed in some songs, targeted some of them for fun. She argued:

I like the majority of the shows and as I said, I listen to for various motives, but the reason as to why I say having fun and being entertained is important for my listening is because these shows help me to stay happy. The music, the stories, and the riddles they tell makes them just gratifying. For example, the day before yesterday, I was angry-- I don’t even know for what-- and Koutia was doing his show and he was making fun of someone and I could not stay angry anymore. I started laughing and then my sister said “you were yelling just a minute ago” and I suddenly realized I was not angry anymore. I can tell you of many more occasions where that has happened. Now I know that when I am not happy and I listen to Khoutia or the Silla Muñal show, I forget my unhappiness for a moment. Also, sometimes at night we try to retell some of the funny stories told on air among us. Sometimes, it is even funnier, sometimes, we know we are not Koutia and we cannot do it like he does it. But it is still funny, it is humorous and it has an important place in my everyday life. I do not like everything in the shows, especially the messages conveyed in some songs, but many of them are fun and amusing for many people like me.

Mati and Yacine both seem to enjoy the humor they get from these talk shows, especially that of Kouthia. In Yacine’s case, it seems as if her humorous experience with the talk show is not just entertaining her, but is also providing her with a way to overcome emotions such as anger. While the talk shows may have entertained her temporarily and given her the opportunity to forget that she was even angry, such experiences, argued Greenwood (2010) might be “a mere distraction from a negative mood, …may provide only a temporary fix” (p.245). Whether the benefits of positive
affect are sustainable or ephemeral, the participants are continuously exposing themselves to and participating in the talk shows with the intention to be entertained and to further alter their negative moods. Research has found that people carefully choose the types of media they expose themselves to when experiencing negative feelings (Zillmann, 1988; Knobloch & Zillmann, 2003). These findings are also valid for some of the participants of this study who indicated selectively choosing the music and humor talk shows to sustain or uphold their positive and affective feelings. As Knobloch (2003) wrote, “entertainment [is composed of] a wide assortment of stimuli that are created to play on our emotions, which give media consumers material to manage mood” (Zillmann, 1988 cited in p.233). In the same way, the music and humorous talk shows provided the participants with a good assortment of entertainment which, according to the participants, were ideal for their enjoyment and mood regulation.

Like Mati and Yacine, many participants’ quest for entertainment through radio talk shows was very much influenced by a mood regulation factor, although it was not the only motivation. Two participants, Fama and Mounasse, indicated that the sole motivation for their search for entertainment through talk shows was amusement. Fama, when asked whether she felt the desire to listen to music and humorous talk shows whenever she was in bad mood or unhappy responded: No. When I am not happy or when I am in a bad mood, I don’t want to listen to Koutia. I want to be alone. Even when I am with people, I pretend as if I am not unhappy. To feel better, I pray and talk to people, but I don’t talk to them about the problem, I don’t discuss with them the veritable reason for my anger. And I am not a person that is moody or gets unhappy very often. So when it happens, I do not use Koutia or people like him to calm down. If I get unhappy and want to talk, I talk to my sister or best friend, but even that I avoid doing it a lot. Sometimes, when my heart does not feel well, I can feel irritated by some of the funny and humorous stuff that goes on the radio because I need a serious environment, a calm place. That is why I pray if I want to be calm or change my mood. But I enjoy Koutia, DJ Boubs and all the categories like them, Naatam, etc. just to amuse myself, to laugh, and to increase my positive feelings, I mean increase my happiness! And that is a very good reason why I listen every day to various radio stations and target the music or humorous shows.
Fama does not use shows like Koutia’s to regulate her mood. Her statement suggests that rather than using these platforms to dissipate her negative feelings, she instead sees them as a place to avoid because of their lack of “seriousness” and calm, which she argued are both necessary to her to really get over such feelings. Praying is a better way for her to be calm and regulate her mood. She however acknowledged being entertained by the music and humorous shows. For her, listening to these shows is an opportunity to increase her happiness and excitement and to join a community of joyful individuals. Mounasse, who also argued in the same line as Fama, declared:

The music and humorous talk shows are my favorite. Look at me; you can see that I love music in my heart. It is the reason why I became a fan and constant caller. At the beginning, I did not call a lot. But as more and more friends called to give me dedications on air, it made it even more enjoyable and attractive to me. My friends entertain me. They know the kind of music I like and they ask the DJ to play it for me, and that makes me really happy. They are showing the whole word how much they love me and want me make me happy. I also like the types of music some shows put on like Niatam and also the stories and riddles others callers tell even if they are not friends. Because sometimes, some people call and give dedication to all the listeners, all the lovers, etc. It is beautiful! It is satisfying! All I want when I participate in the talk shows is to be happy and to make people happy. Joy and happiness is all that matters. Life is too short!

Mounasse’s desire to not only entertain herself and her friends, but also to be entertained by her friends is a significant motivation for her participation in the talk shows. Her satisfaction and enjoyment with the shows seemed to be intensified by her friends’ affiliation to the shows as well as cheering each other up and feeling entertained. Mounasse also seemed to have extended her entertainment and enjoyment beyond her friends and what they bring to the talk shows. As her statement indicates, she also enjoys
other callers’ contributions to the shows as well as the content itself. These additional elements make these talk show environments very attractive to her.

In representing some participants’ views and expectations, the shows helped boost and amplify their level of entertainment and satisfaction. This was especially true for those whose primary motivation was seeking mere entertainment to maintain or intensify their level of pleasure. Similar feelings were expressed by another participant, who interestingly sought entertainment and enjoyment not for herself but for the customers who came to buy coffee at her shop. According to Aysata:

Seeking entertainment, having fun or getting distracted is not the most important motivation for my listening to the radio talk shows. For me, the most important reason for listening is seeking information and gaining knowledge. But I do want to keep my customers happy and entertained. They are the reason why my business keeps running and I will do whatever I can to make them happy. If I just speak the truth, I do not like some of the jokes made during some of the humorous shows, they irritate me sometimes. But my customers gain a lot of pleasure listening to people like Koutia. You get really excited listening to them...You have seen what I am saying, these people only want to get positive feelings, get excited. For their pleasure and happiness I have to turn my radio on. … I get entertained by entertaining them. It entertains me to see them entertained. And at times, I also do get some joy from the shows, the jokes and funny stories people tell. Some of them are indeed very funny and exciting and I am sure that is what makes it addictive to my customers.

As her statement illustrates, although Aysata was not really seeking to be personally entertained by the talk shows, she acknowledged being amused by some of them. What is interesting is that her true source of enjoyment and entertainment in listening to the music and humorous talk shows is not her own reactions but the amusement of her customers. Making sure her customers’ loyalty is maintained, if not increased, was the main of the reasons Aysata targeted and paid much attention to these shows. Knowing that some shows elicited feelings of pleasure and happiness in her
costumers motivated her to embrace them even if they irritated her at times. Striving to stimulate her costumers, whose motivation for listening to the talk shows was seeking entertainment, Aysata tapped into the shows capacity to enthuse them. She went on to add:

The humorous talk shows are their favorite. Those shows make them really happy and that is the reason why when they are on, I hang on my radio here and increase the volume. That is how I became a fan of radio RFM. Some of them have to call. If you see the excitement in their faces, it is unbelievable. I used to wonder what they liked about Koutia. …. sometimes when they do not have money, you see them sending text messages to friends to buy and send me credit to call, or borrow other people’s phones to call. There are some that are more hooked than others. You saw how Aja and Diana were laughing last time, as if they were crazy. That behavior used to bother me and some other customers but I am used to it. I know it is a way for them to relax, forget their problems and just laugh. I have my own problems but some have serious problems and that’s why they come here to drink coffee, have fun and forget about their problems.

This statement exemplifies Aysata’s awareness of the role of humorous shows in her customers’ lives and highlighted the socialization her place offers for many people who come there to drink coffee, but most importantly, to release their daily stress and tension through their interactions and the shows they listen to. For them, the entire experience of listening to jokes and music is a group-gratifying experience which allows them to release their stress together and hopefully heal in the process. While Aysata’s place was unique in a sense that it allowed many people to listen and release their stress together, many other participants recognized using the humorous talk shows as a coping strategy that offered them an opportunity to externalize negative energy and feelings that reside within themselves. As Yasin said:

Every day, I need to listen to the radio to make myself feel good. Koutia, DJ Boubs, they make you forget all your fatigue, the problems you face every day. I also like the Sillamuñal segment a lot. All of these people help us deal with the
heavy weight of today’s problems. They make us laugh even if we don’t want to. Whenever I listen to Koutia, it reduces my stress. I feel happy. What kills me with him is how well he imitates some famous people like Viviane Wade (the wife of President Wade), Djibo Ka and the others. I make sure I never miss his shows. But whenever I miss it, I ask my friends or my grandmother to tell me what funny stories he told or who he made fun of. Did I tell you my grandmother loves Koutia? He makes her laugh so much that she starts crying. It is good for her because it keeps her company and entertains her when everybody goes to work and the children go to school. Sometimes, at night, we try to imitate and retell the stories and it gets really funny and enjoyable. One thing is clear: whenever I listen to Koutia’s show even if it is a story I have heard from him before, it makes me laugh, I feel less stressed, fatigued. I am relaxed and happy and my grandmother is even happier than me. You should have seen her!

Yasin’s statement suggests that entertainment and humorous shows like Koutia’s allows listeners like her and her grandmother to experience enjoyment by being able to escape their daily struggles, stress and selves. Koutia’s shows in particular seems to have benefitted both of them, succeeding in generating laughter, an indication of enjoyment and entertainment which led to some relief from stress. As Lynch (2002) stated, “humor has healing quality, allowing built-up tension and energy to be released” (p.427). As a result of their exposure to Koutia’s humorous shows, Yasin and her grandmother felt less stressed and fatigued. Instead they were able to project themselves into a positive state within which they found relief while appreciating the pleasure of the humor. In doing so, the listeners of such shows are taken away from their mundane experiences and transported “into a narrative world” (Green & Brock, 2002) which stimulates in them pleasurable affective feelings. As they experience relief from a negative feelings or experiences, individuals who are exposed to the humorous shows may be transported into a “positive state (enjoyment) or may simply lay the groundwork for enjoyment by reducing a competing affective state” (Green, Brock & Kaufman, 2004, p.317).
Among the participants who used the humorous shows to eliminate their stress, few, like Yasin’s grandmother, developed a parasocial relationship with Koutia as they spent hours and hours listening to his shows in search of entertainment and enjoyment. As Green, Brock, & Kaufman (2004) suggested, “as individuals become increasingly enmeshed in a narrative world, it is likely that they will develop a strong sense of connection or familiarity with characters encountered repeatedly or continuously over time” (p. 319). In other words, some participants’ long and constant exposure to radio talk shows has resulted in them developing some degree of attachment toward celebrities like Koutia, which for these listeners signifies closeness with such personages.

Yasin’s grandmother’s description of her attachment and connection to Koutia and his shows exemplifies such a scenario. Her seemingly lonely situation during the day with no one at home might have caused her to seek attachment and entertainment outside of her immediate environment. As she becomes less involved in other individuals’ lives for the majority of the day, Yasin’s grandmother is more likely to seek the comfort of attachment and entertainment in talk shows and their hosts, even if ephemeral. Whether illusionary, imagined, or unidirectional, from the formation of such interactions with the performer (Koutia in this case) stem much enjoyment and relief which forges important and compassionate relationships that allow the parties involved to connect with each other. Such interactions and “parasocial relationships, which are inherently asymmetric and do not require the same kind of emotional investment or effort as real life relationships, may be particularly gratifying for individuals who struggle to negotiate negative affect and effortful control” (Greenwood, 2008, p. 421). Therefore, in
permeating their audience’s daily lives, the humorous shows like Koutia’s, whether they intend to deliver a message or to purely entertain, offer many listeners the opportunity to invest in comfortable relationships with some strong sense of mutuality and interconnection.

Furthermore, interestingly, there were a large number of participants who found the political talk shows to be very entertaining despite the fact that only 7% of them identified political talk shows as their first preference. Mati, one participant who disliked listening to the politicians on the radio indicated:

I told you I don’t like to listen to politicians, especially on the radio because you cannot trust them. You will not believe me but they are entertaining to me. They are funny to listen to at times just to relax, when you are bored or have nothing else to do. Also, most of the time, when I listen to the politicians, it is really amusing to me because I don’t know whether I should laugh or cry. For the majority of the time, I feel as if the nonsense they are saying should be obvious to everybody and even funny. I like it when it is a comedian hosting political talk shows because we know at least it is for fun, even though the comedian can ask the politicians they invite some serious questions. These types of shows are fun also but they are different. If I want to really have fun, I choose other shows that are really for fun, humorous ones like Boubs or Koutia. The political talk shows …I have fun listening to them; they can be really funny… You know what I mean.

Mati is so displeased and disappointed by the political talk shows to the point she finds them humorous at times. While she claimed that she does not select them to entertain herself when she really feels like enjoying herself, she does enjoy them when she finds herself exposed to them. Yet, her statement suggests that the type and level of entertainment and enjoyment evoked by the political talk shows is not as gratifying as the humorous talk shows or those where politics and entertainment are intentionally mixed. While it is paradoxical that Mati dislikes the political talk shows and acknowledged their
aptitude to emit positive feelings in her, it is important to note that sometimes the viewer or listener chooses “experiences in ways that do not rely on the experience of pleasure or positive affect specifically” (Oliver & Raney, 2011, p.987). While exposing herself to experiences which are not solely intended to invoke hedonic happiness, Mati was able to come to the political talk shows from a more enjoyable perspective and transform what could have been a negative affective reaction into a pleasant and entertaining experience. While Mati was the only participant who spoke about experiencing ambiguous feelings toward particular types of shows, many other participants who did not like the political talk shows mentioned feelings of enjoyment and fun toward the talk shows that blended entertainment and politics.

Binta was one of the few participants who truly enjoyed the political talk shows, arguing that they give her “joy and pleasure” when she listened to them. Her arguments for such pleasure and joy, she said, were a result of the meaningfulness of the political talk shows and the progress and change they have brought to the country. For Binta “it is a pleasure in the heart to see so many people involved in the political problems of our country”. Binta went on to talk about how she also loves the shows that blend politics and humor and how they bring a funny atmosphere into her house. She said:

I enjoy very much the political talk shows, the panels and the ones that are conducted by comedians like Koutia because they entertain, relax, and awaken many people. There are also two other elements that I find really entertaining. The first one is when politics is accompanied with humor. Even my husband cannot have enough of the comedians making fun of politicians. Koutia is exceptional in imitating everybody. We cannot hear Koutia without laughing. One day my husband and I were sitting in the living room reading and then Koutia said something; we all simultaneously started laughing. We laughed so much that we had tears. Sometimes, he conveys interesting messages. It is not just the humor…The other one (element) is the sarcasm that a lot of callers use when they
call. For me, one of the best parts is the sarcasm of the callers. It is entertaining and interesting to hear how smartly some people are using sarcasm to speak their mind, disagree, and even mock some personalities.

Binta’s statement characterizes how much the various types and formats of political talk shows elicit excitement and entertainment for her and her husband as well. She represents another example of the entertainment aptitude of humorous talk shows but also raised an interesting point many participants did not touch on: the possibility that the humorous shows deliver a message that is not merely entertaining. As she opined in her statement, the humorous talk shows that emphasize politics might play an important role in not only changing people’s negative perceptions about political leaders but also in bringing together politics and the daily experiences of citizens to “make citizenship more pleasurable” (Van Zoonen, 2005 cited in Scott, 2011, p.501). While entertainment shows can be viewed as “distractions from the serious duty of the informed citizen” (Jones, 2006, p.367), current research has shown that “to the contrary, that citizens who employ a variety of popular media in their encounters with politics (such as fictional narratives, humorous talk shows, popular music, etc.) actually derive meaningful engagement with the political process (Corner & Pels 2003; Baym 2005; Jones 2005; Van Zoonen 2005 cited in Jones, 2006, p.367).

Another interesting, exiting, and enjoyable factor for Binta was sarcasm. As highlighted in her statement, sarcasm was a motivational factor that evoked feelings of pleasure and fun for her. Binta recounts how some callers have appropriated this important element of Senegalese communication to express their dissatisfaction and disappointment toward the politicians. This alternative way of using communication
through tonal cues and specific expressions can provide great insights and “analytical
tool(s) for situating people’s expressions of dissatisfaction in experienced discrepancies
between the expected and the actual” (Shari, 2003, p.172) which can be more than just
entertaining for Binta as a politician and a member of the Parliament. In trying to
entertain and raise political awareness, sarcasm offers an interesting way to be culturally
appropriate while “putting one finger in the wound” as Senegalese people say.

Entertainment was an important motivation as to why many participants became
listeners, callers and often times fans of the radio talk shows. As they sought to regulate
their mood, to gain relief from daily stress and problems, or to just elicit mere
entertainment or positive feelings, many participants turned to the talk shows. In their
quest for hedonic feelings, they targeted various types of shows. The humorous and
music talk shows were a popular category that evoked positive affective feelings for
many participants. Even the few participants who were very critical of the content of such
shows did recognize that they fulfilled hedonic functions for them. Surprisingly, despite
the noticeable dislike of the political talk shows, few expressed enjoyment and
excitement toward them. Even though it was only highlighted by one a single participant,
it is perhaps the sarcasm of Senegalese women that listeners hear on the shows which
makes them enjoyable, exciting and entertaining. As a way to challenge the status quo,
sarcasm allowed women to have fun, remain politically correct and yet “put their finger
in the wound”.

Summary

In this chapter, I offered a detailed discussion of the participants’ radio talk shows listening motives. In doing so, I have presented an analysis of the five major themes that emerged from the review of data I gathered from the field. In presenting the narratives, I wove their rich and interesting voices with the literature to provide an analysis of their motivations. Whether they were motivated by the use of a local language, to seek information, attracted by the anonymity the talk shows offered, to interact with others or just desired to be entertained, the participants saw great potential in the talk shows. They desired to speak in their own language, to talk back to other, to be sarcastic, to cry, or even to curse/swear/ or to use profanity anonymously. They wanted to share secrets without being judged. They sought information and they sought to network with others. Sometimes they simply wanted to be entertained. In these ways they sought to improve themselves and they imagined a better future, one in which they will be more knowledgeable, empowered and will function in a better community.

In trying to investigate whether the participants utilized all the information, knowledge, and networking they acquired on the talk shows, the next chapter will explore the role of these shows in the women’s lives.
Chapter Seven: They Listen, They Call, So What?

Introduction

In this chapter I present the various ways participants used talk radio programs to enrich their lives. A close analysis of the interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and field notes discerned four major themes: education, empowerment, identity, and community formation. Each theme indicates the particular way participants reacted to the talk shows. The narratives of the thirty women who participated in this study suggest that engagement with the talk radio programs affected the women's feelings, influenced their actions, and changed their behaviors.

Education

Education was a major theme that emerged as the participants discussed the ways in which the radio talk shows helped promote social change. The theme speaks to the extent many participants apply the knowledge they have gained from radio talk shows to their daily lives. Simply because information is broadcast does not mean that it will be used. Yet my research revealed that the women frequently applied what they learned. Participants viewed the talk shows as unique educational and pedagogical platforms for learning as well as for personal and social transformation. As they sought information and knowledge through exposure to and participation in the talk shows, the participants came to discover new ways of “understanding, describing and explaining intentions; values; ideals, moral issues, political, philosophical, psychological, or educational concepts; feelings and reasoning” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 75). For many, the talk show forums brought together different dichotomies of knowledge, which translated into
unique transformative learning experiences. As they gained new knowledge and were exposed to different ways of understanding their personal experiences, participants developed new levels of consciousness and methods of posing and solving problems. Thus, rather than being passive listeners, the participants became “critical co-investigators in dialogue [with each other as] they strove for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention on reality” (Freire, 1972, p.68). In striving to investigate issues close to their hearts, more than two-thirds of the participants referred to the radio talk shows as a school that provided a space where they could co-learn and gain invaluable knowledge and information. While not all of these women used the knowledge they acquired from the radio, most of those whose primary motivation was to seek education indicated having directly applied and/or shared such knowledge to enact change in at least one aspect of their lives. In their narratives, these women provided many examples as to how the radio, as their school, offered them various bodies of knowledge which they integrated into their belief systems, greatly influencing both their attitudes and practices. Bigué, one of the participants who translated the knowledge she gained on the religious talk shows into action, argued:

I seek knowledge every day. You never have enough knowledge. The radio talk shows are like schools that come to us and give us real knowledge that we can use every day. It is difficult to apply everything we learn, but the fact that they repeat some of these messages makes it easy for us to pay more attention and ultimately use what we hear and learn from the shows. This is particularly true when what they are talking about is what we are searching for. For instance, I did not know how to rectify a prayer. I did not even know [of] all the things that can invalidate a prayer. Before I started listening to the religious talk shows, when I would pray by myself and by mistake increase or decrease the number of rakka’ha I was supposed to do, I would just redo the prayer, not knowing that it is better to rectify a prayer than to redo it. I now know how to correct my prayers. Since I learned that you get more barke by rectifying a prayer than staring a new one, I always
rectify my prayers whenever I make a mistake. I have even taught some of my friends how to fix a prayer.

