WOMEN'S CHANGING ROLES, ISSUES, AND DECISIONMAKING: THE CASE OF LEOBU-WOLOF WOMEN FARMERS IN THIEUDEME

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Although Senegalese women, like other women in Africa, are central to economic development and household survival, little has been done to improve working conditions, increase access to resources, and improve productivity. In part this is due to the scarcity of appropriate information on the full range of women's roles (household, community, production) and in part to qualitative shortcomings in existing studies. That is, most studies focus on what women produce and how they produce and some even look at cultural constraints to economic roles. However, few studies address the broader, contextual variables and institutional constraints within which women operate; explore continuity and change in women's roles across generations of farmers; examine the linkages between women's roles, levels of production and access to resources, and relative decision making power; or step back from discipline-based concepts and theories to truly listen to women and study them from their own position. That is, few researchers construct variables by analyzing women's reality and by taking into account women's perceptions, concepts and definitions, values, and perspectives. That was the task of this research.
The focus is on Lebou-Wolof women farmers in Thiedem, a vegetable producing village in Senegal. Based on findings of an exploratory study carried out in 1993, dissertation research focused on three generations of women and compared the roles, relative power, and perceptions of women who were farmers exclusively with those who farm and market their produce, and of those who participate in self help organizations and those who do not. The general objective was to identify factors that have impacted women's roles, status, and relative decision making power, document how women cope with constraints and responsibilities, and understand women's roles. A survey of 48% of Thieudeme's households provided the study with background information. A sample of 209 women were drawn from these households. The sample was made up of women from three different generations and stratified by socio-economic status. Semi-structured in-depth interviews and life histories were conducted with the sample of women. This comparison of three generations of women farmers' roles in the past and in present day Thieudeme revealed many changes. Changes are taking place in productive and—to a lesser degree—reproductive roles, but also in the ways in which these women farmers are involved and organized in their communities. Changes in productive and reproductive roles can be related to various global, national and local factors such as the changing nature of local and national economies, severe drought, changes in demand for exports and imports, structural adjustment policies, devaluation, local and cultural beliefs.
Dedicated to:

My father Momar, and my mother Nene who invested all their lives for providing their children for a better education. They taught me the values of education, perseverance, patience, and pride.

My husband Cheikh Gadio whose understanding, love, and intellectual support have brought critical insights to my work.

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Research Publication


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<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>United States Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>SAED</td>
<td>Société d’Aménagement et d’Exploitation du Delta</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
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<td>CODESRIA</td>
<td>Conseil</td>
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<td>ISRA</td>
<td>Institut Sénégalais de Recherche Agricole</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNUD</td>
<td>Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement</td>
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<td>CTL</td>
<td>Conservation des Terres du Litorral</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>ILO</td>
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<td>Non Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>FNUE</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

Senegalese women, like other African women, are central to household survival and the economic development of their country. The importance of their role is now gaining more recognition in the rhetoric of development. Little, however, is being done to actually improve their working conditions, increase their access to resources and qualitatively enhance their productivity.

A growing body of literature on women and agriculture and on women and power reveals the need for a study of the empowerment of Senegalese and other African women farmers that combines objective sociological indicators of power with women’s perceptions and local values. As shown by Lewis (1984); Rogers (1980); Njoku (1980), and more recently by Isern (1990); Besteman, Saito and Snyder (1995); and Mlay, et al. (1996), cash cropping—usually identified with men—has received the attention of researchers and extension agents, while there is little evidence of extension programs targeting production or marketing for local consumption—which are usually the domain of women. This is a fairly typical indicator of women’s relative power in the literature on African farmers.
Other scholars (for instance, Blumberg, 1984) look beyond merely economic indicators to examine the linkage between production and decision making power in the household and community. These scholars often situate economic sources of relative power at the micro level within the broader legal, institutional, cultural and economic context to better understand the interplay of factors. Some scholars such as Sen (1991) and Moser (1989) consider factors such as women’s awareness of the need and interests and the impact of their values and gender roles on their perceptions of power and whether or not power is cogent to their daily lives. Nonetheless, these authors continue to use social science theoretical frameworks and concepts to assess relative power and consciousness, but do not construct concepts and indicators around women’s notions and experiences. Furthermore, few studies look at changes in women’s relative power, their perceptions of power, and their changing roles in production and reproduction in order to better understand the long and short-term factors that influence relative power and women’s perceptions of their roles and their interests. It is this lack of information on the impact of changing roles and contexts and women’s perceptions of power and its relevance to their daily lives that have inspired this dissertation research.

The setting for the dissertation is Senegal. In Senegal, women’s farming is primarily devoted to subsistence production and marketing with an important shift from hardy staples to vegetable farming in some regions. In general, the cash crops from Senegalese women’s farms are mainly used for marketing locally and the role of farmer increasingly includes a direct marketing component. In contrast, men’s farming focuses on cash crops for export and crops produced for local markets and sold to intermediaries; men’s roles as farmers do not include marketing. Consequently, men’s farming is given
more attention and support by extension services and government incentives since it provides the country with opportunities to participate in international trade and therefore to increase its economic abilities. This has reinforced the relative lack of knowledge about women’s farming, and has encouraged support services and planners to ignore women’s contributions to farming despite their increased importance to consumption and to the Senegalese economy.

For decades, development planners, policy makers and government extension agents have stereotyped rural women as mothers and wives rather than as farmers. These agents and planners focus on the head of household who, according to local and colonial beliefs, is a man. As a consequence, women’s work has been undermined, overlooked, devalued, and their crucial roles as producers have not been given the importance and attention they deserve. This has resulted in women farmers being discriminated against for access to critical resources such as land, technical advice, credit, and basic training. During the current time of structural adjustment and economic crisis, such critical resources would be crucial to the economic development of rural communities and the country. And, despite the discriminatory nature of plans and services, the very same government officials and agents sometimes influenced by non-governmental organizations and international development agencies--tend to be critical of women’s well-being and that of their families.

There is ample evidence of these issues in the literature of the last several decades. For instance, regarding the issue of cash cropping in Senegal and its identification with men farmers, Boserup emphasized in her study of African women farmers that: “The
introduction of cash cropping (by colonizers) with its attendant emphasis upon male controlled agricultural intensification is a primary determinant of women’s loss of power and status” (1970: 7). There have been some important shifts in focus. For instance, there is a discussion in the more recent literature on women in development of how access to income and productive resources appears to be linked to improvements in the well being of women and children (for instance, better nutrition). However, few studies have asked whether the introduction of new types of cash cropping by women and shifting productive roles reverse earlier trends— that is, leads to improved power and status for women or under what circumstances.

Some research is suggestive. For instance, Blumberg (1981) demonstrated how women’s access to income and productive resources raises their productivity and positively impacts their well being and that of their families and extrapolates that to propose the impact on their nations. April Gordon’s recent work (1996) approaches the issue not from the vantage point of women but from the vantage point of economic restructuring. She argues and presents evidence from studies that support the contention that economic restructuring, especially demands for women’s labor, or economic crises that increase women’s burdens as producers can help break the hold of cultural norms and institutional-legal barriers that have constrained women and their relative power.

Blumberg and Gordon’s work and that of Moser (1993), Tinker (1990), Sen (1991), among others, can be combined to generate interesting questions regarding the circumstances under which women’s roles change, how they change, and how changing roles affect relative power as defined by women and men in their daily lives and interaction.
With this as a starting point, the main objectives of this study were as follows:

A. Determine what factors, economic, cultural, institutional, legal, etc. at both the macro and micro levels, are associated with women’s roles, statuses, and relative decision making power. The study was particularly concerned with identifying factors likely to influence/determine the options open to women in their economic, family, and community roles. The study treated macro level factors as contextual and focused primarily on understanding change at the local level.

It should be noted that this required some attention to men’s attitudes, and behaviors towards women as well as to the sexual division of labor, social pressures from other community members, religious proscriptions, and to factors beyond the community: Inflation, extra-community markets for products, alternative income opportunities, and laws and regulations that impact gendered rights, production, and marketing even when women and men are not aware of these factors.

B. Explore the relationship between relative decision making power and access to productive resources. This objective required close attention to women’s histories and perceptions; it included documenting how women cope with their diverse roles, problems, and responsibilities, and exploring how interpretations of cultural norms and women’s values influence the ways and relative autonomy with which they structure their roles and decisions. It also included assessing how changes in opportunities, needs (increased access to extension, credit, etc.; male emigration/abandonment of farming), and the relative importance of women’s production to household survival/well being do or do not translate into an increased role in decision making (about farming/business or household management, how to allocate labor) and/or increased access to productive resources.
(Increased access to resources can be, alternately and under specific conditions, an input to and an outcome of relative power.)