Bigué’s statement highlights significant knowledge gain, but more importantly, the practicality and relevance of such knowledge to the listeners’ personal and spiritual growth. In actively seeking religious knowledge and incorporating it into her practices, Bigué has clearly moved beyond intransitive consciousness. She refused to sit passively and accept either her inability to perform these religious practices or her reliance on men to guide her. Although Bigué’s statement does not necessarily speak to critical consciousness, given that there is no clear indication that she has succeeded in “connect [ing] the pieces of reality into meaningful wholes but rather acts on parts in a disconnected way” (Shor, 1992, p.127), her determination to seek knowledge and then apply it is a sign of semi-transitive consciousness which is key in “the making of personal and social change” (Shor, 1992, p.127). Bigué’s state of consciousness indicates she is at least beginning a personal transformation. She identifies potential solutions to isolated issues. For many participants, such an approach is a significant step towards critical consciousness even if it may be only temporary or may not fully address the fundamental roots of their problems.

A key component in the radio shows’ success as a tool of education was the women’s curiosity which served as a motivating force. Bigué and a few other participants, like Kolle, found curiosity to be at the heart of their learning and transformation. For Bigué:

If you are not curious, there are a lot of things you will never know. Of course curiosity is not always good, especially for women. It is not good to be curious for the sake of knowing other people’s business. But the curiosity I am talking about
is the one that allows you to discover things that will make you a better person, a better Muslim. [Curiosity] has taught me a lot, things I did not know and things I did not even know I did not know. For instance, I thought I knew everything about mourning in Islam. But when I listened to Tayib Soce, I found out that you do not have to wear just a specific dress. Now I know you can wear any clothes you want, as long as they are decent and modest. Also, I now know that you can shower any time and any day; you do not have to be restricted that way. A widow can travel, cross water if she has to. All these things I thought were right are bida.

Kolle added this regarding curiosity:

Inquiry is the reason why we know what we know. We must be curious to know what we need to know. That’s why God gave us a mind to think, to inquire. If we do not use it, we are like animals. “The only use of the mind is to think”. When we are curious and take time to think very well about all the ideas we hear on the radio, we can really learn a lot from them. Sometimes, you might not even be interested in a topic that is being discussed on the radio, but that should not make you not want to hear what they have to say. A person has to be curious even with regards to things that seem unbeneﬁcial to her/him. I cannot even count the number of shows that are really not interesting to me at ﬁrst, but as more people call and share; I want to know more, which makes me more curious. And most of the time, I end up learning something.

These two viewpoints seem to illustrate the pivotal roles curiosity and a desire to know things play in learning and knowledge acquisition. Both participants’ responses exemplify the positive consequences curiosity has had on their learning experiences. In trying to make meaning through curiosity, Bigué and Kolle have been able to improve, deconstruct and reconstruct their knowledge schemes. The initiatives they have undertaken to incorporate their newly acquired knowledge are very much driven by their curiosity. Their constant quest for answers produced knowledge that fostered their humanity, especially through improving their worship practices. As Freire argued:

“Knowledge…necessitates the curious presence of subjects confronted with the world. It requires their transforming action on reality. It demands a constant searching” (1973, p.101). Through curiosity, these participants reinvent themselves both through changes
in their habits and through the authority that knowledge lends them. Translating their education into praxis is a “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1970, p. 36).

Similar achievements were also recounted by Mati, a health show fan who utilized the information she gained on the talk shows as well. She stated:

I loved butter! But I did not know that it was killing me slowly. You know high blood pressure is my disease. It gives me serious headaches, it makes my ears ring. I used to just spread [butter] on my bread every morning. I did not know how bad it was for people, especially if you have high blood pressure. When the doctor [on the show] explained what it was doing to my arteries, I was very scared. Also he explained the danger of consuming a lot of fat and a lot of salt. But he did not stop there, he explained things we can do every day to improve our health and live longer with the help of God. The most important aspect of that show was the testimonies the callers gave. One caller said that he/she stopped eating salt at night in addition to taking a cup of kinkeliba in the morning and at night … and now she/he feels better and really light. There was also another who called to explain how she uses lemon or ginger in food as a substitute for salt because she could not eat the food without salt. All these people taught me a lot that day. Since that day, I have stopped using salt for dinner and I still use butter, but not the way I used to. What’s more interesting --the doctor agreed with most of what the callers were saying. I really thank God for making me part of that show. The doctor said even people who do not have high blood pressure should be careful about butter, oil and what they eat in general. I agree. It is a bad disease but I cannot afford the medication every month.

Another participant expressed the same awareness:

It seems as if high blood pressure is an epidemic in the country. Many people die of it now. I don’t have it but I know some people who have it. What I learn from the radio is that being heavy is not as healthy as we think. We Senegalese women, we are so happy when we gain weight. Thanks to the health talk shows, I now know that gaining to much weight can be bad for women, especially around your stomach. Another thing that they were talking about on these shows that I did not know is that even when you add water to a sweet drink and drink the whole thing, even if it is less sweet, you are still consuming the same amount of sugar. I do that and I know other people who do it. So that simple thing was really eye-opening for me.
These two participants’ knowledge was undeniably enhanced by their exposure to radio talk shows. Their increased health awareness was produced not only by talk show’s resonance with their own negative experiences with these diseases, but more importantly, by the stories of hope and success others patients shared. While various studies have shown that knowledge alone is not sufficient to lead to behavioral change, in this case a combination of knowledge and a perceived potential threat ultimately prompted participants to embrace some of these healthy behaviors. What these participants have learned on the radio appears to have motivated them to see the necessity of adopting a healthy lifestyle. This step requires understanding for example the effects of “what they put in their mouth [has] on their health,” as Mati stated.

Yet a of lack of resources could be preventing these individuals from really applying what they have learned from these talk shows. Their inability to afford modern medicine seems to drive force many participants to turn to traditional medicine via the radio. Above all, the participants seemed to really value hearing the experiences of the audience and of insiders, particularly those who have experienced similar circumstances. For Mati:

The person who heard something, the one who saw, the one who escaped from it, will never run the same way. What I am saying is that those who share stories [about what] they lived through and how they lived [through them] and overcame [them] are our real teachers. Those whose knowledge is renowned in some fields, like doctors, imams, and lawyers give us important lessons, but you know it is he who has sucked the *tamarin* who knows what it tastes like. When you hear some of these cases, you know that they speak from the heart and if you have a heart, you will hear them and learn from them. You feel their pain and want their happiness…Sometimes people tell you to do this or do that, without really knowing from living. The radios are big schools because they are the schools of lived experiences, the schools of life.
For Mati, the talk shows are schools that educate listeners on practical issues. Her statement highlights the potential of the talk shows’ use of real-life situations to help audiences connect more personally to these issues. As she indicated, real-life experiences are critical but emotions play a more important role in the learning process. In connecting their own personal experiences with the callers’ stories, many participants develop a learning bond that enables them to begin a process of transformation.

Hearing real-life experiences is inspiring and offers the listeners “the ability to step back and ponder one’s own experience, to abstract from it some meaning or knowledge relevant to other experiences” (Hutchings & Wutzorff, 1988, p.15). In that process of pondering, acknowledging emotions in the learning process remains a catalyst for any transformational experience, although it does not guarantee effective learning. As Eyler and Giles (1999) argue, for any learner there “need [be] considerable emotional support when they work in settings that are new to them; there needs to be a safe space where they know that their feelings and insights will be respected and appreciated” (p. 185)]. In combining emotion and experience, many participants like Mati have entered a learning process that “arouses curiosity, strengthens initiative, and sets up desires and purposes that are sufficiently intense” (Dewey, 1997, p. 38) to generate reflection and ultimately enable transformative learning. As the participants engage in dialogue via the radio talk shows to scrutinize and understand their own experiences, they come to newer and improved understandings of their challenges. In so doing, they reach a level of consciousness where they are able to “transform a situation in which there is experienced...
obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort, into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, and harmonious” (Dewey, 1933, p.100).

Roxeya’s story is another great example illustrating how talk show listeners have learned from others’ experiences how to settle a situation in which there is obvious lack of awareness and internal conflict. She said:

My husband was cheating on me. I know the girl he was going out with and she knows I know that they were going out. I did not like it but I always told myself, “if he wants to be playing around and sinning, it is his problem.” He has the most to lose. It is between him and God. I used to say that as long as he did not marry her, I did not care! But then I heard the story of the guy who transmitted HIV/AIDS to his wife whom he married when she was 14. When she explained that he was the only guy she knew and how he had left her and all the problems she is dealing with now, I cried. That day, I could not even finish selling my food. I went home immediately. When she said, “I have never gone anywhere and look at what he brought me,” it felt as if my heart dropped in my stomach….I thought this could be me. I was angry and scared. I was really scared… I was lost; I did not know what to do. I could confront my husband… I never cheated on my husband but he cheated on me, so I did not know if I was sick and I did not have the courage to ask him, nor did I have the courage to go for a test to find out if I was sick. For weeks, I prayed, I cried. I could not tell anybody, [not] even my mother… Finally, I decided to tell the story to my husband and …we resolved the issue. If I had not heard this story, maybe I would have never fought to end the cheating of my husband. Realizing the danger it could bring to me and my family was very, very important.

Roxeya’s story is a compelling example of how a combination of emotions and experiences can be the click that begins this tumultuous process of daring to question and challenge one’s own practices. Roxeya was without doubt convinced that she needed to act despite her fear and lack of readiness to confront her husband. The emotional and experiential nature of the story she heard, alongside the immediate threat she felt, made it possible and necessary for her to connect her personal experience to the experience of the victim and utilize the education she gained from that talk show to address her own
situation. Despite a long and painful process of decision-making, she finally was able to use a problem-posing approach by identifying her situation, problematizing it, analyzing it, developing a plan, and then executing it, which served as a catalyst for individual development. Thus the practical approach Roxeya utilized epitomized a truly transformative learning practice and process which “calls to public expression those fears and terrors as well as those hopes and yearnings regarding growth and change that have been denied for so long and suppressed so deeply” (Boyd & Myers, 1988, p. 276).

Roxeya’s self-discovery of her reality through another caller’s experience created an opportunity for her to engage critical praxis, which entails not just reflection but also action. As Freire (1993) argues, “problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of persons as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation”(p.84). In applying a problem-posing approach to the issues they encountered during the talk shows, participants came upon learning experiences from which new challenges and solutions emerged, and whereby “the difficulty is resolved, the confusion cleared away, the trouble smoothed out, and the question it puts is answered” (Dewey, 1933, p.100).

Participants like Hadi, a 51-year-old French teacher, and Kumba, a 43-year-old journalist, have discovered that they can move beyond problem-posing and reach a level of problem solving, taking direct action which can affect their lives. As Hadi indicated:

The radios have really changed the country. They are spaces where so many problems are addressed, where solutions are found and knowledge is spread. I have often found answers to many of the questions I or my friends or colleagues have [from radio talk shows]. Many people like me turn to the talk shows for
solutions and advice. Also, the fact that you can bring up a problem without revealing your name makes the talk shows a very important setting where you can bring questions and problems and get people to help you find solutions. And if you want to help an individual who is in need, sometimes you have to think seriously about it to offer what you think would work for that person. Many people now know that when they reach out to the talk shows, they will get help to solve their issues. When you listen to the radio, you learn how other people bring their problems to the public in order to find solutions and guidance. Even if they are not solved, these things help others see an alternative they can use.

Hadi’s response provides an illustration of the power of radio talk shows as a great platform for learning how to transform and solve one’s own problems and challenges. As they are confronted with daily challenges, many listeners and callers like Hadi have succeeded in not only learning how to critically frame their experiences through problem-posing, but more importantly, how to find solutions and apply them to their own personal cases. In their search for solutions, knowledge, and skills, participants found new strategies and practices that prompted some to seek better conditions for transformative learning. These newly-founded skills led some participants, like Sata, to accomplish self-targeted goals and experience personal transformation. For Sata:

The worse enemy of a human being is ignorance. If you don’t have the knowledge or don’t know how to start or where to start when faced with a problem . . . . What the talk shows do for us is educate us and teach us to recognize the causes of our problems. But they do not stop there; they show us what we can do to find solutions. . . . Sometimes if even they do not give a solution, they offer ideas as to what you can do to change your situation. In my opinion, that is what a lot of people need to improve their lives. That is why I like the shows on which they invite a lot of experts. They give knowledge . . . the right information. Many people don’t even know where to start when they have a problem. Helping people see that start can give hope to many. Sometimes they even give people the steps they can take to achieve what they desire. But you have to invest in it.

Khoudia is clearly aware and appreciative of the ability of the talk shows to truly educate the audience by helping them to see clearly through their obstacles and to
recognize the significance of their own agency. As Khoudia argued, although the
to promote action, it does give
them solid reasons for at least trying to initiate change. The new horizons the participants
embarked on, and the new worldviews they were exposed to, enabled many to initiate
action that directly affected their lives. The repetition of such experiences motivated
participants like Khoudia to realize that “engag[ing] in reflection on their concrete
situation is not a call to armchair revolution-- true reflection leads to action . . . an
authentic praxis” (48). That offers the audience practical strategies to apply in
predetermined social contexts and situations, while at the same time strengthening their
critical understanding of the indispensable role they have to play in their personal
transformation and quest for knowledge.

The participants understood that exposure and critical reflection could be the
catalyst for transformation and conscious actions. “We need not to be afraid to face the
reality even if it hurts. We should affront it and wrestle with it,” suggested Binta,
illustrating the inevitability of reflection for learning to emerge out of hearing lived
experiences. Thus “ experience becomes educative when critical reflective thought
creates new meaning and leads to growth and the ability to take informed actions”
(Bringle and Hatcher, 1999, p. 180).

The interactive nature of radio talk shows allows for communities to form around
them; participants found building relationships within these communities to have played
a significant role in their learning experiences via the radio. The relationships callers and
listeners were able to build on-air and off-air revealed themselves to be pivotal in helping them form, acquire and disseminate knowledge. As Dioulde argued:

The knowledge we have, we would have not have it if we were sitting in a classroom. Never! It would have never happened! The interactions we have with experts, people with knowledge, with the people that lived through what they are telling us, are very important when learning something, whatever it is. You see, whatever you are trying to learn or know, knowing the people who are giving you the knowledge, developing a rapport with anyone you can learn from, is something that makes you have the comfort and courage to ask them [questions], but also the trust to let them teach you.

Dioulde’s statement speaks directly to how the relationships of all the parties involved in the talk shows are able to shape the quality of the learning. In developing good and trustworthy rapport within the talk show community, the forum has succeeded in greatly influencing personal transformations and at the same time cementing learning relations. “Education is possible only through and with human relations. In this lush terrain and operations, therefore, the purpose of education, teaching objectives, and learning outcomes is one and the same: to form relations” (p. 104). As Daado suggested, the relational practices and processes are at the core of any learning that aims for personal transformation. For Daado:

You can accidentally come across useful information and knowledge. Every day, I hear information, knowledge and facts that are good and useful on the radio, but I do not use all of them. For me, for knowledge to be useful for you, for it to change you or how you see and do things, you need to invest in it…You have to care, you have to feel it, and you have to want it in your heart. But that cannot happen without us feeling each other, without us being able to connect to each other. When connection happens, then we can learn a lot, even just by listening and caring more.

At the core of Dioulde’s and Daado’s arguments for learning is the idea of care and relations. Both participants have identified and understood that relationships, and
more importantly, a reciprocal engagement, is what is needed for learning to occur. Through relational exchanges based on caring and sharing real stories and experiences, Dioulde and Daado were inspired to trust each other, leading to a genuine desire to engage one another. For a few other participants, such situations offered unique learning opportunities that prompted new ideas and reflection, providing a platform “to encourage the actual growth of relational virtues and to establish learning conditions that permit people to contribute to relational growth” (Noddings, 1984, p. 237). It is more than just caring passively. As Noddings (2002) suggests, some participants were able to “employ reasoning to decide what to do and how best to do it” (p.14) as they addressed “genuinely controversial issues’ (Noddings 2006, 1) and “[gave] shape and expression to what would otherwise be untold’ (Witherell and Noddings 1991, x). Yet, reasoning was not always the core of their motivations and actions but rather the “feeling with and for the other that motivate[d]… [them]. In ethical caring, this feeling is subdued, and so it must be augmented by a feeling for our own ethical selves” (Noddings, 2002, p. 14). This notion was illustrated in Penda’s statement when she argued:

See, the problems people share daily on the radios cannot leave us unaffected. Sometimes when I hear stories, they kill my stomach. I become immediately full, especially when they find me eating. My entire life is turned upside down. Remember the story of the uncle who raped his niece many times, got her pregnant and expelled her from the house while the mother of the girl watched his brother do all that? What a painful story! Sometimes you wonder if this is really happening here in Senegal…But you cannot not care. These stories force you to think and wonder, “what if it were me, what if it were my daughter, or niece?” If you have a heart, you cannot close your eyes, ears and heart. I don’t think anybody can [ignore the situation], especially a woman, a woman who has undergone delivering a child. It is impossible. You have to care and that teaches you a lot and makes you thank God wherever you are.
Penda’s response demonstrates the inherent drive to care. Her argument stresses the ability of caring to make people pay more attention to others, to be more reflective and to connect those stories to their own experience. The ways in which the participants appreciated sharing, feeling cared for, and caring for others were crucial to the interactions paving the way for learning. When Penda thinks caringly about the audience and sees the caller’s story as a possibility for herself, she then begins to recognize the necessity to pay attention, to learn and care since “nobody is immune from such problems. As long as you are alive anything can happen” (Penda). Thus, for these talk show participants, caring “does not substitute for learning; caring establishes an effective culture for learning” by allowing them “to widen the knowledge and value base and examine our cultural norms and educational practices, [offering] a far more balanced vantage point” (Sanderson, 1999, p.60). In forging relations of care and creating learning opportunities, participants further realized that they were more than just receivers of knowledge. Knowing the function of the relations they formed and the stories they shared played a part in their own learning and that of others. Participants, as Freire (2001) indicates, were able to reject banking education, which “ attempts, by mythicizing reality, to conceal certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world’ (p. 83).

As Kolle stated:

Before, I thought I could only learn from [listening to] the radio, and that is why I was not very into calling. All I wanted to do was listen because “talking is good but listening is better.” Also, calling can be expensive. But one day, there was a talk show on syphilis and I called to share my story and I explained what we did to address the issue and everything, and then after my call many people called and commented on what I said. They liked what I said and praised my courage. Even the expert was very happy about what I did and said that many people should learn from what I did. You cannot imagine how happy I was to know that …
Since then I call more often. I do not call frequently because it is not cheap, but at least now I know all knowledge is important and knowledge is never small.

Realizing that she can be a teacher and not just a learning member was an extremely important and convincing element for Kolle to reject banking education and to see herself as a depository of knowledge. The experience instilled in her a profound sense of pride and agency. For participants like Kolle, being aware of the possibilities of mutual teaching through radio talk shows make their learning experience even more exciting and motivating as it allows “Knowledge [to] emerge only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 2003, p.244). Through these collaborative learning and sharing experiences, the participants have gained real knowledge and experience, leading many to different levels of consciousness. The knowledge they receive and give “as ... human being[s]... with desires, emotions and ideas, is... [a] widening and deepening of conscious life – a more intense, disciplined, and expanding realization of meanings ... And education is not a mere means to such a life. Education is such a life.” (Dewey, 1924, p. 417) For women with limited formal education, caring may help turn the learning environment from a foreign entity to something more relatable. The radio talk shows have developed into a kind of a fluid or participatory school where information is made available to the masses via airwaves. This particular educational medium is flexible and has adjusted to the needs of listeners and participants in several distinct ways.