Some attention has been paid in the literature to women farmers in Senegal, but there are few studies which focus on women who produce and market specific crops for a local market. Furthermore, studies of women farmers tend to focus on issues important to development planning, technical aspects of production, and farmers' organizations, while studies of women and power tend to focus on case studies of women's political organizations and social movements. Only a handful of studies focus on women's perception of their reality as farmers, women, wives, mothers or citizens, and most of these are anecdotal and have extremely small samples. Importantly, few studies of women farmers allow women themselves to define the issues of importance; instead, issues are defined by the researcher's discipline and theories alone (Isern, 1990). As a result, studies may have missed dimensions and/or notions of power and status that are significant in certain cultures or under certain economic conditions. This interferes with our ability to generalize and improve sociological concepts through comparative research. Therefore, a third objective of the study was

C. To determine women's perceptions of their roles and relative decision making, incorporate them into the construction of concepts and indicators, and relate them to roles and factors contributing to changing roles and decision making power.

Dissertation research benefited from prior, more exploratory research on these issues. In 1993, I conducted a study in the village of Thieudeme with a sample of 20 Lebou-Wolof women farmers in three age groups. The focus of this study was to explore generational changes in the roles, responsibilities, and problems faced by women farmers.
The study found that the roles of the vegetable-producing Muslim women in Thieuème have expanded from a main focus on production for consumption to include marketing of their produce and participation in self-help organizations. Moreover, findings suggested important changes taking place in their lives and in the structure of production. Interestingly, interviews suggested that the gender division of labor and local patriarchal values might have weakened, especially in the domain of decision making at the household level. However, a sample of 20 was inadequate to draw strong conclusions and findings were only be tentative. Many questions remained unanswered, in particular, what factors in the household and the broader socioeconomic context explain women’s and men’s changing roles over time? Do changes in women’s roles represent a worsening of their status and situation (increased exploitation and workload) as hypothesized by authors such as Boserup (1970) and Davison (1988) or an improvement (increased income, status, and decision making power) as argued by Gordon (1996)? What factors explain generational differences among women who farm currently, e.g., do roles change for women of certain ages and not for others and why? Dissertation research addressed these questions with a larger, more representative sample of households, and an improved research design.

**Overview**

Because of the richness of the data, and the complexity surrounding the multidimensional analysis of women’s roles and relative power, this paper starts by laying out the major findings of this study in order to provide a road map to facilitate reading.

The comparison of three generations of women farmers' roles in the past and in present day Thieuème reveals many changes. Changes are taking place in productive and-to a lesser degree--reproductive roles, but also in the ways in which these women farmers are involved and organized in their communities. Women are now the primary providers in
households and men’s relative importance has declined greatly.

Women also have left the households and entered the public arena in two ways. Through marketing and community organizing. Both undercut male control of women and increase women’s knowledge, independence, aspirations and willingness to challenge some male prerogatives.

Changes in productive roles can be related to various global, national and local factors such as the changing nature of local and national economies, severe drought, changes in demand for exports and imports, structural adjustment policies, devaluation, local and cultural beliefs. In fact, the growing capitalist system and its cash economy combined with factors such as the drought, the monoculture of peanuts, the international debt and have led to a Senegalese economic crisis worsened by the implementation of structural reforms. The lives of the poor--particularly of poor women--have been drastically impacted by such reforms. Poverty is increasing; decent public health care is lacking for both rural and urban families; basic foodstuffs are getting scarce; and there is a job crisis and general inflation on prices for products such as sugar, rice, soap, and milk which have become important to local consumption.

Another important factor is the increased pressure and responsibilities--as a consequence of the economic crisis and drought--on women at the household and community levels. These pressures have been critical to rapid changes in the roles of women in farming. Husbands can no longer provide the required support to their families. As a result, they no longer fully exercise their patriarchal roles as head of the families; but they have not relinquished control over one of their most important privileges—control over land.

Rather than show resentment of women's new importance, however, husbands and men in general express an understanding of the need for their wives to access all processes of production. They appear to understand and appreciate women's new roles in the survival of households and communities. Consequently, women farmers today in
Thieudeme have greater decision making power, especially in matters related to production and access to cash. In particular, women have great freedom of movement as a result of their involvement in marketing. This has not, however, significantly changed the gender division of labor in reproduction, though the gender division of labor in farming became less demarcated. To cope with these multiple burdens and responsibilities, women have become actively involved in self help organizations to enable themselves to fulfill their family responsibilities, have access to cash for investment, and seek out the companionship and support of other women. These new activities have contributed to changes in women's roles in the community and to the relative importance of traditional, ceremonial activities.

Production

Women's roles in farming shifted from an exclusive involvement in seasonal subsistence farming of hardy crops such as millet, beans, and sweet potatoes mainly destined to feeding their families to an active engagement in year round farming of perishable cash crops - vegetables- mainly cultivated for marketing.

Women now grow the same crops as men farmers and are involved in the same processes of production as men. Because of the different nature of their crops, women farmers take part in activities such as growing seedlings and nursing beds, digging, planting, cultivating harvesting in addition to watering and marketing what they produce. Younger women today are more active in marketing their produce and in self-managing their income than older women when they were active in farming. Their grandmothers and mothers were not watering because they grew different crops that did only rely on rainfall. That generation of women did not suffer the drought that is creating many hardships and losses to farmers of Thieudeme. Consequently, changes also have been noticed with respect to the tools that are used nowadays in farming. Younger women farmers today use more sophisticated and more expensive tools such as pitchforks, shovels, watering cans and, machines. These are different from the rudimentary tools composed of hoes and
cutlasses used by their grandmothers and mothers.

Factors such as colonialism, a growing cash economy, and structural reform also impacted the traditional communal ways under which land was distributed to different community members. Even though women could not inherit land under communal laws, they could inherit use rights under the matrilineal system under which the lebou ethnic group was organized. In the past, older generations of women had the opportunity to access land through their family's position and status in the social hierarchy. Moreover, they had the possibility to inherit land through the mother's line, which gave them more control over it. Colonialism, and the 1964 land law adopted after independence respectively privatized and put land under exclusive state control. Historical changes have happened with respect to women's rights to land. Today, in reality, land is distributed to younger women farmers through the male head of the household who, in turn, gives them a plot to farm. All women interviewed have access to land through their husbands or male relatives. Even though access to land does not seem to be an issue in Thieudeme, women farmers do not have control over the land since they do not have the ability legally to allocate it to other farmers.

However, the economic crisis has created new complex alternatives for Thieudeme women farmers to access land that their mothers and grandmothers did not have. Nowadays, younger women farmers-- if they have the cash and spite of the current law leaves all allocation of land to the state-- can rent, sharecrop or lease from male farmers who control the land.

The same factors of the Senegalese economic crisis and the need for cash created a shift in the division of labor in the field. Older women faced a division of labor that gave to men farmers the opportunities to farm and market what they produce through government sponsored networks and markets while giving to women farmers the responsibilities of part time subsistence farming and domestic tasks. Moreover, men, under the previous division of labor were totally in charge of providing their families with cash and with
material goods that needed to be purchased. Today, women from the two younger
generations are dealing with a less sharp division of labor since they as well as men
farmers are involved in full time cash crop farming and in marketing. However, younger
women today, bear full responsibility for domestic tasks in addition to sharing, or in some
cases, being completely in charge of the financial responsibilities of the household. As a
result of the economic crisis and the new roles of women, attitudinal changes have been
taking place.

Power

Macro level changes linked to the global capitalist system can be related to
changing values and aspirations. Younger women seem to be more materialistic than older
women. Because of the exposure they get from marketing and from the media, they are
exposed to new life styles, ideas, products and services that were unknown before. This
combines with women’s entry into new productive areas, contributing to demystification
of male authority and to a slight decline in of patriarchal power. Even though women
farmers experience greater burdens in terms of increased responsibilities in production, the
household and in their community, they enjoy greater autonomy and greater recognition of
their contributions. Because of marketing women farmers are more involved in community
organizing such as self help organizations.

The relationship between relative decision making power and access to productive
resources difficult to establish conceptually for several reasons. 1) Given the level and the
causes of poverty (which are to a great extent beyond people's control), it is difficult to
talk about “power” at all. 2) Although women have sought to increase their access to
resource and incomes, the most critical resources--land--is still in the hands of men and
only a few women have been able to circumvent dependence on men to access land on
their own. 3) There are traditional, religious-based rights women have that both facilitate
and intersect in this setting with access to productive resources in non linear ways. And
men’s relative access to resources and support has declined for reasons unrelated to
women's access to resources.

Finally, both women and men farmers are discriminated against in access to viable resources such as extension or technical services from local officials, though women as a group have recently received attention from government and non-governmental organizations. This discrimination relates to several factors. First, Thieudeme farmers are small holders who do not grow the type of export crops that can bring hard currencies to a country's economy. Secondly, Thieudeme is isolated from the main road and extension agents do not have cars or other means of transportation that can allow them to reach remote villages. Third, cultural beliefs about the village, such as that it is "cursed" create more rejection and neglect of Thieudeme's farmers by government officials.

The Analysis

The discussion that follows examines the changing roles of three generations of women involved in vegetable farming and trade. It explores issues of decision making among women farmers at different levels such as the community, the field and the household. The discussion will explore briefly how changing global and national economies and cultural values and beliefs have shaped the gender division of labor in farming over time. In much greater details, it will show how women farmers, through their multiple roles, are critical to the livelihood of their families and communities. In particular, the discussion focuses on the impact of women's new marketing activities, women's perceptions of the changes in their roles as farmers and traders over time, the factors they perceive as obstacles to their participation in the rural economy, and how men in general, interact with these women. Finally, the discussion considers how women perceive and respond to men's attitudes and behavior towards them as farmers and traders.

This dissertation is organized in the following manner:
Chapter II reviews the literature on women’s changing roles in agriculture and on women’s relative power in Africa in general and in Senegal specifically. Chapter III describes the hypotheses of the study, methodological issues, and the research design. Chapter IV presents the analysis of changes in roles. Chapter V analyzes the broad range of factors that appear to explain changes. Chapter VI is about decision-making and power. And Chapter VII presents the general conclusions and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several literatures informed the design of the research discussion. These included the literature on African women and the impact of development planning and agriculture policies and extension services; the literature on strategies to increase women's decision making power and their empowerment; the literature on neo liberal reforms such as structural adjustment and their gender bias; the literature on women's organizing and self help strategies; the literature on issues in feminist methodology; and the literature on economic change and planning in Senegal from colonial times to the present. Each of these will be examined in turn with a focus on the authors and concepts that directly influenced the research problem and design.

A large body of works addresses—or at least includes references—to the themes of African women's changing roles in agriculture and decision making. In many different disciplines, including sociology, history, economics, political science, anthropology and agricultural sciences (see, for instance, Hay, 1976; Tadesse, 1984), one finds a disparate but interesting literature.

The concept of the roles of rural women refers to women's involvement in the rural economy and social organization as reproducers, producers, and community
The existence of a close relationship between these different roles has been argued in Davison (1988) who found that, African women do not view themselves as relegated to a so-called private or public sphere and operate in both. Production (typically considered part of the public sphere) and reproduction (procreation as well as the care of others, typically considered part of the domestic sphere) are interwoven in the daily lives of African women.

As producers, their work in the field (planting, weeding, and harvesting) enables them to meet the obligation of feeding their family. As reproducers, women provide care, cook food, fetch water for their families and communities, bear and rear the children. That is, they reproduce the labor force (Brydon and Chant, 1989; Boerup, 1970; ILO, 1984; Roy et al., 1996).

**Overview of African Women’s Roles in the Past**

Exploring the changing roles of African women in rural society requires an examination of the social and economic changes which have shaped their social structure over time since “the sexual division of labor is constantly being transformed and re-created as social and economic change take place” (Moore, 1988: 73).

Understanding of the pre-colonial sexual division of labor, and how major events, such as colonialism and imperialism, affected the former sexual division of labor, shaped local economies, and, therefore, dramatically impact the lives and roles of women in their society are necessary components of any analysis of current roles and changes in those roles. Tadesse recognizes the necessity of addressing these components when she says:
"The different phases of African history—the slave trade, colonialism and the ongoing processes of export promotion and import substitution—represent the various ways in which Africa was integrated into the world economy" (1984: 65).

By the same token, Geyer emphasizes, “In order to understand [African] women’s present position, one therefore must understand the way in which the demands of the wider economy and the possibilities and constraints of local systems interact” (1984: 19). Specifically addressing the issues of rural women, Tadesse adds, “An exclusive focus on women’s role without analyzing the overall determinants of agricultural transformation and the resultant changes and/or continuity of the pre-existing divisions of labor would only lead to faulty conclusions: (1984: 65). In fact, “historically, the social division of labor in the classic patriarchal societies of Africa was associated with different spheres of control over land to farm on their own account and to dispose of their products as well as of income acquired from other independent activities” (Mlay et al, 1996.126).

However, one should not limit the analysis of rural women’s changing roles only in relation to historical events such as colonialism and slavery, because as rightly defined by Harper, “Social change is also the story of individuals and of differences between generations in families” (1989: 2). Thus, the analysis of changing roles must consider micro- and macro-level historical change.

Previous research (Henn, 1984; Boserup, 1970; Rogers, 1984; Mlay et al, 1996; Roy et al, 1996) reveals that in pre-colonial Africa the predominant farming system was an extensive “System of shifting hoe culture” in which women performed most of the agricultural work. Boserup (1970) defines it as a female farming system par excellence. In
that same sense, Mlay et al. also add that “Part of women’s time was committed as family
labor to farms assigned for common [household] provisioning and sometimes to work on
the personal fields of senior men like fathers and husbands” (1996: 126).

In many African ethnic groups, nearly all the tasks (beyond felling of trees and land
clearing) connected with food production continue to be left to women. In fact, following
the same line, Henn states, “Women usually carried out most of the major farming tasks,
breaking up the soil, planting, weeding, harvesting and carrying the harvest home” (1984:
2). From this perspective, it is clear that women’s roles in agricultural production were
highly significant.

Family structure and women’s status was also affected by the colonial experience.
Etienne and Leacock (1980) state that the social structure of African families was more
stable before colonization. Robertson, in her study of social change in contemporary
Africa, confirms this view and argues, “In pre-colonial societies power and status were
primarily determined by age, family position, and ability, and secondarily by gender”
(1986: 250). The system of values was based on reciprocity and complementarity
between women and men despite the general prevalence of patriarchal rules keeping
women in the domestic sphere (which included food production) and justifying their
activities.

Nonetheless, Henn (1984: 4) notes, “Care of children and the sick, and a wide
range of domestic and personal services for children and for men, especially for their
husbands was done by women. And it has been argued by Kandiyoti (1985) that there is
“Ambiguity that surrounds the whole question of complementarity versus dominance in
the treatment of pre-capitalist gender relation in Africa. Moreover she proposed an alternative by stating that:

"The fact of the matter is that the transformation from a lineage-based subsistence mode to a capitalist mode fuelled by colonial expansion does not require the assumption of a sexually egalitarian pre-capitalist past but simply an awareness of the different forms that women's subordination may take in each instance" (1985: 34).

Regarding the impact of colonialism, many scholars agree that there was a strong impact on indigenous economies, the sexual division of labor, and the economic activities of women:

"Colonialism often resulted in differentiation of social and domestic labor, introduction of large scale cash crop production (a domain of men) for exchange, and transformation of productive resources into private property in which the colonial personnel excluded women from cash-crop cultivation, taught men modern techniques, and gave men access to machinery that could raise the level of production...Colonialism also made land which was initially communally owned and utilized a commodity that could be acquired by the colonial power. As women (and the majority of men) were not in a category of formal ownership, they often fell in the lower strata as stratification based on land ownership developed" (Mlay et al, 1996: 126).

Moreover, as shown by Gwendolyn Mikell, "Across Sub-Saharan Africa, the period extending from the colonial participation in the 1880's to the independence phase in the 1950's was one in which women's legal, economic, and political status fluctuated enormously and, more often than not, declined (1997: 22). In sum, with respect to the changes brought in by colonialism, Mikell gives a relevant summary by arguing,

"Four factors were significant in establishing a new form of gender bias: (1) Christianity, with its notion of monogamy and female domesticity and subordination; (2) Westernized education, which gave men advantages over women; (3) differential marriage
systems, with Western marriages guaranteeing women access to property rights that women married under traditional rites could not claim; and (4) alternative legal systems that supposedly acknowledge African women’s independent rights, although colonial magistrates often treated women as jural minors needing male guardians” (17).