First, the audience can influence what information is presented and discussed. Obviously, preference is given to topics applicable to their daily lives and belief systems.
The material varies, but includes medical, religious and social presentations and discussions. The discussion aspect of the shows allows ordinary people to weigh in on expert testimony and share stories. In addition to giving the information presented more credibility and making it more relatable to the listeners, the discussions have created new learning communities. Through listening and/or participating, many women gained the confidence to share the information with others. These new communities formed both on and off air and helped women develop both as learners and teachers. Finally, much of the information presented was either skill based or facilitated the development of skills. Instead of simply accepting the facts presented, the discussion and participation format encourages listeners to examine how their own experiences differ from those discussed on the air and figure out which of the problem solving strategies presented is applicable to their particular problem. Radio shows are not mimicking standardized education, but are rather flexible to the demands of the listeners. This has resulted in an effective form of education where individuals learn a variety of skills and facts and are encouraged to participate critically in discussions at various levels.

**Empowerment**

Empowerment emerged as another important theme that highlighted the enabling role talk shows played in the participants’ lives. The theme addresses how the talk shows provided the participants with a forum for dialogue, self-expression, self-reflection, self-efficacy, self-love, spiritual and religious growth, and transformation. Throughout interviews and focus groups, the participants articulated how the information and perspectives they acquired while involved in the radio talk shows’ communities
encouraged them to critically reexamine their lives and experiences as women, Muslims and citizens. In discussing what the talk shows did for them and how they incorporated their changing worldviews into their daily experiences, the participants pointed to various ways in which the dialogic interactions they engaged in enabled them to gain a greater sense their ability to reshape aspects of their lives.

The accounts of their experiences and positive results of their involvement in the talk shows exhibited signs of diverse types and levels of empowerment. For these women, the radio talk shows acted as political, social, cultural, religious and spiritual sites that stimulated many to “exercise power in the interest of transforming the ideological and material conditions of domination into social practices which promote social empowerment and demonstrate democratic possibilities” (Giroux & Simon, 1989, p.237). By gaining more knowledge and becoming more to express their opinions and share their stories, the participants were able to exercise more power, empowering themselves as they integrated newly-acquired perspectives into their realities.

Consequently, the participants became more informed, insightful and self-conscious citizens, Muslims, wives and mothers, capable of making choices and planning strategies that offer possibilities for transformation. The dialogic interactions they engaged in cultivated in many participants the desire to speak up and talk back, expressing their opinions and challenging authority. During the interviews and the focus groups, participants expressed a great appreciation for possessing a dialogic space in which their stories and voices were valued. For participants like Anta and Roxeya, interacting, connecting and collaboratively sharing their experiences and strategies to
overcome or prevent problems was an uplifting experience. Most importantly for them, having a forum and an opportunity to be listened to and taken seriously instigated strong feelings of empowerment for participants as they chose to share private and personal issues. As Roxeya pointed out:

You know, the dialogue, the sharing of ideas that occurs between those who call with their problems and those who call to help, is really unique. Anybody can help. Every idea is important, whether it comes from a man or a woman, a young person or an old person. When you listen to the talk shows, you realize that nobody is underestimated and that gives you the courage to speak up. Even if some people do not like what you say, there are many others who will listen and support what you are saying. And for me, that was really important to know before I started calling. Knowing that others will not ridicule you and think what you are saying is not worth paying attention to is very important. In listening to my customers re-discuss the issues and opinions that have been discussed on the talk shows, I see that every idea counts, because they talk about all these ideas. Knowing that some listeners take you seriously has motivated people like me to call more and to feel more confident about the fact that we too have something to teach to the nation. That is a clear fact for me because people have called to make positive comments on comments I had said on the radio. That empowers you and gives you the courage to be daring. At least, now I know that my words can help other people. Once you become a constant caller, you suddenly realize that you dare doing and saying things you never dreamt you could do or talk about.

Roxeya’s explanation shows that she now knows that she is capable of producing good ideas and can contribute to improving other people’s situations. In recognizing her capacity to produce valued and respected insights through “the personal stories as the product of narrativization of knowledge, narrativization of opinions and ideas, (Krumer-Nevo, 2009, p.291)” Roxeya was able to gain a sense of personal empowerment. As Krumer-Nevo suggested:

It is not only that the ordinary persons-agents recognize themselves as having knowledge and may be seen as knowledgeable by some others, but because their experiences and ideas are systematized and made more public their experiences and reflections become part of the general knowledge. In this process they actualize more fully their role as citizens in democratic societies (291).
Gaining empowerment as her ideas and experiences became part of a broader repertoire of knowledge, Roxeya was able to challenge and deconstruct the types of discourses which “facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said, by whom, where and when” (Willig, 2007, p.172). The inclusion of all forms of discourse, perceptions, and voices alongside the lack of censorship facilitated a truly empowering experience for participants like Roxeya. As a way of empowering them and generating authentic experiences, in valuing people’s voices and ideas, the talk shows motivated participants to participate even more in producing and negotiating collective knowledge. The process simultaneously encourages the women to participate in the process and provides them with the tools they need to apply the knowledge in their day to day lives.

Feeling important, being taken seriously, and feeling worthy of people’s attention, as expressed by Roxeya, was also very important for other participants, like Anta. Like Roxeya, Anta felt that the days when she silenced herself were gone. She went on to say:

Having a place to speak up, a place where you can cry out and be heard is really empowering. When I told my story on the radio, I was searching for help; I needed a solution because at that point, I felt lost. I did not know where to go, who to talk to, not even what to think. Once you take your courage in two hands and share your story and let people tell you what they think, you will see the way. It is a difficult process because some people might call and blame you without knowing or knowing what really caused your problems, but that is part of going on-air. You know, they ask you difficult questions; it is really difficult and painful at times, but it helped me to understand what I could have done differently. …I realized and saw all these things I could have done but also what I can do now… What I went through in sharing my story helped me to reflect on it for a long time. It was difficult, but it was such a relief. I did not know I could do something like that, but I did it. I felt peace in my heart! Now, I have the courage to talk about all types of issues, especially on the radio.
Anta’s response indicates the discovery of a new voice as a result of the interactions she experienced by calling in and allowing her story to be exposed to the greater community of the talk shows. The dialogic interactions she engaged in and the show which she listened to allowed her to recognize her own agency and to recognize her strengths and capacities. While such empowering qualities might have existed in Anta for a long time, it was after her involvement with the talk shows that she came to recognize, embrace and utilize them. Her realization that the ideas and knowledge she shared on the airwaves were considered legitimate by many listeners and callers was a very important starting point for her empowerment.

The sense of valorization participants gained through contributing to the talk shows assisted in validating knowledge that would have otherwise been self-dismissed. Knowing that their knowledges are not “disqualified as non-conceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges: naïve knowledges, hierarchically inferior knowledges, knowledges that are below the required level of erudition or scientificity,” (Foucault, 1978, p. 7) the participants were able to see the talk shows as a forum where they could create a space for agency and emancipation. Even though the women may have possessed this knowledge prior to expressing it on the shows, the process of expression and the reception of the knowledge by the other participants transformed the knowledge from personal opinions to properly validated knowledge that they could feel proud to possess and to share.

Moreover, in exercising active listening to others’ narratives and offering strategies to them, participants like Roxeya, Anta, and even Roxeya’s customers were
able to develop new empowering capacities and gain the confidence to challenge and maybe even disrupt local hegemonic discourses and practices. For these participants and for Anta in particular, strong feelings of empowerment emerged from these dialogic interactions as they affirmed themselves and internalized their agency. For Anta, the process of sharing her story was painful, yet the difficult questioning alongside the active listening and dialogic practices strengthened her self-esteem and self-worth. Once the knowledge was transformed and validated, it gave the women the courage to claim their agency, even when it ran contrary to the status quo.

Most importantly, it cultivated in her a sense of critical reflection. By being engaged in reflection, Anta, as well as Roxeya, developed a consciousness of their possibilities, opportunities and challenges, indicative of the formation of the empowering process. Additionally, they were forced to re-evaluate their role in the problem as some listeners found them at fault. This in turn facilitated further self-agency as they either defended their decisions or realized their potential to prevent future problems. In doing so, participants like Anta and Roxeya established a process whereby they recognized their full humanity through their ability to revalue themselves and regain a strong sense of agency. In (re)gaining such agency, participants were able to realize that their actions and feelings embodied multiple empowering capacities which served many and informed their daily practices. Thus, the radio talk shows became an instrument for positive change and betterment. As Khoudia explained:

If you listen regularly to the radios, they will change you because what they are talking about makes you consider whether you agree or not. When you listen with your mind and your heart, you will appreciate and value yourself more. When you hear how desperate some people are…There are so many painful stories:
incest, battered women… I do not want to judge because only God knows. But, I can say this: every show I listen to empowers me, and makes me value and believe in myself more. God is helping me, maashalla, but what happens to them can happen to me, to everybody. So I made listening to some of these shows a duty for me because it keeps me aware of who I am and also what can happen to me. That is why, when they give advice and ways to avoid and solve some of these problems, I listen carefully and try to apply them when the situation arises. (May God protect me from it). Listening to radio talk shows helps me respect and value myself even more, but also behave responsibly.

Khoudia saw the talk shows as very enabling because they allowed her to see potential challenges in life. For her, the shows act as an important site of empowerment, as they remind her of the necessity to believe and appreciate oneself, and also the need to act responsibly as a way to avoid being part of the heartbreaking stories she hears every day. In addition to boosting her sense of self-worth, Khoudia’s decision to incorporate the information she acquired on the shows provided her with a possibility for betterment and thus empowerment. The same feeling of gaining a sense of control, self-worth and personal responsibility as a result of listening to and engaging with the talk shows was also expressed by other participants, like Anta. For Anta:

What I know now is that no matter what, you have to be responsible. The more I listened to shows like Jooy Xol (Cry from the heart), the more I told myself, “I have to act like them, I have to take responsibility.” If you do not help yourself, nobody will. I know that it is easier said than done. Most of the time, you think of what will happen if you do this or that…or what will people think. You know, even when my daughter was raped, and I finally decided to share the story on the radio, many people still blamed me and said I was not vigilant enough, but many others understood me. The criticism was painful but I have learned that truth cannot be hidden. So it is better to take responsibility, wrap up your heart/chest and do what you have to do. Now I feel as if I just put down a burden I was carrying for years. That decision to share was the door to many other positive things that came into our lives. When you help yourself, others will join. Even God won’t help you if you refuse to help yourself. But when you empower yourself, others will join. When that happens, you feel an inner strength, a strength whose origins are unknown.
Both Anta and Khoudia seem to have developed a personal sense of responsibility as they listened to the talk shows. Recognizing and accepting that empowerment accompanies being able to take personal responsibility for oneself was clear in Anta’s response. For these women, taking responsibility for themselves is an important way of “looking at the past …. [and] a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future.” (Freire, 1993, p.65). In accepting their responsibility, participants become better equipped to move on to the next level of being able to problematize their situations, and in the process, recognize their agency and affirm their full potential as capable beings. For participants like Anta, feeling their inner strength forged a profound consciousness. Once that responsibility and consciousness was cemented in the participants’ minds, taking action became easier. Therefore, in offering a platform where the participants could see themselves as agents capable of taking personal responsibility, the talk shows contributed to enhancing a real possibility for empowerment. While the radio shows provided internal empowerment in that they empowered women to continually participate in the discussions, it is the external empowerment that is more important. Through the radio shows, the women developed both agency and responsibility over their actions.

Participants like Roxeya, Khoudia and Anta refused to passively accept their fate or blame themselves for their circumstances. They rather chose to assume personal responsibility and invest in finding strategies to resolve or at least ease their problems. For these women, such processes involving multiple layers of consciousness made them see that “their action encompasses a critical reflection which increasingly organizes their
thinking and thus leads them to move from a purely naive knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which enables them to perceive the causes of reality” (Freire, 1993, p. 131). Such a realization and achievement offered great potential for empowerment, given that it motivated them to embark on a quest to find the roots of their conditions. While knowing the roots of their problems did not automatically translate into the solving of their problems, participants found such knowledge very empowering, as it gave them some control over their lives. As Roxeya suggested, “If you know the how, you will know the how to.” Having the courage to take responsibility and to seek and gain knowledge was a necessarily empowering step for participants to weigh their options and make informed decisions. Knowing and believing that they have the ability to exercise their agency was crucial for many to acquire the “the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 971). The first step to empowering the women in specific situations is to have them fully comprehend their situations so they can make an informed decision. This skill is one of many the radio shows teach, intentionally or not.

Hope emerged as another empowering theme, albeit more of a sensation than a problem solving strategy. They viewed hope as an important motivational factor in breaking their silence on the talk shows. For participants like Penda, who described herself as shy, being involved in the talk show forums helped them to discover a new way of making themselves heard. As Penda explained:

If you have never spoken in public or if you are shy, it can be very difficult to stand in front a group of people to talk about what you want, let alone your problems. As I told you before, I have never spoken in public. I don’t like to talk in public at all. But the fact that the radio allows us to talk without revealing our
name is the reason why people like me can make ourselves heard…It is scary at first, but it makes you feel good and important after you have done it. Once you gain the strength to open your mouth to share and speak up, you will not be the same anymore. It is like you have been in a cloud and suddenly it clears up.

Penda certainly felt empowered by having the courage to pick up the phone, knowing that she would be listened to with seriousness and interest. The radio talk shows offered her a forum in which she could comfortably speak up and talk with a group of people. Although one could argue that she was putting up a guise by hiding her true identity, the talk shows allowed her to transcend her fear and to be more reflective about the issues pertaining to her life. The sense of accomplishment, attention received and respect she felt by calling gave her a strong sense of personal empowerment. By offering Penda an alternate way of speaking up, the talk shows have encouraged her to exercise more practices of freedom, which could be a fundamental step for the formation of a genuine transformation. Such actions, however timid, are indicative of a development of some level of consciousness which “depends on the continual interaction with other voices, or worldviews” (Emerson, 1997, p. 36). As participants like Penda saw the talk shows as a space to break their silence and empower themselves by engaging with other voices and perspectives, they were able to regain hope. Determined to reject “immobilization, apathy, and silence” (Freire, 1998, p.40), participants like Penda and Mati seized the possibilities the shows offered them in order to embark on a new path toward change and empowerment. As Mati suggested:

When your daily problems are becoming unbearable and you struggle to find solutions within your family, friends and neighbors, and you feel like nobody is listening…When you feel like there is no way out and suddenly you hear and see similar people and people whose conditions are worse than yours coming on the radio and getting comfort and hope, it is very uplifting. It was after hearing all
these people share these stories that were similar to mine, over and over again, that I decided to finally break my silence and tell to the world what has been happening to me...After I did it, it was as if I moved from darkness to light. I was finally happy with myself. Telling the world that “it is enough” was healing for me. I was telling it to the world, but mostly I was screaming it to myself. Now I am more enthusiastic about participating in the radio talk shows.

This statement highlights the power of hope in bringing positive and transformational change. For these participants, hope is extremely empowering, as it conveys a power to envision and anticipate a promising result. In deciding to break their silence and regain hope, participants have undertaken empowering practices whereby they come to appreciate and value themselves more, which could lead them to a higher state of consciousness. Making the decision to “tell the world that’s enough” (Mati), even though they knew it might not change what was happening to them, was not only uplifting but made the talk shows an appropriate vehicle for these women to talk back and hope for the better. As Freire argued:

Hopelessness is a form of silence, of denying the world and fleeing from it. The dehumanization resulting from an unjust order is not a cause for despair but for hope, leading to the incessant pursuit of the humanity denied by injustice. Hope, however, does not consist in crossing one’s arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight with hope, then I can wait. (p. 92)

By choosing to speak up and “fight with hope,” the participants pursued their freedom and full humanity. Sharing their stories also increased their desire to participate in the talk shows, leading to a boost in their psychological empowerment. The sense of hope they gained motivated participants to initiate efforts to improve themselves while reconnecting with reality, ultimately enriching and transforming their lives. The talk show forums enabled participants to take “actions to bring about change...empower [themselves]...because [their] actions change the world from one in which [they] merely
exist to one over which we[they] some control, … enable[ing ] [them] to see everyday
life as being in process and therefore amenable to change” (p. 113). Ultimately, hope is
more of an attitude than a skill, but keeping a hopeful tone in the discussions helped
empower the women via positive motivation.

In addition to hope, dialogue, personal responsibility, voice, spirituality and
religion emerged as important empowering elements for many participants as they
became involved with religious talk shows. The participants stressed their desire to
acquire religious knowledge and become better Muslim women as they participated and
learned from the religious discourse that took place on the talk shows. They exhibited
strong sentiments of gaining self-respect and dignity through acquiring a broader and
better understanding of their religion. As Bigue explained:

A Muslim that does not know her/his religion is scary. Many people like me say
that they are Muslim, but most of the time, we do not even know simple practices
such as how to repair/fix a prayer. This might sound bizarre, but at first, before I
started listening to religious shows like Oustaaz Taib’s and Alioune Sall’s, I was
not at all bothered by my lack of religious knowledge. I never thought that I was
not a good Muslim. I thought I was doing it right like most people here do. But
since I began listening constantly, I realized how ignorant I was…I was ashamed!
I did not really know that I did not know so much. Now I know better and I know
more and I feel dignified when I communicate with God. When I pray, I pay more
attention, I get less distracted. Knowing my religion is very important for me.
When you know better, you feel a stronger connection with the Lord, you are
more confident that your prayer will be answered. For instance, since I learned the
retributions of saying astakhfirulla, I say it every day, wherever I am, if I am not
talking to somebody. It makes me feel pure and like a better person. And all that
gives you more self-respect, pride in yourself and dignity, as I said.

In her statement, Bigué makes a connection between knowledge, dignity and
pride. She considers herself to be more dignified in speaking with God, as she has
acquired more religious knowledge. The connection she now feels that she has with God
is a result of applying the knowledge gained from the radio talk shows, and has dignified
her internally, manifesting in an increase in self-respect. Therefore, gaining a dignified state of mind was personally and psychologically empowering for Bigué. These feelings of dignity have fuelled in her the need to also act in a dignified manner. For instance, in deciding to “say astakhfirulla” and putting into practice her newly-acquired knowledge to reflect her way of living, Bigué is relating her inner views to the outward expression of her beliefs. In doing so, she is able to approach the complexities of her life with a more profound perspective. Such a perspective puts Bigué and participants like her in a state where they possess the capacity to “move…toward knowledge, love, meaning, hope, transcendence, connectedness, compassion, wellness, and wholeness” (Miler, 2003, p. 6) consequently, it offers them a space for discovering their “capacity for creativity, growth, and the development of a value system.” (Miranti & Burke, 1998, p. 162). Through that spiritual process accompanied by a religious self-determination, Bigué was able to boost her sense of self-empowerment. As her spiritual practices became synonymous with her religious practices, she felt more whole and more dignified.

The feelings of empowerment gained from spirituality and the increase in religious knowledge was also expressed by other participants such as Rama. She felt that the talk shows had really strengthened her connection with God, thus transforming her life. As Rama put it:

Programs like Taib Soce’s or that of Ustaaz Alioune Sall changed my life. Especially Ustaaz Alioune Sall. He opened my eyes to my religion. One day, he said something that really entered my mind and heart. He said “When you are with God, you do not fear and anybody can be in that special place, both men and women”. He also told the story of Aisha and Rabia, and how much knowledge they had. He said Aisha knew hadiths. When this feeling and belief is really true to you, it changes you and how you interact with anything. After that day, I kept thinking and thinking about the statement and started listening to him more
closely, and also I started doing some of the *wird* he suggested, like saying “*subhanalla, walhamdulilla, walahilahailla, wallahuakbar*”. That prayer changed me. I noticed that I do not gossip anymore…it frees you from the ills of society. I know that I cannot be Aisha, but I can be close to God.

In Rama’s response, it seems obvious that the increase in religious knowledge she experienced by listening to Ustaaz Alioune Sall played a fundamental role in forging in her a real sense of empowerment, self-esteem and self-worth, especially in relation to her identity as a Muslim woman. For these women, their sense of self-esteem was often contingent on the amount of the religious knowledge they acquired. By convincing these women that they can and should aspire to be close to God, as well as grow spiritually, the religious talk shows in particular have become a forum for spirituality and religious growth, where women turn to “search for meaning, purpose and values” (Russel, 1998, p. 17). In their quest for a more meaningful life, participants of these radio talk shows, have displayed confidence in themselves as individuals capable of reaching a spiritual level that they never though they would or could achieve. As Saly explained:

One day, Ustaaz Alioune Sall said something I knew, but I had never thought of it that way. He said that the first individual who became Muslim after the prophet Muhammad was a woman: Khadija. I know Khadija and her story but I never thought that the first Muslim after Muhammad was a woman. That is something that needs to be repeated over and over. After that day, I felt even more proud to be a Muslim woman. During that day, he also talked about the contributions of other women like Aisha…I am now convinced that we Muslim women can be just as good Muslims as men, and maybe even better if we learn and take it seriously.

A strong sense of empowerment and pride rose in Saly as she came to the realization that she, like any other Muslim woman, can attain a close relationship with God. Hearing what women like Khadija and Aisha have achieved was really inspiring to her. Relating herself to spiritually renowned, admired, pious and strong Muslim women,
Saly was able to build a sense of empowerment. Learning the role of women like Khadija and Aisha in the history of Islam inspired many participants to reach a higher level of religiosity and spirituality. Seeing women as capable of producing and transmitting Islamic knowledge well was a truly empowering feeling for these women.

Probably due to the variety of topics discussed on the radio shows, they lead to different types of empowerment in different facets of the participants’ lives. Some specific shows, such as religious ones, lead to empowerment in relation to that specific type of knowledge, whereas other shows helped the participants and listeners develop problem solving skills. Additionally, the process of calling, sharing and actively listening empowers participants in its own right as it gives them the tools and opportunity to explore and use their agency.

All of the women discussed some form of empowerment gained by listening and participating in the radio shows. The sheer consistency in the women’s reflections suggests that the shows are an incredibly effective tool of empowerment.

**Identity**

Identity was another significant theme which ran throughout the data. The radio talk shows provided opportunities to participants to express, assert, develop, and share their complex identities. A close analysis of the participants’ rich and multiple voices reveals that identity politics came into play. In striving to share their stories and make sense of their lives, the participants engaged in multiple collaborative, collective identity discourses. They articulated “their experiences in a process of becoming, or not becoming, a certain person” (Wenger, 1998, p. 215). In their quest for meaning and
remaking their multiple and collective selves, the participants constantly navigated a plurality of boundaries as they altered and prioritized elements of their evolving identities. As they simultaneously participated in identity politics and rediscovered or reinforced a better sense of who they were through the talk shows, the participants became major players in the formation of their new selves. Throughout these complex, contradictory, and culturally specific processes, the radio talk shows assisted the participants in both individual and collective identity formation. Consequently, they displayed strong feelings and behaviors of sameness and oneness, but also of distinctiveness and difference.

By listening to radio talk shows, some participants discovered a new identity that they had not known they shared with others, an identity as a survivor of abuse. Participants established a sense of collective identity with one another by sharing their stories of survival. Participants whose stories of pain and abuses were similar to one another were able to come together and build a collective identity, a valuable strategy in overcoming their challenges. As Penda explained:

Knowing that you are not alone, that you are not the only one who went through what you have gone through is something that was really helpful to me. Knowing that there were other women who felt what I felt increased my desire to be a part of what they were doing and to share my story with them, the way they shared their stories on the airwaves. I don’t know who the woman was who first shared her story on the air, but she really founded a sort of home for all of us to come and join as companions in our pain. In fact, when you realize that your lived experiences are somewhat common, not rare as I always thought, it makes you want to accept who you are and accept others like us in the same way these women have accepted me and many other women.

Penda’s account reveals the extent to which participants’ realization that they were not alone helped them construct and claim a collective victim/survivor identity.
Influenced by the stories similar to her own, Penda was able to identify with the group of victims/survivors, positioning herself in a group that she never before imagined to exist. For participants like Penda, feelings of sameness and adherence to such a community provided a strong basis for self-definition and identity transformation. Gaining new allies encouraged participants to use their newly-formed group identity to mold their world while they immersed themselves socially in groups. By being involved members of such a fluid process of “continually expanding to incorporate new elements that defy an either-or conceptualization of identity,” participants were able to acquire new emotional and practical skills of understanding “the complicated social processes of learning, meaning, and identity formation through practice” (Storberg-Walker, 2008. p. 563). In collectively performing and re-evaluating the multiple experiences that informed the formation of their group identity, participants were able to develop a strong sense of belonging, which solidified even further their sense of identity. As Aysata suggested:

You know, I am really happy when I am with my girlfriends and we can talk about women’s stuff. We all talk, and we are not afraid to talk about crazy issues like sexuality, sing, dance and just be ourselves. It is the exact same thing here when people who have been abused talk about abuse. I can talk to them. I am not ashamed. I am myself and we all can relate to each other because we can feel each other's pain. We share a common story of pain and injustice. We belong to the same group in which we can empathize with and read one another. And that feeling of being in a larger community increased my motivation to be one of them and thus act and fight like them. At times, it felt as if I was them and they were me. And I have no doubt that many of us felt that way. In the long run, we become one. What brings us together makes us one. We can save each other with the help of God.

For Aysata, belonging to a group of daring and courageous people meant that she too was courageous. Her desire to belong and her feelings of empathy were really important in building a group identity which permeated the ways in which she negotiated
her own identity. As Aysata’s response indicated, embracing the group identity played a pivotal role in helping her articulate her own experiences in a courageous and personal way. Therefore, the formation of a group identity fostered the participants’ enthusiasm about self-affirmation. This dynamic and dialogic process established an emotionally and culturally-conducive comfort zone in which all individuals with similar experiences could come together and create a space in which they could produce emancipatory discourses while forging and affirming their identities. Claiming a common collective identity based on survival stories and shared struggles made the participants strive for a collective identity and togetherness rather than strive for distinctiveness. The more these women listened to radio shows, the more they identified with the callers and their stories. As a result, they became increasingly motivated by a sense of empathy and solidarity rather than one of distinctiveness.

Furthermore, in affirming their group identity and strengthening their sense of belonging to the group of “victims/survivors,” participants like Aysata realized that their “selves have become increasingly populated with the character of others…… [Their] identity is continuously emergent, re-formed, and redirected as one moves through the sea of ever-changing relationships” (Gergen, 2000, p.139) By choosing to view themselves as similar, the participants succeeded in weaving together the manifold layers of their identities while at the same time forging a collective identity. In making these stories public, these women, created a community. Through multiple interactions and dialogical practices between callers, listeners, guests and experts and voices, the radio
talk shows enabled many participants to affirm a collective sense of injustice and shared oppression. Such a feeling was clearly expressed in Penda's response:

For me, what makes the calling and the listening really appealing is that I know I am one of them. I feel I am a member of whatever they are fighting against. And it is more than just something I feel; I know that is the reality. I have no doubt about that. God knows that! I understand them and they understand me and that is the case for thousands of listeners. We feel and understand one another. We respect each other and recognize each other’s problems and needs. Even if we do not enjoy our difficult circumstances, we enjoy the fact that we are in a group where everybody is connected. We all agree that what happened to us is not right, and that goes even for some listeners and callers who do not share our experiences; I feel they [too] are connected with us. I do. They too feel the injustice we all are trying to put to an end.

Penda's account indicates that participants were able to create a collective identity and put in action their shared realization of a common problem. In choosing to align themselves with a group to express their experiences of injustice, the participants put themselves into a position where they could transform the issues that cemented their collective identity into apolitical statement. Being able to translate their collective identity into political statements and acting together as members of a group with a shared sense of justice, participants seemed to have developed a robust connection as they formed a stronger sense of self-esteem and group identity. For many participants like Penda, feeling understood, accepted, and respected, encouraged them to not only embrace their newfound group identity but also inspired them to express themselves as belonging to such an entity. Participants’ feelings of shared injustice augmented through their dialogic interactions motivated and empowered the participants. The formation and performance of their identities fostered hope.
Talk show interactions legitimized the agency of the oppressed/victims/survivors and led to the creation of a discourse of hope and a process of emancipation. As a rare public space in which women could come together and transform their sense of victimhood into a collective feeling of empowerment, the talk shows allowed women to reclaim an important element of their identities. By generating a discourse of hope alongside a common perception of injustice, the radio talk forums became a truly stimulating space for the audience to acquire a sense of belonging, agency and collective identity. In so doing the talk shows became “crucial in crystallizing the group’s consciousness and motivating individuals to identify with collective visions and aims” (Roniger, 2011, p. 253).

Whereas the women above developed a new and empowered collectivity, other participants used the music and entertainment talk shows to reinforce older identities and thereby participated in identity politics. Interestingly, the same way in which shared stories of victimhood and survival constituted a common point at which participants rallied to form a collective identity, the ethnically-defined music and songs reformed collective identities. Having a platform where they could connect with one another through the listening of ethnic music was important in making participants more aware of their common cultural identities. Such awareness was exemplified in Saly’s response. She stated:

These songs remind us of who we are! If you don’t respect yourself and your culture, then nobody will give them the respect and consideration they deserve. These songs, proverbs and the history they convey are what makes us as part of a unified culture, one and unique. See, our children are lost; they do not know where they come from nor where they are headed. They don’t know their history; they cannot speak one language strictly. They mix Wolof, French, English, etc.
What most of them don’t realize is that they will never become French. The talk shows are helping us to reconnect and preserve our past. So that is why I am saying we have to use the radios and programs like “Dembali Senegal” (the history of Senegal) to bring the entire country together and educate people about the values of our cultures and languages. As for me, whenever I call, I request songs by Ndiaga Mbaye and Samba Diabare Samb. These guys make you really proud of your culture and country.

This passage captures the hybrid identities of many Senegalese, which seems to worry Saly who viewed the blending of Senegalese cultures and European languages as putting many young people in a state of confusion. Saly worried that the transitional cultural junction in which these young people are positioned threatens the future of their cultural identity. As a possible remedy of this situation, Saly views the talk shows as a great space to cultivate a strong sense of belonging to a nationally shared cultural identity. Their wider reach makes them a valuable tool for the survival of national identities.

In envisioning a strong formation of a collective national identity through shared cultural heritage, Saly stresses the need of “enracinement” through music and ethnic songs as essential for the survival of collective cultural identity. By calling and requesting particular ethnic songs, participants are taking part in the formation and survival of a repertoire of narratives of cultural and regional identities. The plethora of traditional music and songs broadcasted on the airwaves immensely contributes to the “revitalization of culture[s], language[s], and tradition[s] [which] can help repair the ruptures of cultural continuity that have occurred with colonization and the active suppression of indigenous cultures and identity” (Kirmayer et al, 2011, p.84). The

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6 Ndiaga Mbaye and Samba Diabare Samb are very popular traditional Senegalese singers.
collective awareness resulting from such concerted efforts from the musical and entertainment talk shows could generate powerful “expressions of thought and emotional national self-awareness [which] play a significant part in the lives of the people and their understanding of their personal and ethnic identities. Mavra and McNeil, 2007, p.7).”

Music in particular, as Stokes (1994) argued, “is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognize identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them,” (p. 5) but also the boundaries which unite them. Therefore, as a forum where music is played, the talk shows were for participants an important space where a collective cultural Senegalese identity could be formed, performed and preserved. For Mati:

The radio are doing a good job-- a very important one-- one of unification of all Senegalese, whether they are Seereer, Joola, Wolof, Tiijaan, Mouride, Layeen or Catholic. Nobody is left out. They constantly remind us that we are one. You know, people forget that we are all in the same boat. It is our boat, nobody can split it in two. Some musicians like the late Ndiaga Mbaye, Youssou Ndour, Pape and Cheikh, etc., are making us aware of what we all have in common: Senegal. When you listen to some of the messages in their songs, even if you wanted to do something bad, you think twice about it. The talk shows are changing the country. And look at how everybody jumps in whenever a dividing issue arises and starts speaking of the same oneness, peace and togetherness. The fact that I listen has changed a lot of my ideas about us [Senegalese].

Mati’s statement points to the unification effect the talk shows play in the listeners’ lives. For her, the musical talk shows in particular offer the entire nation an opportunity to immerse themselves in their culture. Most importantly, the diversity of music transmitted on the airwaves presents a unique vehicle for forging and representing a Senegalese national identity. Therefore, the music and entertainment talk shows act as an important instrument the participants use to shape their understandings of their
identity. As an enabling force for a collective national identity, the musical radio shows provide a “fundamentally fluid and fundamentally dialogic take on national identity formation not unlike identity formation in individuals who are constantly at work to define themselves” (Askew, 2002, p. 271).

In hearing the musical radio programs as generating a discourse of a collective national identity, participants are more encouraged to express their commonalities. Through that effort of producing and affirming a collective identity, the talk shows allowed for continuity, another principle operating strongly alongside the formation of a group identity. For participants like Mati, the talk shows did not fossilize their individual identities but changed their patterns of behavior or thought. The radio programs maintained the listeners’ identities by establishing a national identity that ensured the continuity of both Senegal’s modern and traditional influences. The health shows in particular seek to combine traditional medicine with modern medicine. In validating traditional medicine, the shows not only contribute to the continuity of this knowledge, but also to the lifestyle that produced this knowledge. In other words, the radio shows ensure the continuity of the good parts of traditional Senegalese society and thus allow Senegal’s modern national identity to claim its ethnic roots proudly.

Ethnic identity was another important element that was strongly stressed by a small number of participants. While the overwhelming majority of the participants stressed the unifying nature of the radio talk and its ability to build a collective national identity that can move beyond ethnic and religious boundaries, Penda and Yacine
however, indicated being more drawn into the preservation of their ethnic identities.

Penda explained:

I am a real Seereer! Whenever I call in during an entertainment show to request a song for myself or a friend, I always ask for a Seereer song. I call to offer my friends Seereer songs and they call to offer me Seereer songs and it feels really good to connect that way. You know, Wolof music is everywhere! You know, before I had a cassette of Khady Diouf but now I don’t have it anymore; and plus I am always on the move, so it is easier for me to call and ask for a song and listen to it [that way]. Also everyone sings in Wolof nowadays, the Seereers, the Pulaars, everybody. So for me, being able to listen to Khady Diouf’s song means a lot to me. Anybody can call and request the music they like. As for me, Seereer music and rhythms make me happy and make me cry. For instance, I love Youssou Ndour, but the words in his songs don’t have the same effects on me. Khady Diouf’s songs always give me goose bumps and Youssou Ndour’s almost never do!

This statement highlights the extent to which Penda connects to her ethnicity through music and entertainment talk shows. She seemed to be mostly interested in connecting with her own ethnic roots; although she does not see any problem with other callers requesting songs of their choice, her response suggests some level of unease with the domination of Wolof music. Penda’s attraction to Youssou Ndour music is done without any significant emotional attachment which is at the heart of her desire to listen to Khady Diouf, her ethnic counterpart. Far from being interested in assimilating and listening to the music of the dominant ethnic group, Penda is in search of the emotional linguistic connection Seereer songs offer her. To her and participants like her, having the option to choose which ethnic songs to listen to provides a great potential to disrupt hegemonic musical discourse, enabling them to prioritize their ethnic identity. In doing so, the musical talk shows, “put into play a sense of [their] identity that may or may not fit the way [they] are placed by other social factors” (Frith, 1987, p. 147).
By privileging their ethnic identities over a collective identity based on nationalism, participants like Penda are opting to stress their distinctiveness. As a member of one of the minority ethnic groups in Senegal, these individuals want to differentiate themselves from the majority ethnic group (Wolof) because they believe their identity is threatened by Wolof hegemony. Therefore, requesting particular ethnic songs is a way to publically display their distinctiveness from the dominant group while at the same time establishing and maintaining a sense of group identity within their own ethnicity. For Penda, feelings of distinctiveness are motivated by her desire to belong to the Seereer group, but not on an individual level. Far from being motivated by individual uniqueness, she is seeking to connect and identify with the people who call in to request similar Seereer songs. Penda seems to be motivated by a sense of empathy and solidarity with her own ethnic group while seeking distinctiveness from the dominant group.

For participants who choose to distinguish themselves from the dominant culture, music is a meaningful way to be recognized and categorized as “the other,” which in this case, seems to generate a positive and empowering feeling. Having the opportunity to select which layers of one’s identity to align with in a public forum like the radio talk shows offered many in the audience a space to display their distinctiveness a significant element of identity self-definition. Such a process and discourse put participants in a position from which they could see and understand their circumstances, thereby offering a collective framework under which they could negotiate their selves.
In being loyal to their own ethnic identities through music, participants felt pride, but also sensitivity and emotional connection to the messages the music conveyed. As Anta explained:

When I call and request a Pël song or when a friend calls in and requests one for me, it makes me really happy. I feel as if I am back home! For some of these songs, like Abu Djouba’s, I cannot even open my eyes when I listen to them because of the immense feelings of nostalgia they cause in me. The Pulaar songs make me happy but they also make me cry. Whenever I listen to Abu Juba, it makes me cry, no matter how many times I listen to it. It reminds me of my childhood, my village when we would have weddings… It makes me proud to be Peul! …[But I sometimes become] afraid for my children that when they grow up, they might not speak the language well and grasp the true meaning of these songs. [Anta starts crying.] Let me tell you something, I even feel lonely when I listen to these songs despite the fact that I am surrounded by children and friends. I can feel the loneliness of being far away from where I come from.

Like Daado, Anta is using the music talk shows to boost her sense of ethnic identity. The type of ethnic songs she requests gives her a sense of pride in her ethnic identity. Having the capacity to choose what aspect of her identity to espouse seems to enhance her self-esteem, despite the sense of loneliness it evokes in her. The fear that her children might lose their cultural and linguistic heritage has increased her desire to play the distinctiveness card, since it enables her to reconnect with her past, a past which she believes she has to fight to preserve. For Anta, having access to the Pulaar songs offers a context from which she can differentiate herself from others and define herself, but also emotionally connect with her own ethnic identity. These songs, in evoking deep emotions, present her with a great opportunity to reconnect and strengthen her identity. In being at “the heart of our identity” the emotions indicate the extent to which ethnicity occupies the primary axis of these participants’ identities. According to Stryker (1987), there is direct correlation between identity and strong emotions. Following Stryker, the
emotional reaction these participants experienced while listening to ethnic songs indicates the importance of their ethnicity to their personal identities. In trying to counter the Wolof hegemony that prevails on the airwaves in Dakar, Anta consciously chose Pulaar songs to affirm her identity on the national public forum.

While the almost exclusive use of Wolof during the talk shows bothered Anta and encouraged her act against the Wolofization of the airwaves, such a wide use of Wolof was a connecting point for a collective identity for most participants. The theme of emotion and its connection to the formation of a distinct and selected identity is closely connected to the issue of language in the context of Senegal and radio talk shows. The talk shows, in allowing the callers to express themselves in a language in which they can accurately express their feelings and emotions, played an essential role of the formation and reevaluation of the multiple identities of the audience. As Kumba argued:

Speaking in Wolof makes you appreciate who you are! We can joke, use proverbs, and most importantly, be ourselves. There are just so many things you cannot say in the language of the stranger; regardless of how well you are educated in it. You cannot say jokes in French, or if you do, they will not be funny! They would not be as funny as they would if you used Wolof, your mother tongue. Also, the fact that everybody, including the lawyers and doctors, (I mean everybody!) has to speak in Wolof during the talk shows is the smartest decision these radio shows have made. We are all on the same page; we understand each other even when we use proverbs, or become sarcastic.

Kumba’s statement highlights how language is critical to a group’s identity; it facilitates clear communication. When participants spoke of being able to joke and use proverbs in Wolof more freely than in French, they also showed how the group identity they ascribe to is different from the French or colonial identity. This distinctiveness of language is key to their identities.
To summarize, the radio talk shows provided a forum in which participants both discovered new identities and reasserted old ones. Participants were empowered by listening and calling in to the radio programs. Reassured and secure in collective identities, the participants called for justice against abuse and they called for their distinct ethnic cultures to be remembered and revitalized in the face of hegemonic culture, be it French or Wolof. Identity formation and the reinforcement of identity, even more than identity politics alone, were important aspects of interacting with talk radio.

Community

Community was yet another significant theme that emerged as the participants discussed the many ways in which the radio talk shows enabled them to develop a sense of belonging and togetherness. The participants spoke of the radio talk shows as remarkable sites which allowed them to imagine and create a sense of multiple communities. Due to improved communication and connections as a result of participation and exposure to talk shows, participants flourished beyond local, national and transnational boundaries. This lead to the formation of multiple types of communities, some existing solely on the airwaves, while others involved some level of physical interaction. These communities, just like communities formed on the internet and social networking sites, are made up of groups of people with a shared identity or purpose. Therefore, when discussing community, it is important to approach the concept holistically and recognize that communities do not always form in accordance with a set system, but rather involve diversity and pluralism.
In many of these new communities the participants came to form, shared regional identities were not a key component. Participants were members of multiple pre-existing communities, but also formed completely new ones. And these communities became powerful sites of reinforcing the notion of both imagined and “real” communities as being “potentially ideal public spaces where personal, private or autobiographical narratives come into contact with larger-scale, collective or national narratives in mutually inter-animating ways” (Rowe et. al., 2002, p.98).