However, there is still disagreement among scholars about the long-term consequences of changes on the status of African women. One trend (Van Allen, 1976; Okonjo, 1976; Mullings, 1976; Rogers, 1984; Mlay et al, 1996; Roy et al, 1996; Mikell, 1997) argues that realities imposed during the colonial period, such as the male dominated Western vision, the introduction of a cash economy, the imposition of cash crop cultivation, the obligation of tax payments, and the migration of men to colonial factories and plantations, profoundly affected the sexual division of labor and deprived women of their important economic roles and rights. In fact, their approach is based on the assumption that clearly, in traditional African societies, whilst it cannot be said that all women had equality with men, despite class differences a balance of economic responsibility did prevail between women and men, and parallel gender-based institutions were common in such an environment, and men’s and women’s groups each managed their own affairs (Snyder and Tadesse, 1995).

The loss of power and property rights experienced by women has been approached differently by scholars in their analysis. This diversity in approaches is well illustrated in Davison’s study (1988) of land and women’s agricultural production when she states that “Leacock and Friedl focus on changes in the control of property to explain women’s loss of power in productive relations (1980)”.

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Karen Sacks (1979), instead, examines shifts in the mode of production in Central and Southern Africa as a means of determining what led to women’s loss of power here. [In addition] Boserup emphasizes that, “The introduction of cash cropping with its attendant emphasis upon male-controlled agricultural intensification is a primary determinant of women’s loss of status and power (1970: 7).

Therefore, most authors agree that colonialism had a negative impact on women’s status and roles (differences in studies are due to different conceptualization of status). In a sense it also accelerated the dissolution of the village economy and the development of class society. It appears, then, that “The development of stratification by class, particularly as accelerated by colonial relationships, has resulted in the decline of women’s status relative to that of men” (Mullings, 1976: 255). Most recently, authors such as Mlay et al (1996) point out that other socioeconomic factors like the increasing dependence of African countries on a Western monetary economy, developments in technology (agricultural modernization), international trade, increasing religious fundamentalism, and state development policies have contributed to the deterioration of the position of African women.

An alternative perspective finds that in some ways women’s status improved through colonialism. According to Henn (1984), the partisans of that view (including Huntington, 1975; de The, 1970) point out that “In many societies colonial intervention gradually weakened traditional patriarchal control over women, lessened the possibility of torture, slavery or death as punishment for female rebellion, and for the first time made divorce available to women” (11). Moreover, scholars sharing the same ideas (Afonja,
1986) added that women, particularly in West Africa, benefited from the introduction of cash crop production and privatization of land.

Disagreement includes not only what the impact of colonialism on women's roles in rural Africa has been, but also the impact of capitalism. Gordon (1996) and Davison (1988) consider the positive impacts of the introduction of capitalism and caution against facile assumptions regarding cause and effect relations. For instance, Davison argues that

"Where capitalism has intruded on subsistence forms of production, its impact is experienced differentially depending upon pre-existing and changing forms of production and exchange, kinship patterns of inheritance and land use practices. Although capitalism has been viewed as a major determinant in changing gender relations of production and exchange, it is not the only determinant" (1988: 7).

**African Women's Contemporary Roles in Agriculture**

In analyzing the roles of women in the contemporary context of an imperialistic reorganization of the world economy, some analysts argue that, "With the increased penetration of capital, the sexual division of labor is usually transmuted by the continuance of sexist ideology into a ghettoization of women into unskilled or semi-skilled jobs" (Robertson, 1984: 249).

Given the close relationship between level of technology and mode of production on one hand, and the interaction of local and imported sexist beliefs on women on the other hand, one can agree with Robertson that "It is not an accident, then, that women often remain in a labor intensive mode of production while men assume control or
participate in capital-intensive activities... Ideology controls the dissemination of technological knowledge” (Robertson, 1984: 249).

In general, in contemporary Africa, even though major efforts have been directed towards improving the roles of women in the two last decades, “The presence of women in policy and decision making positions in government and parliament is negligible in Africa no matter how educated they may be. African women have very little say in society and community’s day to day decisions, let alone their personal matters, although it is women who basically feed the family, are responsible for its social well-being, and manage the household resources. Women constitute over half of the population but they are not sharing power equally” (Mlay et al, 1996: 127).

**Food Production**

Most rural women in Sub-Saharan Africa (90%) are farmers (Henn, 1984; Boyle, 1988; Lele, 1990; Saito, 1995; Besteman, 1995; Snyder, 1995; Mlay et al, 1996; Roy et al, 1996). They perform the bulk of the subsistence production and reproductive work (Robertson, 1984; ILO, 1984; Boyle, 1988; Roy et al, 1996). As producers, women’s work in the field helps them feed their families but go beyond farming alone. Women’s rural activities in many parts of Africa range from agricultural production, food processing, and food providing, to marketing and craft production. According to Blumberg (1981), Lewis (1984), and Roy et al (1996), in some places African women contribute 70% of all human labor time spent on food production, 100% of the time spent on food processing, 50% of that spent on food storage and animal husbandry, 60% of all the marketing, and 90% of the time spent obtaining firewood and water. At least one anthropological overview of a large number of societies found that women’s status has tended to be highest in those places where workloads are more egalitarian and lowest in places where women provide the highest and lowest proportions of household sustenance.
(Sacks, 1983). Changes in the division of labor resulting from the implementation of macro-economic policies and development programs and projects may have changed this.

Marketing

The importance of African women’s involvement in marketing or trading their crops has been documented in different studies conducted in different African countries such as Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Kenya, respectively, by scholars such as Robertson (1984), Lewis (1976), Hay (1976), and Creevey (1994). These authors show how marketing provided the women studied with income, self-esteem and empowerment at least at the household level. Relevantly, in her study conducted in Nigeria, Barbara Lewis noted that in Southern Nigeria as well as in Southwestern Ivory Coast “Women’s strategic role in commercialization offers them far greater social leverage and access to income. On a smaller scale, women who are able to market the surplus of their subsistence food crops are also better off” (1983: 174).

In some places, marketing is a traditional activity of women (Ghana, Togo), but in others it is a new role for women, as in the case of the women in Thieudeme, Senegal, site of dissertation research. Marketing exposes women to risks, reduces the ability of families and communities to control their movements, and provides new, competence-building experiences. It also combats the invisibility of women associated with farming and household based production by putting them in the public’s (and policy makers’) eyes (Gordon, 1996). But, women in marketing are faced by specific constraints for instance, having small children or male control over mobility may limit the type of markets they operate in or the clientele they can reach.
If new to marketing, women may be harassed for stepping outside accepted, traditional roles. Women may adopt strategies to compensate for constraints and to avoid harassment for instance, organizing into self-help groups for mutual protection, veiling themselves in public, taking along a male family member or children to protect their reputation. While there are some good studies of women in marketing, including some by feminist scholars (see, for instance, Robertson, 1984), there are few, if any, studies of women who combine traditional farming activities with new roles in marketing. Yet it seems likely that such a dramatic shift in roles and different demands of the two activities would have a profound impact on women’s values, relations with family and community members, and perceptions of self and others.

Reproductive Roles

Women’s reproductive roles include care of children, husbands and the elderly. This goes beyond “Biological” roles of bearing and rearing children, to a role in reproducing the labor force by providing care, cooking food, fetching water and fuel for their families and communities (Brydon and Chant, 1989; Boserup, 1970; ILO, 1984).

These reproductive roles of African women can be analyzed in relation to the symbolism that links African women to earth, fire, and water in traditional African culture. Men are associated with the fourth symbolic element--the air--that represents speech and verbalized ideas” (Sow, 1995; Mikell, 1997). Such a symbolism “Gives women responsibilities for food preparation, acquisition of cooking materials, and tilling the soil, in addition to other productive and reproductive tasks” (Mikell, 1997: 9).

However, African women tend not to differentiate between roles in the way those
of us who study them do: "African woman do not view themselves as relegated to one or the other sphere and often operate in both. Production (usually included in the public sphere by sociologists and anthropologists) and procreation (included in the domestic sphere) are interwoven in the daily lives of African women" (Davison, 1988: 8).

Moreover men and women’s responsibilities are

"Carried out through a continuum of household and extra household economic activities, which means that the distinction between domestic and public is often difficult to make in economic gender roles throughout Africa. Both men and women contribute to simple and complex market economies in ways that are complementary, even if not symmetrical. Naturally, Western economic influences and colonial control altered this domestic/public linkage in women’s roles" (Mikell, 1997: 9).

Furthermore, some Western feminist theories tend to see domestic roles as wives and mothers as a source of women’s subordination. However, African women according to Mikell (1997), conceptualize their productive roles differently since:

"African women think of their responsibilities as dual: the bearing of children is a primary responsibility, and their status as women depends on this, but their responsibility for maintaining the family, village, and the community is also crucial. No self-respecting African woman fails [both] to bear children and to be an autonomous economic contributor. This means that the relationship between polygyny, the numbers of children women bear, the type of productive system, and the items produced is an important one" (9).

**Access to Resources**

Despite its centrality in the economy and their daily lives, African women’s critical role in agriculture and marketing has not been adequately valued and studied. They remain poor and do not get recognition from policy makers and economists for their massive and vital contribution to African societies (Guyer, Henn, and Robertson, 1984; Mlay et al, 1996; Roy et al, 1996). In addition, they have been discriminated against and denied
needed access to critical productive resources that would enable them to increase productivity (Rogers, 1980; Lewis, 1984; Guyer, 1984; Monimart, 1989; Njoku, 1980, Mikell, 1997). Scholars at the African Regional Seminar on Women held in Dakar in June 1981 argued that, "National plans and agricultural policies perceive women only as housewives and mothers, and not as farmers. As a result, most women are denied access to land, credit, extension services, and technology" (ILO, 1984).

Most recently, Gordon explains the rationale behind such a neglect of the roles of women farmers by stating that:

"Part of the explanation for the marginalization of women is that development planning in the Third World is permeated with sexist assumptions, as Moser (1991: 85-87) demonstrates. These include the assumption that households are basically nuclear (i.e., with a husband, his wife, and children) and that there is a uniform sexual division of labor. That is, the woman is primarily a housewife. Women's subordinate position with regard to control over resources and decision making in the household is typically ignored. These gender relationships are seen as neutral and reinforced by legal and educational systems, the media, and family planning programs. Such stereotypes shape development thinking and policies despite the fact that one third of the world's households are headed by women" (1996: 137).

**Access to Land**

With respect to women's right to land, studies have shown that there are a variety of ways such as rights to use, control, ownership of land that are established by

"Indigenous local land tenure practices, by law, or by particular agricultural projects" (Besteman, 1995: 19).

African women's rights to land was and continues to be dramatically affected by the colonial economy since before the introduction of changes such as colonialism and its private land tenure policies, "In many African societies individual and communal rights to
land concurrently existed” (Davison, 1988:14). Imposed changes such as the privatization of land or its ownership by government destabilized the relationship, based on reciprocity and cooperation, which seemed to exist between African women and men. This deprived women of fundamental rights of land tenure. Rogers states, “With the trend towards Western-style ownership of land rather than customary and communal rights, it was women’s rights to land which suffered most” (1984: 38).

“The advent of European colonial capitalism drastically altered former patterns of land use and occupancy in many places...agricultural land held by Africans was gradually restricted, in many areas, by government policies that favored the consolidation of scattered tracts in the hands of male owners” (Davison, 1988:14).

In the same sense, Henness emphasizes that “property rights became individualized under the influence of colonial legal changes and the planting of tree crops. African men who had been powerful in the pre-colonial era were able to accumulate much of the best land. Women’s access to land for subsistence farming and especially for market farming was highly circumscribed” (1984: 12). Researchers such as Davison (1988), Saito (1994), Besteman (1995), and Snyder (1995) demonstrated that before colonialism many African countries were under customary law, and

“Women traditionally had clearly defined rights to land; land was allocated to women from their husbands and natal families based on their position within a kinship group and, in particular, on their relationship to a male relative (father, brother, husband). These rights entitled women to farm the land, often in exchange for labor on their husbands’ and other family plots” (Saito, 1994: 46).

Besteman’s findings in her study of women farmers of central Burkina Faso reinforces that view by stating that “Traditionally women do not inherit rights to land use. Instead they are allocated land by their husbands, which they work themselves” (1995:
Moreover, Saito (1994) emphasized that men were considered the head of the household under Colonialism and "Were therefore granted title and the right to mortgage or sell the land without the consent of other family members. Registration in effect converted men's land rights into absolute ownership" (46). As a result, many women lost their traditional usufruct rights to land under communal ownership and still remain disadvantaged (Davison, 1988). Other factors such as population growth and pressure on the land and "The declining value assigned to subsistence farming crops in the colonial and post-colonial economies undermined women's access to land" (Lewis, 1984: 176).

More recently, studies done in Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Zambia, and Kenya by scholars such as Saito (1994) and Besteman (1995) revealed that because of a growing scarcity of land, population pressure and economic crisis, new strategies have been developed by women to access land. These include borrowing and renting. However, even as women develop these strategies, other factors come into play to once again undermine their access to land. For instance, experiences in various African countries such as Senegal and Tanzania have shown that "Land reform programs often work to place the most reproductive land in the hands of the able and rich few. As a result, the poorest are squeezed into marginal land that is steep, infertile, dry, subject to pests, or covered with rainforest. Nationalization of land, which is the most important factor of production in Africa, does not necessarily lead to equal access to land by men and women" (Mlay et al, 1996: 129).

Access to Extension and Technology

Access to extension services, credit and inputs seem also to be directed primarily to male farmers as legal or culturally assumed "heads of households". This reinforces the
tendency to overlook women farmers who, because they are not considered as head of household and were not encouraged or pressured into cash cropping, are not considered to be "real" farmers. Barbara Lewis—in her research conducted in Senegal—pointed out that "agricultural extension in independent African states, greatly expanded to reach African farmers, continues to bypass women farmers. Typically agricultural extension is still oriented solely to exported crops or relatively large scale production of cash crops, which are in turn the domain of men" (1984: 177). Regarding the same issue, Conti (1979) demonstrated in his analysis that

"Contemporary state institutions, such as producers' cooperatives and export crop marketing agencies, reinforce patriarchal dominance over the labor and earnings of women. Often only [male] heads of households are accepted as members of cooperatives. In this case most women do not receive the seeds, credit, agricultural advice, and crop payments which are dispensed through the cooperative" (Qtd in Henn, 1984: 17).

Another reason for women to be overlooked by extension services is the higher number of male extension agents. At least one study found that both men and women extension agents have good knowledge of women's farming responsibilities (Owusu-Ansah, 1996), but men tend to have low interaction because of cultural restrictions on interacting with women and, despite knowledge of real farming practices, may be influenced by gender stereotypes regarding men's superiority or empathize with men farmers because of cultural considerations and patriarchal notions. As a result, agents direct their services mainly to men farmers. In her study of African women farmers and extension services, Saito (1994) found that only 13% of extension agents were women in 1992 and only 7% of agents were women in 1988. She concluded that these disproportionate numbers of female extension agents are due to the fact that "Their
recruitment is hindered by girls' relatively low enrollment rates in secondary and agricultural schools, and by cultural and family restrictions on their employment in rural areas" (Saito, 1992: xiv). However, recent studies conducted by scholars such as Blumberg (1992), Saito (1992, 1994), Henderson (1995), Warner and Henderson (1995), and a dissertation by Owusu-Ansah (1996) show that the farm household is not always a single economic unit with common goals, resources, and benefits. Family members may have different, even competing, interests (Saito, 1992: xii; Sen, 1991).

There are complex dynamics that go on within the farm household with respect to gender that need to be taken into account when designing policies and project directed toward farmers. For instance, women farmers have different technological needs and problems with respect to their varied roles, level of education, and production systems. For one, technology should not be viewed as gender neutral. It should be designed to reflect the specific needs of women farmers in relation to their geographical context, culture, size, farming system, and skills as well as costs. In addition,

"Technological innovations that will lessen women's procreative and household labor remain low in Africa nations' development priorities. In many countries although technological change has increased crop yield and brought about significant improvement in economic conditions of large and medium-sized farms, in dry land and rainfed agriculture, land poor women and environment have failed to benefit from this change" (Mlay et al, 1996: 129).
The Senegalese Economy

In Senegal, agriculture is the most important sector of production since it "provides approximately 70% of total national employment" (Rice and Gustavo, 1989; USAID\Senegal\ADO, 1990; De Wilde, 1984; USAID, 1997; ISRA, 1997). A recent study of Senegal's Agricultural Sector produced by USAID shows the importance agriculture plays in the national economy:

"The agricultural sector, including forestry, livestock, and fishery, accounts for a modest share of approximately 20% of GDP [but] for 60% of employment. Arable land in Senegal is estimated at 3.7 million hectares of which some 2.3 million hectares are cultivated annually. Rainfed agriculture predominates with production under irrigation accounting for about 4% of cultivated area. On average, export crops, principally groundnuts and cotton, account for about 50% of cultivated area with food crops, principally millet, rice, sorghum and maize comprising the rest" (1997:6).