Among the various types of communities that emerged, one of the easiest forms to recognize were physical communities, centered about the cities, towns, neighborhoods and streets where people live, work and interact with one another. In reviewing the narratives of the participants, it became clear that the radio talk shows helped reinforce existing physical communities in many ways. These communities are bounded by specific physical features, but defined by the interactions the physical features contain: neighborhoods can be dangerous, quiet, lively, etc. Many participants discussed how the radio shows helped them to develop solutions to problems in their own neighborhood/community. This was particularly true for the “Community Outreach” format, in which talk show hosts go to neighborhoods to interview people directly about issues or concerns they have and would like to share with the rest of the country. There was great variety in the nature of both the problems and solutions discussed, and some women only recognized their circumstances as problematic and detrimental after listening to these radio programs. As Oumy explained:

I think all types of shows help the neighborhood because if you help a person and make them see things the right way and do the right thing, that person will
transmit that knowledge or skill to her/his children, family members, and so on. That chain of transmission will help the neighborhood and the nation. But from my experience, when the radio people come here and talk to us about our problems, [that is what really] highlights the problems and forces us to take action. Most of the time we see trash around, or plastic bags, or a lot of mosquitos, but we do not think that we are part of the problem. I know all these are problems, but for instance, I did not realize the amplitude of the [mosquito] problem and what I could do to combat it until after the show on mosquitos. Also, you know nobody wants their neighborhood to be on the news for a problem, for something negative; that fact has forced us to unite and create a good image for our neighborhood. If the neighborhood has a bad reputation, nobody will say, “Oumy did this,” or, “Fatou did that.” All people will remember is that our neighborhood is dirty or unsafe.

Oumy’s response indicates the extent to which the radio talk shows can help improve the conditions of neighborhoods and cities. In confronting neighbors with their problems, the talk shows are able to stimulate a feeling of obligation/responsibility to come together as a community and respond by taking the appropriate actions. As Oumy suggested, for her community, acting collectively to create and maintain a good image was really important to its members. Therefore, in rallying already-existing communities around specific issues such as malaria, the talk shows encourage these communities to form and engage in networks of solidarity. Such physical networks presented the residents with the opportunity to conceptualize themselves as members of:

a socially interactive space inhabited by a close - knit network of households, most of whom are known to one another and who, to a high degree, participate in common social activities, exchange information, engage in mutual aid and support and are conscious of a common identity, a belonging together. (Cater & Jones, 1989, p.169)

The radio talk shows help strengthen and improve existing communities by enabling community members to see how they can help achieve of their communal goals. The shows draw attention to problems in a way that encourages each member of the
community to be part of the solution. They foster interaction and help build a sense of community. Such a process involving ‘individuals and groups develop[ing] their own strengths and solutions’” (Gutierrez & Alvarez, 1996, p. 505) is oftentimes very empowering. It allows for strategizing and bonding together to enhance their conditions. In more complex situations, the interactive nature of the shows helps initiate the discussion process that will ideally lead to either a solution or at least a greater understanding of the problem. Such was the case in Anta’s neighborhood, where an entire weekend was devoted to raising awareness of diabetes and high blood pressure:

Thanks to the radio and the education they provide people regarding diabetes and high blood pressure, an association in the neighborhood decided to spend an entire weekend raising awareness of these two terrible diseases that most people can prevent. It started on Saturday and lasted the whole day until the next day at around 6pm. There was music, everybody in the neighborhood came out, some radios hosts came out, and they checked people’s blood sugar and tested their blood pressure. They brought pictures to show what the diseases do to your body. It was really important and I think we will have it again next year. And all that was because of the radio; nobody should have an excuse for ignorance. Even if it did not solve the problem of many people who cannot afford their medications, at least many now know how to avoid the diseases. And the reportage they did on it after the event will educate even more people. Once we know, we can watch and warn each other as we always do for other things. That is our duty/responsibility.

As Anta rightfully pointed it out, the actions taken by a community association might have not been enough to eradicate the problem entirely, but the joining of public radio with the event helped educate more people and potentially improved the well-being of many more communities. Involving not just isolated individuals but groups of people from the same community in the identification of problems, solutions as well as modes of prevention seemed to have very positive results for the targeted communities. In coming to the realization that they have the knowledge and capacity to “watch and warn each
other,” Awa and her community members have embraced a sense of a collective responsibility which entails exercising accountability and support toward one another. Being convinced that they have the “capacities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives” (Bandura, 1996, p. 118), participants are able to utilize the information they acquired on the radio talk shows to galvanize their communities and facilitate community action. For some participants, as their sense of efficacy grew alongside their collective community engagement, they began to understand that “by engaging the community to develop context-specific prevention strategies, community members are empowered in the decision-making process and their capacity for problem-solving can also be enhanced, along with the ability for collective decision-making and collective action” (Rahim, 2005, cited in Mitchell and Haddrill, 2007, p.62)

Beyond facilitating problem solving and dialogue regarding issues in existing communities, the talk shows also helped strengthen ties among residents. By being involved together and working closely, participants gained “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (Wilson, 2001, p. 9). Roxeya suggested that:

After the radio did the reportage here on prostitution, and how dirty the neighborhood was, everybody in the neighborhood was talking about it. Everybody was talking to everybody about it. Before the reportage, my friend Diatou and I barely spoke to each other, but since then we have become closer. We ended up being in the same cleaning group and we started talking as we cleaned… I used to think of her as a snob but after working together, I found out that she was a completely different person. I was shocked to see that she even
participated in the activities. But everybody came out. Nobody wanted to be left out. Nobody!

Roxeya’s experience is a good example of how community participation in the activities initiated by the talk shows has enhanced understanding and appreciation between neighbors. Their close interactions provide them with a unique opportunity to improve their relationships by building strong ties based on collaboration, partnership and trust. In being aware of these common bonds through collaborative actions, participants become more devoted to finding the much needed “linkage of cohesion and mutual trust with shared expectations for intervening in support of neighborhood social control” (Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999, pp. 612–613). Such social cohesion and collective willingness are critical in helping the neighborhoods maintain cohesiveness and operate well as a community to “maximize their efforts toward a common end” (Pecukonis & Wenocur, 1994, p. 14). Therefore, in visiting neighborhoods and addressing their needs and challenges through dialogue, the talk shows have put in place a significant mechanism for communities to frame their needs collectively, to develop problem solving strategies, to build trusting relationships, and to “set the stage for members to enhance their efficacy [and] competence” (Zimmerman, 2004, p.135).

The radio talk shows play another critical role in helping the physical/geographical communities to flourish. Employment plays an important part in thriving communities because it contributes to “continually creating and improving those physical and social environments and expanding those community resources which enable people to support each other in performing all the functions of life and in developing their maximum potential (CDC, 2010, p.1).” In other words, equal value is
put on paid employment, voluntary work outside the family setting, and running households, since all contribute to the community in different ways. Regarding paid work, the talk shows serve as a means of building strong relations between customers and sellers. Street sellers in particular use the talk shows to attract customers. Participants like Aysata, a street coffee shop owner, uses talk show content to remain close to her customers and expand her clientele networks. Aysata explained “For my customers’ happiness and pleasure I have to turn my radio on…” She went on to add:

This stand is a place where people from all over Dakar converge. Some of my neighbors come here, especially the young people, but most of my customers don’t live here. They come from everywhere and many are attracted to come here to listen to the radio, especially when there is a wrestling game on or shows like “diine ak jamamo” (religion and society). The costumers know they cannot just come and sit down; they have to buy coffee and then they can sit for as long as they want and listen and argue…Also, for instance, for some customers like Fallou-- I know for a fact that he will not listen to “diine ak jamono” somewhere else because he wants to be with his buddies and vigorously argue about it. Can you imagine-- sometimes people cry! Some bet when there is a game. It gets very funny! Costumers like Musa leave their wife and children at home to come all the way here for their breakfast except for Saturday and Sunday. Some people have cellphones and they can use them to listen but they prefer to come here because of the fun they get here. This is like their home.

Aysata is aware of the positive effect radio has on her business. She used the radio as a marketing tool but also to create a feeling of “home” for many of her customers. The comfort and sense of togetherness the customers gain at her coffee stand provide them with a favorable context for building a community that shares a common space---one that is heterogeneous in terms of gender, age and place of origin. The talk shows and Aysata’s place foster the formation of a vibrant new community among people who come from all over Dakar. Aysata’s is “a place where people know and care for one another” (Etzioni ,1995 ,p, 31). This community has truly succeeded in creating a space and time
for bonding. In listening and discussing events and issues raised on the talk shows, Aysata and her customers experience bonding and sometime emotional moments which contribute to increasing feelings of comfort and being at “home.” Their collective listening to particularly-selected radio talk shows bring them together as a community.

It is, however, important to note that a lot of the shows used in this manner fall into either the entertainment or music genres, demonstrating that radio can be used as an indirect form of marketing within communities; owners of businesses use them to attract customers without having to pay for advertising. Interestingly, the radio shows are also used as a forum for networking. Khoudia’s friend is a perfect example of how listeners have used the talk shows to obtain a job. As Khoudia explained:

“Boroom kuddu du lakk” (he who has a spoon does not burn her/his fingers” You know my friend Maam; she got a job in SONATEL right after joining the club. One fan that has connections helped her. Yes! We the fans help each other. The discussions and exchanges we have when we gather during the meetings are really helpful to all of us. We all benefit from them. Only God knows how helpful they are. We all want to help because all of us have been in need of help at some point in our lives. And you know, having these connections is so important because for one job, there are many, many people who are qualified for it. So knowing somebody is really important, especially if you are poor like me. When you can help, you should start right at home, with your own people. It is a kind of a loan you are giving away; it will come back to your hands, one day inshalla.

Like Khoudia, many Senegalese believe that establishing strong ties with people is one of the best ways to obtain a job. In attempting to “develop and maintain relationships with others who have the potential to assist them in their work or career’ (Forret & Dougherty, 2001, p. 284), a number of talk show listeners have reached out to other fans to seek help for employment. As the statement explained, listeners view the fan networking as an important element for the survival and strengthening of the fans’
community. In developing a feeling of needing to give back, the radio fans community is “cultivating mutually beneficial, give-and-take, win-win relationships,” (Burg, 2006, p.2) which in return fosters interdependency among fans. Realizing the significance of such interdependency motivates many listeners to stay in touch with members of their fan clubs and foster a genuine sense of community. This sense of community also seems to provide greater feelings of confidence and self-efficacy. The promises of opportunities alongside the strong ties developed in networking make it possible for many fans to practice solidarity and invest in the formation of a community. For fans, being able to call in and speak directly to experts, asking for career advice or even exchanging information, helps create a professional network that would have been difficult to establish without the use of the radio. In that regard, the radio shows have a monster.com-like facet for Senegal. It is, however, important to emphasize that the relationship between radio shows and the employment-for-pay sector is not always perfect. Although Aysata recognized the value of entertaining her customers, she herself did not always enjoy the shows. “If I just speak the truth, I do not like some of the jokes made during some of the humorous shows, they irritate me sometimes.” It is important to note that radio shows have as much potential to create conflict in communities as to unite them.

Regarding this potential for conflict, radio shows have had a significant impact on Senegal’s religious communities. Religious shows vary in content and format, and thus, so do their impact. Many of the women discussed how the shows helped educate them about their own religions and build a stronger sense of belonging within these religious communities. Awa, one of the participants who felt that her involvement with the
religious talk shows empowered her as a Muslim, but also expanded her networks of Muslim communities, stated:

I feel an improvement within myself. Inside me I know I have become a better Muslim thanks to the religious shows, thanks to Taib and Alioune Sall. I belong to a dahira here in my neighborhood, but because I listen to and call during the talk shows, I now have other fellow talibes all over the country which I am connected to. I can also reach Ustaaz Taib and Ustaaz Alioune Sall whenever I want or if I have a question concerning Islam. Also, I like the fact that they invite Imams onto the shows from all the different tariqas. Even if each of them talk about their own Marabout, all of them, without exception, talk about the prophet Mohamed (SAS) and always, always remind us that we are Muslim first and foremost. They constantly remind us of where we belong and who we are. As Taib always says, “being Muslim is great.” I believe Islam has the answers to all our problems. As [the imams] say, we have to know our religion and build our umma so that our children can grow up with good Muslim values. Tijaan, Mouride, Layenne-- we are all Muslims and we all follow Imam Malick.

Awa’s response highlights the role of the talk shows in building religious communities. By centering their discourse on the need and advantages of building strong Islamic communities, the talk shows are encouraging participants like Awa not only reexamine their Muslim identity but desire to belong to such a unique entity. As they develop a profound identification with their religion through a strong feeling of attachment, participants are able to join a larger Islamic community, one that moves beyond the neighborhood and even one’s own tariqa. In presenting Islam as the solution to society’s problems and the perfect model for social cohesion, the imams are making it a really attractive framework for individuals like Awa. Moreover, the efforts by some of these religious talk shows to disengage from the negative influence of Western cultures and traditions seem to have raised concerns among some regarding the survival of a strong Senegalese Muslim community. By promoting a collective representation of Islam and Muslims, the religious radio talk shows are planting the seeds for the formation of a
national Islamic community. For many listeners, the platform provides a form of solidarity that holds people together under the umbrella of Islam while offering them the possibilities to unpack what it means to belong to a Muslim community. As Anta suggested “We have responsibility to protect our religion…. Nobody will do it for us. If we do not do it, the Toubab (colonizer or Westerner) will come and disrupt our community and destroy our values.” But beyond solidifying their sense of community as fellow Muslims, the talk shows provide the audience with a site from which they resist Western values. In making Islam more public and accessible to all individuals, including women, the radio talk shows are facilitating the formation of a collective Senegal Islamic identity, as well as the widespread desire to be a part of it. As Ndikku, the only participant in this study who memorized the entire Koran, suggested:

The religious leaders that intervene on the radio always remind us of the fact that this country has only one head. No one can split it into two. They always remind us that all the tariqas are the same. I think Taib is doing a great job in that regard. I like how he explains the similarities between the tariqas. We all follow Imaam Malick. I also like the fact that radio shows present imams that represent all the religious families, and other imans that do not have any affiliations. And also our Catholic relatives have their share of the shows. Plus, having discussions regarding Islamo-Christian dialogue is very important. You know, the radio can mess the country up, so it is really good that they always remind us that we are a big Islamic family and that people like Cheikh Amadou Bamba and Mame Elhadji Malick have worked so hard for us to ruin it! We have to preserve and deserve all that they did for us, ishalla.

What Ndikku’s statement highlights is the significant role the talk shows play in bringing the Muslim community together. The religious talk show hosts, by repeatedly reminding the audience that dividing the Senegalese Muslim community would be impossible, shape the audience’s conceptions of the similarities between the tariqa. In emphasizing a strong and unified Islamic community discourse, the shows are laying the
ground for the audience to unite around Islam while maintaining respect for the Senegalese Catholic community. Moreover, the additional access to information helped transform existing religious communities into more active, informed ones. In addition, some formats have provided a venue for interfaith discussion, usually between different religious leaders. In this sense, the shows are acknowledging pre-existing social cleavages and attempting to both bring light to and resolve any tensions there may be between different listeners’ communities.

Some communities are defined by social/cultural connections; in this instance, ethnic groups form their own communities. Many women discussed the importance of language as a motivating factor for listening to radio shows. Having talk shows and music broadcast in Wolof instead of French has helped strengthen the “post-colonial” community, the groups of individuals whose common identity is rooted in their pre-colonial ethnic background. This form of community is also reflected in some of the women’s desires to hear broadcasts in their own languages. It speaks to their desire to increase the visibility of their communities and give legitimacy to them. In this sense, the radio shows could become a way for minority communities to make their voices heard. At the same time, especially when the linguistic component is taken into consideration, radio shows could have a stratifying effect on the national identity. Listeners would be able to connect to their particular community, but in the process, the national community, bound together with a Senegalese identity, could weaken and become less important. There is evidence that radio shows are having more of a melting pot effect than a stratifying one. A perfect example of this is the health shows, which actively mix
Western medicine with traditional cures. Western medicine is more available to people who have more money and access to transportation, especially in cities and towns, compared to people in rural areas. The combination of knowledge, facilitated by the radio shows, helps provide a knowledge link between the two different communities, setting the stage for a more inclusive, shared identity.

Finally, radio shows have allowed people to connect and form their own communities without ever meeting one another in the physical realm. Often this connection takes place because of shared experiences. Hearing that other people have been through the same hardships motivates a form of “survivor networking,” where participants in radio shows continue to share their experiences and advise one another outside of the radio show format itself. The anonymity of the shows allows for people to share and discuss shameful and taboo topics, which gives survivors a venue to connect with one another without fear of judgment from their regional communities. As Aminata puts it, “You can live in the same neighborhood or even be related to people who have the criteria or the story you are looking for or that is of interest to you, but if they don’t interact with you, or if you don’t hear them interact with others and share their stories, how can you approach them to be their friends?” (300).

As was previously stated, these communities do not operate in isolation. One of the main impacts of radio shows on Senegal’s communities is that they have increased the average person’s access to different communities. Similar to online social networking, radio shows have strengthened existing communities and helped form new ones, be it in the physical or technological realm. Although there is potential for the
shows to fracture Senegal’s national identity into numerous regional ones, there is more evidence to suggest that a melting pot effect is occurring, where the communities continually interact with one another and evolve in relation to one another. One individual can be a member of multiple communities, even within a small town. Overall, radio shows have not only had an impact on the previously developed communities of Senegal, but have also facilitated the formation of completely new ones.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I analyzed how the radio talk shows affected the participants’ lives. I discussed the four major themes that ran throughout the data about how the radio talk shows influenced women’s lives. Comparing the women’s stories to the academic literature on education, empowerment, identity, and community formation confirmed that the radio talk shows were an important vehicle for change. Whether they felt more educated, empowered, discovered and embraced new identities, or found a community that made them feel safe and at “home,” the talk shows turned out to be a remarkable forum for the participants to negotiate, articulate and re-invent themselves. In doing so, the participants were able to see themselves as great individuals, citizens, mothers, and Muslims who all had the capacity to improve their intersecting communities. The next chapter concludes the dissertation. As a final chapter, it presents the summary of my findings, discusses their implications, and suggests recommendation for future research.
Chapter Eight: Summary, Findings, Implications, Conclusion

Introduction

This study was designed to explore the experiences and interactions of Senegalese women with radio talk shows. I used a phenomenological case study informed by both Africana Womanism and Freirean critical theory to interrogate and investigate the educational and empowering capacities of the radio talk shows. The previous chapters have reviewed the pertinent literature, presented the theoretical framework and provided the profiles of the thirty women who constituted the core of this study. This current chapter concludes the dissertation. It summarizes the preceding chapters and presents the major findings emerging from the research. This chapter also discusses this study’s implications for theory and practice and suggests recommendations for future research.

Summaries

This section summarizes the preceding chapters. Chapter one sets the stage of this study. It presented the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose and the research questions. It also addressed the significance of the study, the limitations and delimitations of the study as well as the definition of the operational terms. This chapter offered an overview of the evolution of local and global efforts to improve women’s visibility and access to education. The section highlights various national and international initiatives that have taken place in order to articulate the needs addressed by the international community (Byrne, 1990; Diaw 2005, Stromquist, 1998). The first World Conference on Women in Mexico in 1975, the UN Decade for Women (1975–1985), the second World Conference on Women in Copenhagen in 1980, the third World
Conference on Women in Nairobi in 1985, and the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995 are all manifestations of more than three decades of the international community’s commitment toward the emancipation of women. This international movement to advance women’s conditions translated into a rise in the scholarship produced about women, but also by women. Furthermore, conferences, workshops, studies and NGOs working on women’s issues flourished all over the global South. These efforts have translated into the adoption of new policies and measures aimed at improving women’s lives. As the international community promotes women’s rights and gender equity, the Senegalese government moves in the same direction by implementing various policies aimed at improving women’s wellbeing. The government further ratified various international conventions and laws promoting the welfare of women. These efforts have generated the formation of a range of gender-based organizations and movements, and an increased awareness of the essential necessity to educate and empower women and girls. But while Senegal has made strides in promoting more women in leadership and enrolling more girls in primary school, the situation of the majority of women tells another story.