In addition, the agricultural sector provides both "subsistence and income through cash crops" (Isem, 1990: 22). While cash cropping for export (e.g., peanuts) tends to be dominated by men, Senegalese women are the main actors in other agriculture, growing food crops for local consumption and sale as well as providing labor for cash crops. According to Marie A. Savane (1984) "women comprise 25% of the formal labor force and perform approximately 60-80% of all agricultural labor" (Qtd. in Isem, 1990: 123).

Despite women's essential contributions to agricultural production, "agricultural statistics reflect only the portion of the cereal, cash crops, and livestock brought to
market. The cereal, condiments, vegetables, fish, oil and crafts produced by women for household consumption are not included in these statistics" (Rice and Gustavo, 1982: 2).

In addition, Senegalese women farmers do not have access to credit. Even though development projects such as “The Senegalese Groundnut Basin, Cereal II” (located in the central part of Senegal) made attempts to integrate women’s productive activities, it has been shown by Lewis (1984) that “productivity on women’s plots is as little as half as high as men’s, due to labor constraints and lack of access to credit. Unable to get credit because they are excluded from extension services and cooperatives, women have not been able to get fertilizer and other agricultural inputs” (1984: 183).

In reality, extension services in Senegal have been scarce for women as well for men farmers since “the agricultural extension service in Senegal is both fragmented and compartmentalized, thereby leaving a large number of farmers with little or no extension assistance what-so-ever” (USAID, 1997: 126).

In fact, Senegal has several departments or organizations such as the Directorate of Agriculture, Rural Development Agencies, the National Agricultural Extension Program and non-governmental organizations that provide agricultural services to farmers in Senegal. Their services include extension activities, but most of these organizations are dealing with constraints such as lack of money, agricultural inputs, lack of transportation making field visits impossible, and a lack of extension specialists in some cases. Such constraints make the delivery of extension services difficult in many parts of the country.

Two “events” impacting Senegalese agriculture and programs and the current economic crisis in Senegal are the inadequate government response to and management of
the balance of trade and the imposition of structural adjustment policies. Both are related to the design of new neo-liberal policies and programs that are, not surprisingly, gender biased. The discussion that follows considers both the nature of structural adjustment reforms and the “New Agricultural Policy”—both of which impact the markets and political context that present opportunities and constraints on women’s income generating strategies.

After independence, in 1960, the Senegalese agricultural policy objectives, as shown by Martin and Crawford (1991:85), were twofold: a food strategy in produce and export groundnut products to finance cereal imports, in particular broken rice from Asia; and a heavy state involvement in agriculture producing and marketing. The heavy reliance on groundnut and a massive consumption of rice (not locally produced) created a chronic deficit in the Senegalese commercial balance of trade. State involvement in agriculture production resulted in a bureaucratic control, and financial corruption unprecedented in the economic history of Senegal. ONCAD (Office Nationale de Coopération et d'Assistance Pour le Développement), the machine for that policy, was to blame for the disaster in the sector of agriculture which the agency finally acknowledge in the early 1980's. Consequently ONCAD was eliminated in 1980 and replaced by provisional structures while the New Agriculture Policy was in the making. During that process, a general restructuring of Senegalese governmental policies occurred under the auspices of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its “structural adjustment Plan”. Structural adjustment policies were supposed to remedy economic crises in many African and other Third World countries. They were imposed by the World Bank and the IMF as a way
to solve the debt crisis and to stabilize the "balance of payment."

Structural adjustment policies include:

- Removal of government intervention in economic management, relying instead on markets.

- Removal of tariff barriers and other restraints on free trade.

- Strategic devaluation of national currencies to make exports more competitive in the world market.

- Tight government control of monetary policies.

- Permitting the private sector to run markets previously exploited by inefficient state agencies and to acquire potentially viable state-owned enterprises (Mckay, 1990:5)

The adjustment policy provided Senegal with an "improved framework for economic growth" argues Weissman (1990), who pointed out that with the implementation of structural adjustment policy. However, in 1988 a decrease in production occurred for several reasons including the declining world price for ground nut oil, popular protests in Senegal and pressures on the government which resulted in lowering prices.

A lack of equity and increased poverty are typical shortcomings of structural adjustment policies because they hit the lower social groups the worst through high inflation and unemployment rates, decline on real wages and cut backs in social services as health care and education. Weissman states:

"Poverty has clearly been aggravated by structural adjustment policy. Official wages restraint policies, affecting both government and private sector workers, have reduced the average workers purchasing power by about 30% since 1985. Furthermore, an estimate 6,000 private employees out of 120,000 have been "deflated" i.e., fired as a direct consequence of import liberalization (Weissman, 1990:1628)."
Structural adjustment policies reflect neo-liberal theory. They are based on a principle that "less state involvement and privatization" are best. This also is known as the "disengagement of the state." Neo liberal partisans argue that "These austerity measures" facilitate "capitalist" economic growth and, that, in the long run, supposedly will allow countries to pay off their debts and experience greater economic development and a better quality of life.

The National Agriculture Policy is an outgrowth of structural adjustment. As Diop (1984:12) put it, the "NAP adopted in 1984 by the Senegalese Government is part of the country's structural adjustment policy plans that are focused on reducing state expanditure" (Qt in Benoit-Cattin, 1991:59). In the agricultural sector, the NAP symbolized the acceleration of the state's disengagement and a transfer of responsibilities to producers. Newman and al (1988) observed the implementation of the new policy in rural areas, "farmers are encouraged to organize weekly markets where they could effectively intervene, specially in the cereal sector, to adjust supply and demand for a given period" (Qt in Benoit-Cattin, 1991:68). With the introduction of the NAP, the new food strategy became almost the opposite of what prevailed before. The new strategy "included major objectives such as (1) an increase in the cereals self-sufficiency (CSS) rate from the current level of roughly 50% to 80% by the year 2000, and (2) the transfer of certain economic activities from the state to the private sector" (Crawford, 1991:85). However, the lack of integration of women farmers and the lack of analysis of the impact of such a policy on their lives is a major problem. Isen states "There is no mention of women's participation throughout the New Agricultural Policy. This is specially surprising since women play a vital role in Senegalese agricultural production, and success in
achieving these goals depends on the involvement of women" (1990:12).

Actually, the lack of mention of women throughout this policy is no surprise because the theories (neo-liberal and modernization) that inform these new reforms and policies are assumed to be "gender blind." They overlook the roles of women in economic development and fail to consider how gender roles influence impact and participation.

In fact the government omitted mention of women in almost all its important new national policies such as the New Industrial Policy, The Plan for the Protection of Nature, The Plan of Action for Fishing. In reality, "the government does not seem to include women in any official development plan" (Isern, 1990:13). Here it is legitimate to conclude that the Senegalese government’s national policies can be perceived as sexist and biased.

**Land in Senegal**

Land distribution and use also have been suggested as a major problem for women farmers in Senegal. In Senegal land tenure is complex and still follows traditional laws despite administrative reforms introduced after independence that transfer all lands to the government though recognizing land use rights and local management. As researchers such as Niass (1996) have shown, women and youth in rural areas are the ones who suffer the most with respect to access and control over the land.

"In Senegal the land tenure reform known as the *Loi sur le Domaine National* was adopted in 1964. This law stipulates that the nation is the owner of almost all the Senegalese territory (95% of the land area), and that this territory is managed by the State on behalf of the Nation. The State may delegate its management authority to local community institutions in urban or rural areas. No ownership rights, other than those exerted by the Nation, are recognized over the National Domain. In rural areas, farmers are granted usufruct rights on land, which cannot legally be purchased nor sold. These juridical dispositions are meant to insure an equitable access to farmlands. The land would then normally be in the hands of those who are its actual users. It is the traditionally marginalized, who actually are
the major providers of the agricultural labor work in Senegal as in other African countries, who would enjoy greater decision making power regarding management of farmlands” (1996: 2).

Women are excluded from specific land use rights and traditional access through husbands and male family members continues to be their primary means of access to land. The only exception is the Bakel region where 60% of women farmers got a share of irrigated perimeters (SAED/FAO/UNOD, 1981).

At the village level, studies confirm that decision-making structures have tended to exclude women from important decisions regarding the distribution of crucial resources such as land and agricultural inputs (Isern, 1990). Though not excluded by law and even encouraged by national policies, women farmers in many areas do not participate in rural councils or village meetings during which important decisions are taken about community management and resource allocation.

Women’s access to and control over land varies from one ethnic group to the other. For the Lebou-Wolof, Serer, Peul, Mandingue and Joola, land tenure follows traditional inheritance rules and the degree of women’s involvement in agricultural activities. In some cases, such as the Diola of Casamance, because of the dual matrilineal/patrilinical nature of inheritance and women’s exclusive and traditional responsibilities for rice cultivation, they do have more usufructs rights than in other patrilineal groups under which inheritance through males only dominates (Sow, 1995).
Decision Making

A growing body of literature on women and agriculture and on women and power reveals the need for a study of empowerment of African woman farmers that combines objective indicators of power with women's perceptions and local values. Decision making power has been a focus of studies of rural women though it has received less attention than farming. Attention to decision making power is crucial because it sheds light on women's ability to control the well being of women themselves, as well as that of their families and community. A focus on decision making transforms women from objects or passive recipients of outside pressures, to agents and subjects who respond to, resist, and contribute to change.

In the particular case of Senegal a study of decision making and relative power need to consider the cultural and institutional context-specially Islam. The women who are the focus of this study are all Muslim and researchers have shown that

"The patriarchal nature of most Islamic societies reinforces the pervasive belief that Muslim women are more subject to the control of men than are women in most other societies. This control is dramatic in the case of Muslim Hausa women in northern Nigeria. They are literally secluded immediately upon marriage; that is, they are removed from contact with men (other than relatives) and rarely allowed to move in public" (Callaway and Creevey, 1994:3).

The situation is a little different in Senegal since in "Senegal the submission of women is less dramatically exhibited; women are not veiled or secluded. The discrimination against them, however, is still obvious in law codes
that allow polygamy and unequal inheritance laws” (Ibid:3). Even though Muslim Senegalese women have more freedom of movement than Hausa women, they are still subordinated to men and are expected to have no decision making power with respect to “serious” issues such as polygamy and inheritance. However, these norms are linked also to women’s rights to support, to land and to control their own income. The trade off should be economic security and a clear division of responsibilities and spheres of influence. Islam is not the only source of subordination in Senegal. Senegal shares features with other non-Islamic, societies. There is a body of feminist work such as Barbara Reskin’s study on work and gender (1994) in the U.S. that is relevant to any discussion of decision making power. Reskin says, for instance, that the devaluation of women’s work occurs both because it is part of the ideology in many parts of the world and because it is in men’s interest. Enduring cultural attitudes that devalue women are expressed in the lower value that employers, workers and whole societies place on the work that women usually do (9). In addition, Chafetz (1991) and Blumberg (1984) pose theories of gender stratification and its important component/outcome: the power variable. Gender stratification systems, and particularly the gender division of labor, they say, overlook and devalue the contributions of women in society to the extent to which societal members are unequal in accessing to the scarce values of their society. Chafetz argues that “the gender division of labor comes to be associated with the unequal ranking and rewarding of tasks and therefore of genders associated with various tasks” (1991: 77). This suggests that changing roles and changed division of labor may open
opportunities to "revalue" women and their work.

Blumberg and Chaetatz agree on two types of power: "resource power" (the ability of a person or group to extract compliance, even in the face of resistance, by real or threatened bribery or coercion) stemming from control over greater income and productive resources and "definition power" which is rooted in resource power (the ability of a person or group to impose values, norms, standards of judgments, and situational definitions on others) (Blumberg, 1984; Chafetz, 1991). In fact, studies conducted in Guatemala, Venezuela, and Java respectively by Blumberg (1984), Rakowski (1991), and Wolf (1991) have demonstrated how women's greater control over relative income can increase women's decision making in the household. Blumberg also suggests that evidence exists to support the effect of "relative male/female control of income and marital power on outcomes that run the gamut from how much food is available to the children in a family to how much food is grown in a country" and, she says, "in much of Africa, in fact, the implications of husbands' versus wives' control of resources may extend all the way to the region's recent food crises" (1991: 97). But in the case of Thieudeme with its clear-cut norms regarding men and women's respective responsibilities to support the family, will control over production and income and access to resources be affected by increased economic pressures and new opportunities for cash income?

Sen (1991), in considering the case of intra-household relations in India, conceptualizes relations as "cooperative conflict" (for instance, pressures to pool resources for survival versus differential individual rights of access to scarce resources) and problematizes women's perceptions of their contributions, rights, and responsibilities. Women, he argue, have been socialized in ways that make difficult a separation of their
identities/rights as individuals from their identities/responsibilities as wives and mothers who measure their self worth in terms of their ability to respond effectively to the needs of others. In a situation like Thieudeme where women’s roles as mothers/wives have intersected with their roles as farmers historically, will the introduction of women’s marketing and declines in men’s inputs to the household (for instance, due to economic crisis or emigration) lead women to reassess notions of their contributions and their rights relative to those of men in the household and community?

Molyneux (1985) and Moser (1989, 1993) conceptualize this tension between identities, rights, and responsibilities as differences in women’s awareness of their practical needs (what allows them to fulfill daily their social roles as wives, mothers, producers) and their strategic needs (what reduces their dependence on and subordination to the decisions of others). One way in which women may try to increase their decision making power and reduce constraints is through organizing (identified differentially by theorists as a means to meet either or both practical and strategic needs). Studies done in various African countries such as Ivory Coast, Nigeria, and Senegal respectively by Lewis (1976), Wipper (1984), and Gadio and Rakowski (1995) highlighted the ways in which self-help organizing was a survival strategy (practical needs) for women in Africa, especially under conditions of economic crisis and for women from areas where traditional farming strategies were becoming less viable.

But, there also is a broad literature that argues that collective organizing increases women’s self esteem, confidence, and power not just their income (so linked to strategic needs as well as practical needs). In her study of African women’s voluntary associations, Wipper concluded that women’s self help organizations “provide financial and
psychological support and training and establish standards” (1984: 80). The same view was anticipated by Little in 1973 when she described the importance of African women’s organizations in the sense that “they regulate and promote trade, extend credit, teach new social and occupational skills, and provide monetary and psychological support” (Qtd in Wipper, 1984: 69). More recently, Gadio and Rakowski’s study of Serer millet pounders in Dakar, Senegal, found that

“Self-help organizations support women’s individual business activities and help them confront harassment and hardships. Through collective organizing, women have had the opportunity to see themselves and other women as competent, important members of their households, their community and their society. Thus, group organization had the potential to break down male dominance and control and to promote female autonomy and empowerment” (Gadio and Rakowski, 1995: 12).

The same was found in diverse African countries for women’s organizations mobilized around environmental issues (Kettel, 1995). Therefore, it seems clear that women are actively involved in constructing their lives, creating new spaces for their work, and juggling values associated with productive and reproductive roles.
Conclusion

In summary, one can argue that in spite of the various views on the roles of African women in agriculture, the major trend in the literature is that the sexual division of labor was not as stratified or associated with inequality and status in pre-colonial Africa. It is colonialism, economic imperialism, and neo-liberal reforms such as structural adjustment that negatively impacted the roles and status African women farmers. Colonialism and imperialism imposed a certain Western model of society that undermined indigenous values and knowledge, therefore leading to privatization of land, cash crop production, increased workload, and marginalization of women’s farming. However there is a need to consider the interplay between capitalism and the nature of previous and contemporary gender relations in exploring the changes that are taking place in women’s roles in agriculture. Changes can either build on or incorporate traditional gender differences or they can create opportunities by contradicting or supplanting certain aspects of the traditional division of labor. They can reinforce traditional values that support gender differences or they can introduce new values that intersect with women’s changing roles to open new options and undercut men’s control of women. This discussion has shown that there is a need to link changes in women’s roles to changes the world economy and in the nature of gender relations in exploring the changing roles of African women in general and specifically of Senegalese women in agriculture.
Even so, it is a widely argued that capitalism should not be looked at alone and that other factors such as local and imported patriarchal values, cultural norms, and traditional bases of stratification should be integrated into the analysis of changing roles. The possibility of an autonomous relationship between capitalism and patriarchy that has been raised by authors such as Gordon (1996) need to be explored further.