Even in the light of increased attention with respect to women’s education, statistics show that Senegal has yet to improve the situation on all levels (UNESCO, 2009). Among the 83% of girls enrolled in primary school in 2010, only 35% made it to secondary school. From that 35% enrolled in secondary, only 6% went on to receive a college education (UNESCO, 2011). Moreover, only 38% of all Senegalese females aged 15 and above are literate (UNESCO, 2009).
While some changes have occurred as a result of international initiatives aimed at improving the lives of women and girls, many questions remain unanswered: What educational alternatives have been provided for the entire generation of girls and women who have never attended school? How about those who cannot reach middle or high school? Even for women who are “educated”, how have these policies and initiatives transformed their lives? To what extent, if any, have these changes trickled down to affect the majority of Senegalese women? What needs to be done to ensure more effective changes which do filter down to the average Senegalese female’s benefit in terms of equality in the socio-economic, political and cultural arenas?

In recognizing the real challenges faced by many Senegalese women and the inability of formal education alone to remove the barriers to women’s education and empowerment, this study sought to explore the potentialities of radio talk shows to provide a public platform for urban women. Despite the extensive recognition of the possibilities radio holds for social change, in West Africa, very few studies have looked at the medium’s potential to contribute to the education and empowerment of women. As indicated in the background, radio remains by far the mass medium for the majority of people in Senegal (Dia, 2001). Radios and talk shows in particular have become a powerful instrument for emancipation and a driving force for social change and democracy. Therefore, radio could be utilized to fill in the gaps by contributing more holistically to the needs of Senegalese women. In an attempt to investigate the potential of the radio talk shows as a space where critical education and empowerment can occur, the study aimed at understanding the composition of the female demographic of the
audience, the types of talk shows they are attracted to, the motives behind their involvement in the talk shows, and finally, the ways in which their engagement with the talk shows affects their lives. Four main questions were posed:

1. What are the characteristics of the women who listen to the radio talk shows?
2. What are the characteristics and the contents of the radio talk shows?
3. What factors prompt or motivate women to engage in talk shows?
4. What roles does radio play in the everyday life of the listeners?

By answering these questions, this study hopes to bring to light the potential of radio talk shows to contribute to women’s education, emancipation and empowerment, rather than reinforcing their objectification. In so doing, it will attract more attention to the medium’s ability to challenge patriarchal ideology and spur social change and democracy. This study further seeks to draw attention to the liberating and democratic nature of the talk shows in their ability/push to move critical thinking and dialogue beyond the domestic sphere. In seeing how the talk shows are educating people about practical issues, such as legislation and legal, political and institutional bodies aimed at bringing more visibility to women’s lives and conditions, it is critical to pay more attention to and invest in radio talk shows.

The chapter also addressed issues of limitations and delimitations. Regarding delimitations, this study took place in Dakar, the capital city of Senegal, and focused exclusively on the female audience of radio talk shows. While community radio dominates the media landscape in Senegal, this study specially targeted private radio for two reasons: first, to fill the gap in the literature regarding the lack of studies on private
radio and second, they offered more programs and attracted more callers. Like all qualitative study, this study’s findings cannot be generalized beyond the select group, but can be instructive for other settings as well as affords possibilities for transferability. The challenges that came with translating all of the interviews from Wolof to English were another limitation of this study. While sharing the first language of the participants facilitated the data gathering, English is not my first language and this limited the precision with which I was able to convey some aspects of the participants’ voices. Even beyond having to overcome the translation of certain Wolof words which do not have a clear correlate in English, translating body language, proverbs and dictums posed further challenges in the writing process. Chapter one concluded by providing the definitions of some key terms, followed by a section that presented the layout of this dissertation.

Chapter two is comprised of two parts, namely a review of relevant literature and the theoretical framework that informed this study. The first part, the literature review, covered four main areas: the state of women’s education, the evolution of development communication, the history of radio broadcast in Senegal and research on radio. The second part, which presented the theoretical framework, addressed the two theories that guided this study.

The first section of part one of the literature review examined women’s educational conditions in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Senegal. For each time period, I considered the particular realities that promoted or hindered women’s emancipation and self-determination.
During the pre-colonial period, literature indicates a gendered and normative nature of traditional African education. Each gender functioned with regards to pre-set gender norms, provisions and expectations which restricted women’s role to the domestic sphere (Assie-Lumumba 1997; Cutrufelli, 1983; Moumouni, 1968). However, these domestic roles assigned to women should not hide the vital roles women played in pre-colonial African societies. Works from scholars like Alidou, 2005; Egbo, 2000; Jagne 1998; Kann & Sharma 1993 caution their peers not to keep throwing women at the margins of knowledge production. They call for special attention to be devoted to uncovering the important roles women have held in African societies and the substantial contributions they have made (Alidou, 2005; Egbo, 2000; Jagne, 1998; Kann & Sharma, 1993). Their studies underscore women’s immense contributions to knowledge-transmission through proverbs, songs, storytelling and puzzles (Egbo, 2000; Jagne, 1998; Reagan, 1996). Moreover, other scholars’ works on the prevalence of matriarchal systems in pre-colonial Africa have challenged the strong association of patriarchy with Africa during that time period (Diop, 1987; Amadume, 1997; Noris, 2003). Diop (1987) for instance, offers the example of Wolof society, which he characterizes as one of the most powerful matriarchies during the pre-colonial era. He describes pre-colonial Africa as the “the cradle of matriarchy” where mother-centered and pro-woman society prevailed (p.82). While pre-colonial Senegalese societies might have been hierarchal, women participated freely and fully in both domestic and public spheres. As active members of their societies, they held positions of power (Callaway & Creevey 1997; Noris, 2003).
The literature on women’s education and status in colonial Africa indicates a worsening of women’s positions in society during that time period. Coquery-Vidrovitch (1997) argues that colonization further deteriorated the situation of African women by “defining women by the three S's: silence, sacrifice, and service” (p. 18). Such a view on women, Coquery-Vidrovitch argued transformed African men’s perception of African women. While the French worked hard to assimilate people into the colonies, their policies did very little to advance women’s and girls’ education. As Davidson (1991) argues, “for the great part, education was designed to do no more than provide a little primitive literacy and counting for hewers of woods and drawers of water” (p.318).

Solely motivated by the dissemination of French culture and values to male elites, the colonial educational policies had negative gender implications (Conklin, 1998; Egbo, 2000; Lazreg 1994). There was little concern for women; instead the policies intensified women’s domesticity and isolated them further from political and other highly-public spheres (Gaidzanwa, 2006; Conklin, 1998). Profoundly gendered and elitist, the French colonial legacy laid the groundwork for “bourgeois notions of femininity centered on domesticity and wifehood,” (Gaidzanwa, 2006) which strengthened the gender imbalance and slowed women’s integration into the workforce (Djibo, 2001; Gaidzanwa, 2006). Moreover, many Muslim Senegalese girls, like those elsewhere in francophone Africa, faced more discrimination due the fact that most schools were Catholic missions, a fact which further marginalized many Senegalese women (Djibo, 2001). Colonization and colonial education ultimately diminished women’s position and influence in society.
Islam is often equated with colonization (and Christianity) as being one of the two major factors in women’s oppression. While critics like Devès-Senghor (1972) associate the worsening of women’s condition and inferior status with the introduction of Islam in Senegal, other scholars, like Diop (1987) and Callaway & Creevey (1994), claim that Islam did not nearly harm African women to the extent that colonialism did. Instead, Diop (1987) and Callaway & Creevey (1994) argue that Islam and traditional African values co-existed for a very long time, and were able to converge and generate distinctive Islamic societies in which women held leadership positions.

The literature pertaining to the status and education of Senegalese women in the post-colonial period suggests very slow progress despite the implementation of a range of programs, initiatives and approaches to improve the difficult conditions of women’s experiences. The year following independence, the Senegalese government emphasized formal education, modeled on the French curriculum, by drastically increasing the national budget on education. While these policies improved enrollment in general, they failed to attract more girls and keep in school the few that were already enrolled, due to an inability to accommodate larger number of students alongside a culturally-unfit curriculum (Barro, 2005; Isern, 1990). Committed at least in rhetoric to fixing the problems of girls’ education, the Senegalese government continued to implement local and national programs and initiatives, as well as participate in international conferences as the issue of girls’ education became an international issue. In 1981, the government initiated a Meeting on Education and Training (EGEF) aimed at “reflect[ing] on the future of schools in the country and on the alternatives to undertake to face the big
challenges related their development” (MENCET, 2001). In 2000, the World Bank initiated a forum on Education in Dakar, which generated actions that contributed to the overall improvement of girls’ education (Ndiaye, 2006). In 2001, the Senegalese government began another program called the Programme de Scolarisation des Jeunes filles (PSF), this time just to rectify the imbalance between girls’ and boys’ enrollment. In 2008, a National Girls Education Day was implemented to demonstrate the government’s commitment to the improvement of girls’ education and the retention of girls in schools. In the same light, Senegal signed and committed itself to various international initiatives aimed at improving women’s education, including Education for All (EFA), the Programme Decennal de l’Education, and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While all this is paying off, the results are still not widespread. Despite all these efforts and strategies, and after more than half a century of emphasis on formal education, less than 30 % of females (15 and older) are literate in Senegal.

The next area of the literature focused on development communication and its effects on development initiatives across the globe. This section traces the history of the use of communication for development projects and highlights the three paradigms that have emerged from the field of development communication. The literature review discusses each approach extensively, including a description of each paradigm’s origins, major arguments and development approaches. For each approach, the section also provided examples of specific gender-related programs which reflect the methods and agenda of that paradigm.
An examination of the scholarship on development communication reveals a long history of the use of communication to improve people’s lives and wellbeing. As early as the late 50’s, scholars like Daniel Lerner (1958) and Wilbur Schramm (1964) theorized the essential relationship between mass communication and development. Over time the field expanded, producing a large volume of literature. As it gained more ground, it attracted more practitioners and scholars, but also critics. This movement of ideas generated three paradigms: the modernization or dominant approach, the dependency or critical approach and the participatory approach (Singhal et al.1996; Servaes, 2004; Wilkins, 2000; Melkote & Steeves, 2001), each with a particular view on how communication affects women’s lives.

The modernization or dominant paradigm is “based on neo-classical economic theory and promoting and supporting capitalist economic development. This perspective assumes that the Western model of economic growth is applicable elsewhere and that the introduction of modern technologies is important in development” (Melkote & Steeves, 2001, p.34). The model was replicated in non-Western societies and many people were forced to adopt it, to the detriment of their own development practices. Senegal was not an exception. Right after independence, Senegal embarked on a modernization phase which attempted to assimilate women into modernization. In the 1970s, a new agenda with new visions for women began to emerge. The Senegalese government adopted the Women in Development (WID) approach, an approach informed by the modernization theory, which led to the implementation of various projects that promoted women’s access to education, credit, employment and leadership positions. Unfortunately, the
modernization paradigm was unable to bring much-needed improvement to the lives of the masses, including women. It became obvious that the modernization paradigm was unable to implement culturally-adequate change to transform and “develop” non-Western societies as expected. Rather, it facilitated the legitimization of Western ideas and values (Schech & Haggis, 2004; Airhihenbuwa, 1995). Because of the WID programs, despite meager progress, the approach is criticized for failing to challenge patriarchy and hegemony and connect women’s subordination and exploitation to the larger capitalist institution (Diaw, 2003; Hirshman, 1995; Beneria & Sen, 1987). It is also criticized for assuming that men carry out all productive labor and for viewing women as merely reproducers rather than both reproducers and producers (Davison 1988; Callaway & Creevy, 1994; Gadio, 1993).

As it became obvious that the predicted economic growth was not going to take place, discontent and criticism grew and led to the emergence of a new paradigm: the dependency or critical paradigm. Informed by critical and Marxist theories, the proponents of the dependency theorists challenged the modernization approach for its refusal to connect capitalism to world inequalities and its Western ethnocentric approach of modernization and development. The dependency theorists instead called for the decolonization of both the content and the mechanisms of information dissemination. Just as modernization led to WID, the dependency paradigm gave birth to the initiative Gender and Development (GAD). Contrary to the WID approach, the GAD addressed women’s issues by questioning the underlying assumptions of the dominant structures of society like capitalism and patriarchy (Giele, 2001; Mies 1986; Moghadam 1999;
Rathgeber, 1989; Ward et al. 2004). In Senegal, GAD programs and initiatives led to more engagement and conscientization of women’s issues, translating into an increase in nominated female representation in politics.

However, before long, the dependency approach began losing popularity as well, mainly due to the need for conceptualizing a paradigm that would put people at the center of development communication. This led to the birth of the participatory paradigm (Korzenny & Ting-Toomey, 1990). Realizing that unless people started developing a sense of ownership by engaging themselves, change might not happen, the participatory theorists promoted dialogue, affirmation and freedom in the communication development process. Influenced by scholars like Freire (1970) and Chambers (1995, 2002), the paradigm championed a model of development, whereby participation and ownership led to empowerment. It stressed the significance of valuing and respecting the knowledge and realities of the local people (Chambers, 1999; Rahman, 1993). In doing so, the participatory paradigm greatly distinguished itself from the early paradigms that saw non-Westerners as backwards and obstructions to modernization. While the model has its limitations, it does provide a great framework for exploring and understanding the dialogic practices that occur on the talk shows.

The third segment of the first part of the literature review presents the history of the development of radio in Senegal. Starting from the birth of radio in Senegal in 1911, I lay out its evolution and explain the various elements that have influenced the major changes it has experienced. This section explains how radio shifted from being a tool for controlling and exploiting national resources in the colonial period (Hachten, 1971;
Wilcox, 1975) to a tool for reinforcing central political power (Bourgault, 1995) the year following independence. From 1911 to 1932, the radio was almost exclusively used to disseminate military and government information (Dia, 2001); while some civilian programming was initiated, it was very limited in terms of content, the duration of the broadcasting and the areas it covered (Bourgault 1995; Perret, 2005). By the time Senegal gained independence, the county had a second radio station in Saint-Louis, but the political leaders of the newly-independent Senegal showed no interest in decolonizing the colonizer model of communication, and rather used radio to reinforce French assimilation (Bourgault, 1995; Wilcox, 1975). In accordance with the modernization paradigm, the government began to use the radio to market its new development projects. By late 1960, radio was an extremely popular instrument used to promote modernization, agricultural development and literacy (Dia, 2001; Fougeyrollas, 1967). In the mid-1990s, media liberalization greatly contributed to the promotion and development of radio in Senegal, which played a key role in democratic maturity of the nation. Having only one station FM in 1994, Senegal is now the home of more than one hundred radio stations.

In the fourth and final portion of this segment of the literature review, I review various studies that have underlined the great potential radio provides for education and information dissemination (Adeya, 2002; Buckley 2000; IDRC, 2000; Jensen, 1999; Kenny, 2002; Kole, 2000; Lamoureux 1999; Onadipe & Lord 1999). These studies have also stressed the value of radio as one of the most effective media outlets for social change in Africa in various areas, including education, health and human rights. These results seem to be applicable in various settings, cities and villages alike (Adeya, 2002;
IDRC, 2000). While television and the internet have flourished, millions of people in Senegal still use the radio as their primary source of information (Jensen, 1999; Lamoureux 1999; Buckley 2000; Kole, 2000; Kenny, 2002). The literature also indicates the scarcity of comprehensive research on media in Africa, particularly on private radio stations. While a lot of research has been carried out on the radio, it has mostly targeted community radio (Singhal & Rogers, 1999; Michelle, et al. 2003). As the favored media, the focused research on community radio seems to be part of a new paradigm to counter the dominant hegemonic ideology (Carpenter et al. 2003; McQuail, 2000). Although its positive effects on communities are undeniable, its sustainability could be challenged due to its heavy reliance on external donors. Thus, there is a need to start paying more attention to the potential of private and commercial radios radio stations as an alternative avenue for education.

Chapter two detailed the theoretical frameworks I adopted for this study: Africana Womanism and critical theory. It begins by providing a rationale for utilizing two theories, and then provides a brief history of how each theory has emerged and evolved over time. I highlight the major tenets of each, discuss notable critics and offer an explanation as to how they fit this particular study. I demonstrate how Africana Womanism captures the particular cultural and religious realities that govern the lives of the participants, while Freirean critical theory enables me to move my analysis of the participants’ experience beyond Cultural Relativism and draw from a more critical perspective. The theoretical framework section ends with an examination of the intersectionality between Africana Womanism and critical theory. I point out the
similarities and differences of the two theories, and emphasize how, when combined, both theories offer unique frameworks to address the multi-layered experiences of my participants.

Due to the rich and diverse experiences the participants had on the talk shows, it was very important to adopt a multi-disciplinary approach. Since there was not one single theory broad enough to explicate and theorize the complexities of the participants, a combination of two theories was essential to guide my research and provide a stronger structure by which to understand and analyze the study (Anfara & Mertz, 2006; Denzin, 2000; Wu & Volker, 2009). I opted to employ Africana Womanism as a theory to understand the experiences of the participants because it recognizes and accommodates the realities of Senegalese women. The theory offers a unique lens by which to theorize and understand the histories and realities of the participants without falling into the trap of analyzing their experiences and ideas as those of oppressed and voiceless people. In using socially, culturally and spiritually appropriate criteria to analyze the experiences of my participants, Africana Womanism helps localize and acknowledge the fluidities of their identities. In viewing African women as “the subject and not the object,” African Womanism provides a great framework for this study.

But despite the appropriateness of Africana Womanism in analyzing the realities of Senegalese women, the theory cannot alone address the critical educational experiences of these women. To fill the gap, I add the Freirean approach to help understand and examine the educational avenues radio talk shows offer women in Senegal. Freire’s approach to education provides a way to explore the dialogic
interactions of the participants because of its emphasis of process over product. Using critical theory offers a suitable framework to analyze the ways in which women are using the talk shows as a platform to speak up as they strive to transform their lives. The liberating experiences participants had on the talk shows through dialogue, reflection and problem solving concurred well with a Freirean approach to critical theory.

Chapter three presented main methodological issues of this study. It presented and discussed the approaches, techniques, procedures and processes utilized throughout this study, from data collection to data analysis.

The first section of the chapter sets the framework for the design of the study. I explained how my research questions justified my choice of a qualitative inquiry (Creswell, 1998, Wolcott, 1992, Silverman, 2000, Glesne, 2006; Brizuela et al, 2000). The nature of my questions, alongside the empowering values of qualitative design, dictated my choice (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Creswell, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). My study aimed at understanding Senegalese women’s experiences of talk shows, through their own voices, making qualitative design the most suitable framework (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1985). I situated this research within the interpretive paradigm in the larger qualitative research paradigms. Rooted in the belief that realities cannot be discovered, but are rather co-constructed through social and cultural practices and interaction, the interpretive paradigm is the ideal fit for this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Krauss, 2005). I opted for a hermeneutic phenomenological case study as the most suitable approach to guide this study.
Phenomenology was chosen due to its purpose: the study of the essence of people’s experiences (Merleau-Ponty, 1995; Patton, 1990). While various types of phenomenology exist, I determined hermeneutic phenomenology to be the best fit because it embraces the idea that meanings, like realities, are fluid and co-constructed. In being “open to the emerging intersubjective explorations of meanings” (Sammel, 2003), where meaning is co-constructed through the “fusing of horizons” (Gadamer, 1989), hermeneutic phenomenology is an appropriate approach for the interrogation of the listening practices of Dakaroises. Such an understanding of phenomenology echoes the tenets of interpretive paradigm and both approaches and champions the production of a plurality of possible interpretations. Furthermore, the bounded nature in which this study took place suggested the relevance of a case study approach. In seeking “interpretation in context,” the emergent and fluid nature of the case study, alongside its ability to explore a “real-life phenomenon through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and their relationships,” (Zainal, 2007, p.2) made hermeneutic phenomenology a great match for this study.

This study also aimed to deploy a research approach that was responsive and sensitive to the realities of the participants. Hence, an African-centered framework was utilized in the analytical process and collection of data. Committed to representing the stories of the participants through a lens dictated by the Senegalese worldview, the study employed a method that unpacked representation of Senegalese women and decolonized knowledge. The core of this study remains the valorization of an African-centered paradigm as the essential principle of gaining insight into experiences of the participants.
This means more than just recognizing differences, but also seeing the participants "as centered and central in their own history when they see themselves as agents, actors, and participants rather than as marginals on the periphery of …experience” (Asante, 2009, p.1).

Such an approach was particularly meaningful given that this study used hermeneutic phenomenology, a Western-centered approach. Hermeneutic phenomenology combined with a strong focus, lived experiences, contexts, and fluidity of realities, makes the approach capable of capturing African realities and appropriate to this study.

In chapter three, I also provided a detailed description of the research setting, the selection of the participants, and the methods and procedures employed to carry out the study. Dakar, the capital of Senegal, was the host city for this study. The choice of Dakar was motivated by many factors (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). The major factor in choosing this setting was my hope of filling the void of literature surrounding this topic, given that most research on radio in Africa is carried out in rural settings. However, other factors, such as familiarity with the terrain, accessibility of information, cost and diversity influenced my choice. Overall, all of these factors made Dakar an exciting and fitting location for this study.

The field work itself began in March 2009 and lasted 11 weeks. After 4 years of absence, finally arriving in Dakar was emotionally difficult, but field work began right away. I began visiting research institutions and radio stations in my second week and I was building rapport with participants the day following my arrival. Thirty women
constituted the core of this study, which is congruent with qualitative inquiry and hermeneutic phenomenology, and underscores a deep and rich understanding of people’s experiences (Patton, 2002). Four men also took part in this study. While these men were not part of my target population, they provided me with invaluable information needed to deepen my understanding of the talk show phenomenon in Dakar.

Two techniques were used to select the participants: selective sampling and snowballing. Twenty-seven participants were selected using snowballing sampling and the rest of the participants were selected through selective sampling. Patton (1999) argues that both snowballing and selective sampling are somewhat purposeful. The combination of both techniques strengthened this study by facilitating, although differently, the “locating [of] information-rich informants” (Patton, 2002). It led to the formation of a rich and diverse sample of participants that was representative of the diversities of both the radio audience and the country as a whole. Most importantly, bringing together these two techniques strengthened and revitalized the entire data collection process, which was necessary to yield such rich data.

Multiple methods and techniques were used to capture the meanings and realities of the participants’ experiences. I combined interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and document analysis to gain a diverse yet unique perspective on women’s involvement with the radio talk shows. Combining all of these methods allowed for the use of the crystallization technique, which “recognizes that any given approach to study the social world as a fact of life has many facets” (Janesick, 2000, p.392). Using the crystallization technique to gather data allowed for flexibility and reflexivity, offering
more possibilities to interpret the complexities of the participants’ lives through various angles. (Gergen, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Richardson, 2000).

In chapter three, I also reflected upon my position as insider/outsider. As a woman and a native of Senegal, it was extremely easy for me to fit into the participants’ settings (Balde, 2004; Kiluwa-Ndunga, 2001). Being a Senegalese woman facilitated my entry into the field and contributed to the fruitful research experience I had on the field. My social, cultural, and religious understandings of the Senegalese milieu/culture guaranteed full cooperation from the participants and unflinching support from various people and institutions. The strong and trustful relationships that my insider position helped me to forge were foundational in yielding the rich data this study produced (Smith, 2007; Sultana, 2007; Kara & Philips, 2008).

However, being an insider does not come without challenges. The challenges associated with drawing the line between ‘field’ and home’ (Sultana, 2007) can undermine the entire research process and can lead to what Creswell (1998) calls “backyard research”. As an educated woman from an American University in Dakar, I was considered to be privileged, which positioned me to be considered an outsider. This forced me to recognize and question my privileged position and forced me to adopt a critical and reflexive attitude (Moss, 2002). I adopted the Senegalese concept of “Wacce sa bopp” which means “to lower yourself.” When embracing such an attitude, it is very important to dress modestly, exclusively speak in the local language, and use proverbs and idioms to prove a sense of belonging or fitting in. The attitude paid off and allowed me to develop strong and respectful relationships with some participants, despite the
enormous educational gap that existed. Although the native researcher “is still assumed to be less adept at creating the kind of objective detachment needed to properly interpret the emic ethically, to turn humanistic ruminations into true scientific fact” (Jackson, 2004, p. 34), paying extreme attention to the challenges that came with my position as both an insider and a privileged outsider made for a successful research experience.

Ethical issues were also addressed in this chapter, as they permeate to “every aspect of the research process from conception and design through to research practice and continue to require consideration during dissemination of the results” (Goodwin, et al, 2003, p.1). The entire research process was informed by ethical guidelines. In addition to following Ohio University’s procedural ethical guidelines requiring guaranteed protection of all participants from potential harm associated to their involvement in the study, I paid particular attention to unpredictable and unpreventable ethical dilemmas that emerged during my field work. As a result, I adopted a sensitive ethical stance that forced me to “constantly have to consider which questions to ask, which secrets to keep, and which truths are worth telling” (Ellis, 2007, p.4). By constantly interrogating and reflecting upon the relationships I formed with the participants, we were able to build mutual respect and produce a more ethical research practice that formed the most humane relationships.

The issues of credibility and trustworthiness were addressed as a way to assess and guarantee quality. I relied on the crystallization and triangulation of data, prolonged engagement in the field, member checks, and peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) to guarantee the credibility and trustworthiness of this study.
The last segment of this chapter explained how the data was analyzed and interpreted. After all the data was gathered in Wolof, transcribed and translated into English, the data analysis began through breaking it down into bits, and then “‘beating' the bits together” (Dey, 1993, p.31) to form themes and meaning. As I engaged in “a hundred separate pieces of interesting information [that ] mean nothing to a reader unless they have been placed into categories …. groupings, patterns and items of particular significance” (Bell, 1993, p.127), I decided to adopt a constant comparative analysis, also known as “coding” (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and followed these three steps: open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

In the first phase, termed “open coding,” I searched for common threads as I sorted the threads within the data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Bishop, 1999). After multiple readings of the transcripts and unpacking, organizing, and reorganizing the data, I began to categorize and append codes. The endless readings of the transcripts and listening and re-listening to the participants’ voices led to data reduction. Using a basic coding system with labels and highlighters, I proceeded to axial coding. I began to group the codes into various categories as they emerged (Perkins, 2005). I then moved on to the last stage of selective coding. As I continued to immerse myself in the data, I started “noting patterns and themes,” “clustering by conceptual groupings,” “making contrasts and comparisons,” “shuttling between data and larger categories,” and “noting relationships” (Bishop, 1999, p. 117). I began to make sense of the data and find meaning.
Using a constant comparative analysis method to analyze the data facilitated a connection between the theories and literature review, but also filtered the data through a hermeneutic phenomenological approach grounded in an African-centered paradigm. Such a perspective offered a rich, unique, and holistic understanding of the experiences of Dakaroises’ listening habits and practices.

Chapter four introduced the 30 women who participated in this study. In that chapter, I provide the profiles of the participants and offer a rich description of the context in which we met and interacted. For this study to have any significance, it was critical to acknowledge the multitude of variables that affected how these women interacted with the radio shows. A look at chapter four revealed that the sample was very heterogeneous from various angles, including age, marital status, and level of education. While all the women I interviewed lived in Dakar, they originated from all corners of Senegal. The ethnicity and marital status were 90 % and 73 %, respectively. Going into the research, I expected to see many uneducated/unschooled women turning to the radio talk shows for educational purposes, due to their limited reading skills and the multi-tasking enabling factors of radio. Yet while the biggest number of the participants (30 %) had never attended school, it was a big surprise to find out that a relatively large percentage (27%) of the participants had college degrees. What this means is that the talk shows were not an educational space solely for those women who had not attended school. It was a place where lawyers, doctors, journalists, housewives, street vendors, maids, teachers and Imams converge to build a learning community where each and every one could find the types of information and knowledge they were seeking.
Beyond teaching and learning through dialogue, the talk show forums made it easy to network with the radio listeners. Sometimes one participant would recommend a friend or acquaintance for me to interview and sometimes it was simply a matter of discussing the idea with women listening to radio shows in public. There is no single aspect of the participants’ lives (education, gender, social class, etc.) that defined their relationship with the radio. Instead, they tailored both their listening styles and preferences to suit their lifestyles. Ultimately, the diversity of the sample highlights how the radio shows could, in one way or another, be beneficial to every Senegalese citizen regardless of her/his specific needs.

**Major findings**

This section presents the summary of the major findings that emerged from the research; the following are the questions which guided this study:

1. What are the characteristics and the content of the radio talk shows?
2. What factors prompt or motivate women to engage in talk shows?
3. What roles does the radio play in the everyday life of the listeners?

In reviewing the participants’ responses to the first research question, aimed at finding out the characteristics and content of the radio talk shows they were involved in, a wide variety of both formats and genres emerged. Far from being standardized, of the 29 programs the participants of this study engaged in, it was possible to identify six separate formats, fitting into five different genres. While each woman had a favorite format and genre, no particular combination seemed to dominate the field.
The first format is a “Guest-Expert” show, in which a special, qualified guest is invited onto the show. This type of show usually progresses through three stages: first, the host interviews the guest about a specific topic, then callers are invited to contribute their views and/or ask questions, and finally the expert is given some airtime to summarize his or her main message. This format gives special responsibility to the host, as she or he is responsible for facilitating good discussion between the audience and guests. This format typically deals with controversial issues, in which listeners seek out expert advice and have the opportunity to challenge them as well.

The second format, the “Expert’s Panel,” uses the same three-step progression, but features two or more experts, often with contradictory opinions. The host’s role changes in this format from facilitator to mediator. Her/his responsibility is essentially to facilitate calm, reasonable discussion that helps the audience to either reexamine their own stances on the issues at hand or form new ones. Just like the “Guest-Expert” panel, this format also deals with controversial issues, but also provides multiple expert viewpoints. Many of the women enjoyed this format because of how effective it is in educating audiences.

The third format, “Vox Pouli,” can be roughly translated as a “Community Outreach” format. This one is far more community-based and has two phases. First, the host physically goes into a community and interviews locals about issues of concern. Depending on the show, the host may focus on a specific topic or deal with multiple issues, and the interviews can take place on an individual level or in focus groups. Afterwards, the host will publicize the issue(s) raised in the field and then open up the
lines for people to call in and pose possible solutions or comment on the situation. Just like the “Expert-Panel” format, the hosts of these shows play the role of a mediator, trying to drive the conversation towards a productive solution.

The “Individuals’ Testimonials” format is essentially the lay-person’s “Expert Panel.” In this format, ordinary people share their stories, then the phone lines open for listeners to comment on their situations. This is a particularly popular format; all of the women in the study mentioned one particular “Individuals’ Testimonials” show focused on the stories of disabled women. This format is especially effective in allowing disadvantaged peoples to share their stories.

The final two formats, “Open Air, Call In” and “Listener Selected Topic,” are very similar and rely heavily on listener participation. In both, a topic is selected (either by the host or audience), then the phone lines are opened up for listeners to participate in active, on-air discussion. The topics tend to be controversial and the host’s job is once again to moderate between different sides of the topics. The Open Air, Call In format tends to stick with a single topic, whereas the Listener Selected Topic format can change topics as more people call in with different issues.

In addition to these six formats, the radio shows can also be divided into five different genres according to the issues they address: religious, social and domestic, political, health, and music/entertainment. By far, the religious genre was the most commonly mentioned, which seems fitting for a majority Muslim country. The specific formats of these shows vary, but the common theme is that they strive to provide a solid religious education for listeners. Many women felt especially empowered by these shows
as they provide both religious education and the authority which accompanies it; some women were able to challenge their husbands or family members, backed by their own knowledge of the Quran.

The social and domestic genre is one of the newest to develop in Senegal, but has gained popularity quickly. Topics addressed are usually controversial and often culturally taboo, thus these programs are sometimes the only platform on which these discussions can take place. Anonymity and language are especially important with this genre, as many people rely on anonymity to share their stories and only feel comfortable discussing such issues in a familiar language, rather than French. These shows tend to promote real discussion of issues which directly impact women’s daily lives; thus they are very popular among female audience members.

Health care has spread to the airwaves within the health genre. These shows draw their expertise from both traditional knowledge and Western medicine, and aim to provide the population with access to medical advice. Many of the shows focus on preventative medicine, which is especially important as many of the listeners simply cannot afford medical treatment for advanced conditions. As part of the preventive focus, the shows also offer lifestyle advice. Simple solutions are posed to common problems: people with high blood pressure need to stay away from salt and standing water provides a place for mosquitoes and thus malaria to breed. Many women expressed appreciation for this genre and discussed how they have benefited from lifestyle changes inspired by these shows.
The Political genre works in a very similar way, but instead of educating listeners on living healthy lifestyles, the political shows aim to create informed citizens. Despite the undeniable importance of this genre, it was not particularly popular amongst the participants in this study. Most cited a distrust of politicians in general as their reason, but some of the women also expressed appreciation towards the radio shows for holding politicians accountable for their actions. Furthermore, some women discovered the power of their vote, especially as a means to advocate for their fellow women, by listening to such shows.

Obviously, it would be remiss to discuss radio shows and not acknowledge the lighter side: the Music/Entertainment genre. This genre has evolved from strictly music to including comedy shows as well. For some women, this genre is an excellent escape from daily life and a stress reliever. Others were unhappy with the racial humor and unfulfilling lyrics. This genre probably had the smallest impact on the empowerment of women and could actually be a road block in positive cultural evolution, as it often allows racial humor and degrading lyrics to flourish.

Radio shows in Senegal can be compared to a mosaic: just as the tiles in a mosaic are of different shapes and colors, the shows come in different formats and genres. Each seems to have its own advantages and disadvantages, as well as a specific audience type. It is highly likely that this variety has contributed to the overall success of radio in Senegal, as it provides something for everyone.

Research question 2 revealed five main motivations behind the women’s decisions to listen and/or participate in the radio shows: language, seeking knowledge
and information, anonymity, social interaction, and entertainment. As could be expected from the diversity of the sample, there was not a dominant motivation, but rather each woman identified more strongly with one or another based on their own personal needs and experiences.

To begin with, many of the women expressed the importance of most shows being conducted in Wolof, not French. Although French is the official language of Senegal, Wolof is more commonly spoken, and many women felt more comfortable communicating in Wolof than in French. Wolof is also less discriminatory towards one’s education level: those with more formal education are more likely to have a greater confidence communicating in French. Therefore it serves somewhat like an equalizer amongst the population, as it is a common language in which a majority of the population is comfortable expressing and comprehending complex ideas. In addition, it provides a more culturally-sensitive platform to address taboo issues such as sexuality or HIV/AIDS. Because the radio shows do deal with controversial issues, Wolof not only gives participants the vocabulary to communicate their opinions, but also a way to challenge current cultural hegemony without relying on colonial language. Furthermore, solutions to the issues posed were considered more valid as they were communicated in a more “authentically” Senegalese language. Because the discussions occurred in Wolof, the solutions did not seem to come from the colonial paternal mindset, but rather a true, internally-motivated Senegalese culture. Having stated all of the positive consequences of using Wolof, it is critical to remember that not everyone who participated in the study is ethnically Wolof, and thus not everyone was comfortable communicating in Wolof. In
fact, some of the participants felt that the radio shows helped justify the Wolof hegemony in Senegal, ignoring other languages.

Many of the women were motivated to listen/participate in shows because they were seeking knowledge and information. Several told stories of accidentally stumbling upon the wealth of knowledge the radio programs offer; once they realized the validity of the information given, they turned to the programs to seek more. Essentially, the shows provide a cheap, readily available source of information that requires little to no formal education. The nature of the information the women sought out varied, but religious, medical and political knowledge were all mentioned. Some of the participants had little to no literacy and had to work to support themselves and/or their families. Because radio does not require their visual attention, many women were able to multitask, listening to the programs while continuing to work. The radio shows also provided a platform where different types of knowledge could be presented alongside one another to create a comprehensive knowledge base. This was especially common with the medical shows: doctors and traditional healers would both give advice on preventative and curative medicine. Another interesting consequence of this particular motivation was that the women developed critical thinking skills as differing opinions and solutions were presented to them and they needed to develop personal opinions. Thus, while seeking knowledge was the primary motivation, many of the women unintentionally developed critical thinking and other life skills as a result of the process.

Anonymity was another motivating factor, especially for those women who chose to participate in the shows. Because of the often controversial nature of the topics, many
women did not want to openly express their opinions or share their stories. Some feared it would reflect badly on themselves or their families, and others simply did not want to intentionally cause trouble in their communities. Essentially, anonymity allowed the women to draw attention to hidden societal problems without having to draw attention to their own culturally-shameful experiences. Several of the women stated that they were only comfortable sharing their personal stories because it was anonymous and their neighbors and families would not be able to trace their stories back to them. Despite this, some of the participants expressed unhappiness with those who participated in the shows anonymously. Some felt that their stories were less credible as a result, and others expressed concern that anonymity allowed guilty parties to escape accountability.

Anonymity was similar to language as a motivation in that it was somewhat controversial amongst the women surveyed.

Unlike anonymity, which allowed the women to hide behind false identities, many of the women were motivated by the social interaction the radio shows generate. One very obvious example of this was especially popular among the venders and shop owners: people physically gather around the radio. Thus, the radio can serve as a catalyst for social gatherings. However, a more unexpected phenomenon was that many of the participants developed actual relationships with one another via the radio. Several women shared stories of connecting with other women who had endured similar experiences to their own. The nature of these relationships varied: some stayed strictly in the virtual realm, over the radio or through phone calls, whereas others chose to develop a face-to-
face relationship with those they connected with through the radio shows. Ultimately, the social interaction motivation worked on several levels.

Finally, as could be expected with a medium like radio, many women expressed pure entertainment as a motivation. Many felt that the comedy and music shows provided them with a release from the stresses of everyday life. They placed a lot of value on laughter and humor as an important part of a balanced life. In addition, just as language provided a culturally-relevant motivation for many of the women, some participants were very happy to hear their personal taste in music played, especially when it was regionally-specific. This motivation was particularly important, as it showed the lighter side of radio shows: they are not all about rape, incest, abuse and the like. The variety of motivating factors is appropriate when one considers both the variety of radio shows and the variety of women who participated in the surveys. Although there was not a dominant motivating factor, it is perhaps more important to recognize the complexity and variety of relationships women can have with these radio shows.

As the study progressed, the critical question became: so what? These women actively listened to and participated in these shows, but what impact did the shows have on their lives? I ultimately identify four major categories of impact these shows have on the participant’s lives: education, empowerment, identity creation/formation, and community formation.

Education was a dominate theme, which is not surprising considering the informatory nature of many of the shows. Many of the women viewed radio shows as a way to access the schooling they may have been denied earlier in life. Furthermore, the
information presented really resonated with them because it was applicable to their daily lives. Two prime examples were religious and health education. Many of the shows were religious; for some Muslim women, listening to the shows was the first time they were exposed to true religious education. Similarly, the health shows helped to educate the women about the detrimental impacts many of their daily habits, especially diet choices, were having on their health. But the education went beyond simply presenting facts and ideas the women could interpret and use. They also learned skills, especially problem solving capabilities, for dealing with social and familial issues.

This development of skills bridges the gap between education and the second theme: empowerment. Essentially, empowerment was an effect of education. As the women gained more information, they began to recognize their own authority and agency and thus took control of their lives in new ways. For example, some women rebelled against familial expectations, armed with religious knowledge of the Quran. These were not isolated incidences; in fact, every woman who participated in the study felt empowered in one way or another. This empowerment took root in a variety of ways, but the common theme at work was women recognizing their ability to change unsatisfactory or detrimental aspects of their lives.

In addition, the radio shows helped create and strengthen identities. Just as empowerment took place in different facets of the women’s lives, different identities were developed or strengthened. For example, many women said that the new religious knowledge they gained from the shows helped them strengthen their identity as Muslim women. The knowledge gave them a deeper awareness of what it meant to be a Muslim
woman, and from there they were able to identify more strongly as Muslim women. National and cultural identities were also mentioned as being important. For some participants, the political and musical programs were authentically Senegalese; they contributed to the development of Senegal’s post-colonial identity. Others chose to focus more on their regional and ethnic identities, identifying especially strongly with music from their own region or ethnic group.

Although this tension between regional and national identities has the potential to create cleavages, the final theme that emerged—community—focuses on unity. Similar to the creation or strengthening of a multitude of identities, a number of different communities were developed or strengthened. For pre-existing physical communities, the radio shows helped bring internal issues to light and helped resolve conflicts. The shows helped the business sector both by providing employment and by giving vendors and shop keepers a way to keep their customers entertained. Additionally, new communities formed, especially as participants shared survival stories and connected with others who underwent similar experiences.

Ultimately, none of these themes can stand independently. Rather, they are all intertwined with one another: education facilitates empowerment, empowerment leads to the creation of stronger identities, and communities form around shared identities. This is a prime example of how complicated an impact Senegal’s radio shows are having on the female population.
Implications for Theory

In this study I opted for an interdisciplinary theoretical framework to investigate and understand the experiences of Dakaroises. Two theories, Africana Womanism and Freirean critical theory, were utilized to capture and conceptualize the complex and rich relational experiences the participants developed through their involvement in and exposure to the radio talk shows. Both theories provided a valuable framework for exploring and articulating the listening and calling practices of the thirty women who took part in this study. Although Africana Womanist theory and critical theory pursue somewhat different agendas and operate on different grounds, they share an emancipatory agenda and “the hermeneutics of suspicion” (Braidotti, 2002, p.68). Africana Womanism, while being primarily concerned with the experiences and stories of women of African descent, is not to be understood outside the larger framework of critical theory. Africana Womanist theory and critical theory both have strong emancipatory commitments and challenge hegemonic discourses and practices, although how they interrogate issues of power, agency and emancipation differentiate them.

In challenging traditional theoretical paradigms and repositioning them at the center of the analysis of underprivileged groups whose history, voices and agency have been neglected and thrown to the margins, both Africana Womanism and critical theory allow for problematizing the larger power structures, but also for analyzing localized injustices. These two theoretical lenses, when combined, offer a unique opportunity and mechanism for debunking the interconnectedness of oppressions. Together they provide a
vehicle to understanding and recognizing these interlocked oppressions, but also to seeing
and valuing agency and intersectionality.

For this study, it was particularly important to choose an interdisciplinary
theoretical framework that emphasized elements that could capture and speak to the rich
and diverse layers of the participants’ lives. By making it possible to theorize similar
issues from different angles that account for intersectionality, Africana Womanism and
critical theory provided a lens through which I was able to simultaneously narrate and
theorize the multiplicities of Dakaroises’ experiences vis-à-vis radio talk shows.

The findings of this study concur with many of the tenets of Africana Womanism.
The narratives of the participants highlighted how the particularities of these women’s
accounts of their experiences with the talk shows pertained to the Africana Womanist
theory. As a theory centered on an African worldview, Africana Womanism stresses the
criticality of:

understanding and appreciating the Africana woman is recognizing her common
18 features: (1) a self-namer and (2) a self-definer; (3) family-centered, (4)
genuine in sisterhood, (5) strong, (6) in concert with male in struggle, (7) whole,
(8) authentic, (9) a flexible role player, (10) respected, (11) recognized, (12)
spiritual, (13) male compatible, (14) respectful of elders, (15) adaptable,(16)
ambitious, (17) mothering and (18) nurturing. (Hudson-Weems, 1993, p.154)

These characteristics of the theory are all important themes that were captured in
my research findings. In particular, the data confirmed the significance that being in
solidarity with men held for women. Many participants expressed a desire for partnership
with men rather than seeing them as enemies. Most women, even those who recounted
painful experiences with men, seemed to be convinced of the necessity to partner with the
very men that abused them to truly eradicate the injustices they experienced. Participants
believed that any struggle that aimed at sustaining families and society at large must be carried out with the support of everybody, including men. As Hudson-Weems (1993) suggests:

> The Africana womanist is also in concert with males in the broader struggle for humanity and the liberation of all Africana people…. Unlike the mainstream feminist, whose struggle is characteristically independent of and oftentimes adverse to male participation, the Africana womanist invites her male counterpart into her struggle for liberation and parity in society, as this struggle has been traditionally the glue that has held them together and enabled them to survive in a particularly hostile … society. (p. 61)

This quote was echoed in the findings as the participants expressed their awareness of cultivating a collaborative partnership between men and women, a necessary first step for any deconstruction of power relationships. These women recognized that men and women, in their unity, create one another (Mazama, 2007, p. 401). Such an attitude is indicative of the women’s capacity to identify the roots of their problems, but more importantly, it points to their aptitude in constructing culturally-appropriate solutions founded on collaboration. In choosing to collaborate with rather than affront those in power, women are better positioned to interrogate the existing dynamics of power which, although minimal, allows them to generate novel dialogues and inherit new knowledge (Benson & Nagar, 2006). Most importantly, in collaborating and partnering with men, these women can be guaranteed that power and authority will not solely rest in the hands of men. While such an attitude does not always translate into the equality of voices, which might not be even relevant in this scenario given the valuable status assigned to elders, it certainly encourages dialogue and mutuality.
As their stories suggested, many participants were aware of the fact that closely collaborating with men never meant that they had to abandon their own perspectives. These women knew that they had to collaborate with men in order to build trust and strong alliances. Yet they recognized that such alliances were somewhat limited, that they did not “require agreement in all things, but a mutual commitment to talk things through, to reach a common understanding, and to respect considered differences” (Rouverol, 2003, p.83). The participants, in embracing the realization that Africana men and women, struggling for human freedoms alongside one another since the days of slavery, are and will always be allies (Hudson-Weems, 1993) really echoed the core of Africana Womanist theory.

Spirituality was another important theme that justified well the appropriateness of Africana Womanism for analyzing this study. A core tenet of Africana Womanism, almost every woman who participated in this study demonstrated a strong sense of spirituality and religious conviction. For the participants, their involvement in the talk shows heightened their spirituality and generated strong feelings of empowerment and transformation. Moreover, the findings indicate that through the talk shows, the women searched for a personal and closer relationship with God, one which made them feel more dignified, empowered and confident. Such a close relationship with God indicated the women’s “existential search for ultimate meaning through an individualized understanding of the sacred” (Wink & Dillon, 2002, p.79). Therefore, in reflecting upon the participant’s narratives, it was clear that Africana Womanism’s emphasis on
spirituality made it a truly valuable lens through which I was able to theorize their experiences.

Genuine sisterhood was yet another significant theme that ran throughout the findings and demonstrated how well African Womanism theoretically fit this study. Central to the participants’ experiences vis-à-vis the radio talk shows was their ability to provide the audience with a space in which genuine sisterhood relationships could be built, developing a sense of togetherness and solidarity. As Hudson-Weems (1993) argues, these solidarities formed on the airwaves “renders one sure way of bringing about ultimate success, for the sharing of one’s life experiences often gives what is needed for that success. Hence, where there is a coming together of body, mind, and spirit, there is victory” (p.67). Such a unifying experience based on genuine sisterhood reflects well the tenets of Africana Womanism. It further provided the participants with a real sense of togetherness which embodied a feeling of belonging to a wider community of shared values and needs.

In reflecting upon the narratives of the participants, one can easily identify the various features that characterize the African Womanism theoretical framework. While some aspects like spirituality, genuine sisterhood, and partnership with men were most noticeable and outstanding in the findings, the remaining elements of the eighteen features were visible in the participants’ voices, actions or behaviors. That is to say that Africana Womanism provided a valuable theoretical framework for all of the articulations of Dakaroises’ experiences.
Similar to Africana Womanist theory in some respects, critical theory yielded a different yet equally valuable framework in investigating and understanding the experiences of the participants vis-à-vis radio talk shows. From the findings, it was clear that critical theory in general, and Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy theory in particular, offered a framework that was very suitable for examining the educational challenges but also the educational possibilities the radio held for women’s empowerment. Freire’s (1972) approach to education and his concepts of praxis, dialogue, problem-posing and consciousness were very applicable to the learning experiences the participants partook in. The critical knowledge the participants gained as a result of constructive dialogic interactions alongside the formation of newly-acquired levels of consciousness were manifestations of transformative pedagogical experiences though the talk shows. The emergence of these Freirean educational practices on the talk show forums provided useful insights in understanding the critical value of the collaborative learning at work. Participants, in coming to the realization that they were not just acquiring knowledge but were themselves producing and spreading it, embraced their capacities to intervene in and transform their realities. In allowing for a new pedagogical shift which positioned the women at the center of knowledge production, the talk shows became educational forums for addressing and investigating alternative ways of seeing and understanding their realities. The dialogic and pedagogical interactions the participants engaged in were very conducive to problem-posing, kindling genuine reflection on their realities (Freire, 1972).

These various critical pedagogical practices that occurred through the talk shows reflected the tenets of critical pedagogy quite well. As illustrated in the findings, many
participants, through praxis and reflection, became much more engaged critical thinkers capable of challenging and even eliminating some of the oppressive practices they encountered. In spreading knowledge and praxis, which resulted in liberating possibilities for many women, the talk shows achieved an important goal of critical theory: that of trying to “understand, analyze, criticize, and alter social, economic, cultural, technological, and psychological structures and phenomena that have features of oppression, domination, exploitation, injustice, and misery” (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, p. 146). Moreover, in making the participants realize and accept the idea that “... there are no themes or values of which one cannot speak, no areas in which one must be silent. We can talk about everything, and we can give testimony about everything” (Freire, 1972, p.58), the talk shows revealed their potential to foster liberating educational practices. In doing so, the talk shows awakened agency within and among the participants by allowing them to “name their world” (Freire, 1972) while simultaneously engaging in counterhegemonic discourses and practices.

In accordance with these liberating and transformational learning experiences and praxis, the Freirean approach to critical theory was well-reflected in the voices of the participants. The theory provided a genuine and dynamic framework from which to appropriately capture educational meanings of the listening practices of the participants. When combined with Africana Womanist theory, the critical theory offered a unique lens through which to interrogate the intersectionalities of multiples layers of identities which informed the hybrid positionalities of most talk shows listeners. The integration of these two theories served as a suitable critical lens to challenge deeply-rooted stereotypical
assumptions about groups like African Muslim women, often seen as oppressed and victimized objects with neither voice nor agency. Deeply committed to social change through intersectionality, plurality and praxis, Africana Womanism and Freirean critical theory offer great theoretical potentialities for the eradication of marginalization.

Implications and Policy Recommendations:

This study has several important implications for education, policy makers, radio owners/programmers and NGOs. The findings of this study reveal that radio talk shows have the ability to effectively educate and empower both individuals and communities in Senegal. The findings also highlight radio talk shows as a democratic space with great potential to supplement formal education, facilitate gender equity, and resolve various social issues. The findings also suggest that talk shows can play an influential role in the formation and implementation of public policy.

The findings of the study reveal that there is a need for the Senegalese educational system to explore the potential of talk shows as mechanism to supplement formal education and address the existing educational gap, because they offer uneducated or undereducated citizens exposure to different types of knowledge and assist in developing the critical thinking skills required to apply knowledge effectively. The government could collaborate with radio broadcasters to develop educational programming targeting the specific needs of different population groups. These targeted programs could be broadcast in indigenous languages at different times of day, which would increase access to information. In exchange for agreeing to broadcast educational programming, the government would pay the stations an annual fee. This arrangement would benefit both
parties because the government would expand education to its citizens, and the radio broadcasters would develop a new and needed revenue stream. This would also contribute to the communities’ economic base by providing additional employee salaries.

By using talk shows as a complement to formal education, education activists could use the forum to promote critical thinking and democratic values. This is particularly important given that receiving a formal education does not always transform citizens into critical thinkers. Therefore, the findings of this study could help the education authorities to see the potential of talk shows to complement the holistic and transformative education that women need.

The study’s findings also could be useful to politicians and policy influencers. The types of discussions and dialogue that occur on the radio talk shows are a sign of the maturation of a democratic society, one which requires freedom of the media and a lack of government control over it. In an ideal democracy, the media plays the role of both a watch dog and a carrier pigeon. It transmits the information citizens need to intelligently participate in the system, and holds the government accountable for its actions. Because both of these tasks are best achieved from a non-partisan stance, it is important that the media remains politically neutral at all times. The findings of this study have demonstrated that radio talk shows have enormous potential for addressing political, cultural and social issues in Senegal.

One immediate challenge facing the government as it attempts to define its obligations to freedom of the press is the issue of censorship. However, doing so would not only limit the broadcasters’ potential to contribute to social change, but it could
actually be a detriment to society. Free expression can provide a forum for contentious debate, but censorship prevents ideas from spreading and evolving into a shared base of knowledge.

Ideally, there would be no need to develop policy to support these obviously beneficial radio programs because the political and social elite would recognize the benefits and support their existence. However, reality offers many shades of grey and thus it could be beneficial to develop policies that strengthen independent media. This must be achieved through a transparent and inclusive process because censorship and other detrimental practices are proven threats.

The findings of this study also have significant implications for radio broadcasters. In realizing their significant contributions to educating and empowering not only women, but the entire nation, broadcasters could be motivated to continue to play an important role in the transformative changes underway in the country. Therefore, the apparent benefits of the findings had by citizens could influence radio stations to improve their programs and accommodate for the needs of their audiences. The findings could also motivate radio broadcasters to invest more in the talk shows by initiating research to gain a better understanding of the needs of their audiences. To strengthen their capacity and ability to educate citizens, radio broadcasters could extend the time of some of the talk shows the participants find truly educational and transformational, and make more experts available to the audience. Thus information will be accessible to citizens who most benefit from it. Providing more access to typically out-of-reach
scholars who can influence policies and curriculum design would be an excellent way for the audience to have their needs addressed by the policies that impact their daily lives.

The findings of this study could also influence NGOs to pay more attention to the potential of private radio to provide critical education to the underprivileged, while building strong democratic societies and providing support networks for survivors of abuse. This, however, does not mean that the NGOs should shift their attention from community radio. Senegalese private radio broadcasters’ large listener base makes them an optimal medium to reach a wider population. The study rather calls for a diversification of approaches because this would multiply the possibility of reaching different demographics with various approaches. Recognizing that solutions lie in the synergy between formal and informal education through radio talk shows would be a powerful argument for policy makers to design policies that could help sustain and maintain their survival.

**Suggestions for Future Research**

Many aspects of radio talk shows remain uninvestigated as potential sites for education, empowerment, democracy, identity formation, etc. Based on the narratives of the participants, it is clear that the radio talk shows have been a catalyst for improving women’s acquisition and production of knowledge in Senegal. Further research on the educational and empowering capabilities of other media outlets, such as television and the internet, would provide a deeper understanding of the ways in which various media institutions could be mobilized and redirected in an attempt to bring more visibility to women’s issues and wellbeing. This would be particularly interesting given the
significant increase in the number of private television channels that have incorporated talk shows into their daily programs since this study was conducted. The findings of this study also highlight some frustration toward the hegemonic and almost exclusive use of Wolof on the talk shows. While this sentiment was only expressed by a few participants, it is critical to further undertake a more extended research, using a mixed-method approach, to gain a deeper understanding of the extent to which minorities feel excluded by the media. Such research would have to include all segments of the minority communities--not just women--for a more comprehensive analysis.

The participant’s narratives indicate that the radio talk shows provide a space for socialization and identity formation. Although it did not emerge as a major concern for most participants, it seems that the music and entertainment talk shows hold the potential of reinforcing women’s objectification. More research should be done on how talk radio could be used as a space in which to deconstruct women’s objectification and rebuild new ideas and perceptions of women and their bodies. The research could be expanded to look specifically at Senegal’s music industry and its impact on women’s development in Senegal.

The radio talk shows have become a place where the pedagogy of relationships and dialogue play a significant role in the learning experiences of women. Further research should focus on the potential of these forms of educational practices, and on how they could be translated into a classroom setting.

The findings of this study also revealed a lack of female interest in participating in political radio talk shows; therefore, there is a need to conduct a wider study that would
help unpack the root causes of such a lack of female enthusiasm in a country that has just passed a law that guarantees gender parity in parliament.

Finally, this study could be replicated with men. This research would allow for a comparison of gender outcomes and expectations on radio talk shows, which would be very useful in designing and implementing policies intended to address issues related to a specific gender. Further research could look at how participants of different genders and ages relate to the programs, specifically men under age 18.

Conclusion

I embarked on this research journey to discover the potential of radio talk shows to educate and empower women in Senegal. What I found exceeded my expectations in terms of the levels of affirmation and agency that the radio talk shows enable in many women. However, it is very important to acknowledge that the radio talk shows are not a perfect forum. Nonetheless, radio talk shows represent, without a doubt, a dynamic educational space where solidarity, dialogue, critical thinking and problem posing are promoting social and democratic change through language and cultural evolution.

Another important consideration is how the talk shows have facilitated the formation of solidarity which generates strong feelings of self-esteem and empowerment. As a necessary step for meaningful change to occur, bonding and building strong alliances encourage women to value “mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationships” (2003, p.3). Seeing and accepting themselves in terms of solidarity has helped women to deconstruct the challenges they face while allowing them to enter into dialogue using more caring, respectful and
responsible terms. The talk shows offer women a place to identify common interests originating from similar circumstances without invalidating “material and ideological power differences within and among groups” (Mohanty, 2003, p.116). These opportunities of building alliances while still recognizing the specificities of each woman has also allowed for the formation of a cultural forum.

As illustrated in the findings, the use of the Wolof language is extremely important in a sense because it gives authenticity to Senegalese culture as an entity in and of itself, rather than a bi-product of colonialism. Yet it is anonymity that gives people a platform on which to challenge social norms. Instead of the radio talk shows targeting a specific audience and attempting to inspire a specific sentiment, they struck me as more of a community and cultural forum. The participatory nature allows for resistance to take place within the specific cultural context; the solutions are not simply “this way is right, this way is wrong,” but a discussion of different approaches.

This is also evident in the different responses of listeners: some felt anonymity was critical, to others that was cowardice. Some liked the political and comedic programs, others found them irritating. There seemed not to be an expected singular response to any of the programs. This idea of cultural evolution is incredibly inspiring. It is interesting how different sectors of the population listened to gain different types of knowledge: the less educated listened to gain “academic” knowledge, while the more educated listened to gain “traditional” knowledge. In other words, instead of the just the rural or uneducated women learning to resist detrimental traditions, radio talk shows seem to be an effective way of bringing together distinct categories of Senegalese
knowledge that have sometimes been seen as diametrically opposed. All sectors of the population can participate and distinguish good ideas/knowledge/traditions from bad ones by their collisions with one another.

A key example of this was the issue of anonymity. Clearly, Awa wanted to take a firm stand against anonymity, as it can allow either for the fabrication of stories or for abusers to escape unpunished. Other participants, such as Saly and Penda, firmly defended its virtue as being critical to facilitating discussion in a culturally appropriate manner. Regardless of whether the answer is a positive one or not, it is clear that radio talk shows allow people to voice their opinions about these issues and pose possible solutions, which are discussed in the context of other solutions. Importantly, the cultural impact these talk shows have goes far beyond simple resistance. They are a platform by which Senegal can form a sense of cultural identity and resolve the tensions between different ethnic groups as well as pre and post-colonial identities.

Ultimately, this study has illustrated that the radio talk shows have great potential for education and empowerment in Senegal. The multiple cases of personal transformation and problem-solving that emerged are proof that the radio talk shows are building vibrant democratic communities where individuals are capable and willing to name their world in their own terms. More than just being a valuable alternative for formal education, the talk shows provide an interesting model of democratic pedagogy that could transform the Senegalese educational system if transferred to the classroom.
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Appendix: Interview Guide

- Do you own a radio?
- Are you involved in any collective listening? If so, what programs do you listen to? With who and how often?
- What is your favorite radio station? And Why?
- Has it always been that way? Has your preferences changed recently?
- When you are alone, which radio station(s) do you usually listen to?
- What stations do you listen to when you are with your family?
- Can you explain why?
- In your family, who decides which radio talk shows and stations to listen to?
- Which shows do you listen to on a regular basis? For instance, are you an “occasional” listener or a dedicated listener?
- Do you call during the talk shows? If so, how often?
- Do you have a phone? Landline or mobile phone?
- How does language influence your everyday radio listening?
- What are the differences and/or similarities from one station to another?
- What type of content do you like to listen to? Why are you interested in this type of content?
- Who is your favorite radio talk show host and why?
- How would an ideal radio station look like?
- Do you have “sidebar” conversations about the subjects discussed on the radio talk shows?
• Are there any radio stations or talk shows you feel particularly connected to? Which ones and why?
• How would describe your relationship with the radio stations and the listeners in general?
• What factors motivate you to listen or call radio talk shows?
• What do you attribute as the educational or informational benefits of radio talk shows?
• Which subjects do you consider to have been the most informational, engaging or stimulating?
• How do you use the information gained from the talk shows? After listening to the talk shows or calling in, do you continue to talk with other women [people] about these issues? How, where, and what are the results?
• Can you name changes you have undertaken as a result of information you obtained on the radio?