I will structure my analysis in this study by directly addressing Gordon’s model which has been called a dual systems approach. It posits the relative autonomy of capitalism and patriarchy, yet recognizes that “They are usually but not inevitably mutually supportive and interrelated systems. Such a model allows us “to appreciate the diverse manifestations each can take and to avoid reductionism (i.e., of patriarchy to capitalism or vice versa). It also allows us to examine how and where women can maneuver within capitalist and patriarchal structures to promote greater gender equality” (1996: 28).
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter is composed of several sections. It provides information on the setting—Senegal in general and Thieudeme in particular, discusses methodological issues grounded in feminist and sociological principles, and describes the research design.

The Setting

Senegal and Thieudeme are appropriate places for a study of women farmers. Agriculture represents the most important sector of the Senegalese economy, 60% of the Senegalese population live in rural areas, and women represent 70% of this rural population (Ministere de l'économie et des finances, 1990). More relevantly, unlike most Senegalese women studied to date who are involved in cash crop production (Seck, 1989; Isern, 1990) many women farmers of Thieudeme are centrally involved in marketing their produce and take part in self-help organizations in their community.
Thieudeme came to my attention because of a woman I met many years ago who spoke often about women’s importance as farmers and the changes in their roles. Therefore, it came to mind as a site for this study because of the subject matter.

_Senegal_

Senegal is located in extreme tropical West Africa. It is 196,722 square kilometers in area. Dakar is its capital city. Senegal’s climate is tropical with a rainy season from July to October and a dry season from November to June. Senegal shares borders with Mauritania (North), Mali (East), Guinea Bissau (South) and has 500 kilometers of coastline on the Atlantic Ocean. The country has ten regions (equivalent to states): Dakar, Thies, Kaolack, Louga, Tambacounda, Ziguinchor, Kolda, Fatick, St-Louis and Diourbel.

Senegal’s population was estimated at 8,347,000 during the last official estimates of 1995, with an annual growth rate of 2.8%. Women represent 52% of the Senegalese population. Seventy-five percent of its active population work in the primary sector, 5% work in the secondary sector and 20% in the tertiary. In 1996, GNP per head was estimated by the World Bank at about $600 per head and GDP at 5.2%. The main cash crops are groundnuts, cotton, rice, and millet.

Ethnic groups are the Wolof (36% of the population), Serer (19%), Fulani (13%), Pulaar (9%), Diola (8%), Malinke (6%) and Soninke (2%).

_The Niayes Areas_

The Niayes was selected for this study because of its characteristics that lend themselves to a study of role change among women. It part of the horticultural zone of Senegal, which contributes 71% of the country’s total
production of vegetables, between 120 and 125 thousand metric tons of vegetables per year. That same zone provides more than 60% of total vegetable production.

In fact, the largest portion of individual vegetables is yielded in that area (USAID/SENegal/ADO, 1990). Most women and many men farm vegetables and most women also market vegetables for local consumption in the Niayes area.

**Thieudeme**

As mentioned above, Thieudeme village is located in the Thies region. It is part of the rural community (a type of township) of Diender and is located approximately fifty kilometers from Dakar, the capital city of Senegal.

The population is mainly composed of Wolof and Lebou, both of whom adhere to Islam as their religion. In Thieudeme, we speak of the Lebou-Wolof as a single ethnic group because there are many similarities between them, and because the population studied identified themselves in these terms as Lebou Wolof.

Furthermore, Senegalese historians such as (Sylla, 1992) argue that the Wolof and Lebou have the same origins since they share the same language, the same culture and norms. They say that the Lebou are a subgroup of the Wolof.

At the time of the study, the population was composed of about 96% of Lebou-Wolof, 2% Naar, and 2% Serer. The main activity of the population is vegetable farming (CERP/CLT, 1995). As part of this research, a household survey was conducted in 48% of Thieudeme’s households. The household survey found that 97% of the population give farming as their primary or exclusive occupation and source of income. The survey also
found that 95% of the men heads of households are married with only 3% of our sample are divorced and 2% are widowed. The Geer, that represent the noble in the caste system represent 93% in Thiedeme, while the lower caste in the community constitute a minority of 7%.

Data from the household survey undertaken by this study in 1996 was compared to that from an earlier survey (CERP/CLT, 1995) of the village carried out by the Centre d’Expansion Rural for the purpose of studying viability of development projects in the area. Estimates are consistent. The population of Thiedeme is approximately 1700 inhabitants made up of 869 men and boys and 831 women and girls. The village has 123 households (husband-wife units) living in 57 concessions (a concession consists of anywhere from one to several households and represents an extended family and/or polygynous marriages).

The main activity of the population is vegetable farming gardening although men in particular also engage in wage work in nearby towns or cities (CERP/CLT, 1995).

Although caste has decreased in relevance as a system of stratification and occupation, people still include caste as an important aspect of their identity. In fact, caste intersects with class and politics to reinforce the status quo. Most residents of Thiedeme are members of the Geer caste which, historically, represent the nobles that are part of the “free men”.
Thieudeme is characterized by certain particular agricultural practices and marketing systems developed by the Lebou-Wolof women farmers. Most Thieudeme women of working age are engaged both in farming, providing for the subsistence needs of their families, and in marketing vegetables and fruits consumed throughout the Dakar/Niayes regions. These Lebou-Wolof market women not only sell at the village level, but also travel long distances to urban markets to market agricultural produce. These practices are not traditional. Women over age 50 did not engage in this combination of activities nor did they farm vegetables primarily. It is for this reason that Thieudeme makes a good site for researching changing roles of women.

Men and women cultivate a variety of foodstuffs. Even so, the relative weight given to certain crops has changed dramatically over time. For instance, in the past (by men of the eldest of three generations) men’s farming emphasized cash cropping of peanuts and cotton and the production of millet for the family and for the market. In the past, women’s crops emphasized part-time subsistence production of beans, millet and sweet potatoes. In 1996, contemporary farmers still produce these foodstuffs and non food crops. However, both women and men’s production emphasizes carrots, cabbage, potatoes and onions for direct sale in local markets (women) or to intermediaries (men).

Furthermore, men are more likely than women to have non farming sources of income. For some men, these represent--increasingly--primary sources of income though most, but not all, men continue to farm or shift responsibilities for their farms over to the women in their households because their work often takes them every day and all day to
nearby towns or cities (as is the case of drivers of buses and trucks). No women have any type of occupation beyond marketing that takes them out of the village or nearby region. For those men whose alternate sources of income take place in the village (nurse, metal worker), farming is still their major source of support. Only herders rely exclusively on income from a source other than cultivation of crops.

**Research Design and Principle**

This study provided the Lebou-Wolof women farmers of Thieudeme with an opportunity to voice and give meaning to their work as farmers and marketers. Data was produced using multiple methods. Research methods included a household survey of approximately half the households in the village, policy research and document analysis, and both formal and informal interviews with men, but emphasized in-depth interviews and life histories for a large sample of women from three generations. Thus, the study used an innovative approach that combines feminist research techniques with standard sociological methods. In particular, research combined standard sociological concepts with women's conceptualizations of their reality to construct indicators and analyses.

Combining feminist research techniques with standard sociological concepts is justified by the fact that

"Dominant ideologies distorted and made invisible women's real activities, to women as well as to men. For example until recently it was common for women to dismiss housework as 'not real work.' Yet, unlike most men, women also experienced housework as actual labor, as a practical activity that filled their daily existence" (Anderson et al, 1987: 96).

The issues and variables that were explored were defined through an interactive process that contrasts the researcher's interpretation and concepts as a feminist sociologist with women's perceptions, concepts, definitions, and questions. That is, the researcher seek to achieve a balance between 1) the construction of
variables, questions, and analyses based on theoretical concepts and theories or empirical analyses from other settings and 2) the construction of variables, questions, and analyses that are posed by women in their discussions. As demonstrated by feminist scholars such as Anderson, Armitage, Jack and Wit, women's perspectives were not absent simply as a result of oversight but had been suppressed, trivialized, ignored, or reduced to the status of gossip and folk wisdom by dominant research traditions institutionalized in academic settings and in scientific disciplines. Critical analyses of this knowledge often showed that masculinist biases lurked beneath the claims of social science and history to objectivity, universal relevance and truth” (96). 

By listening to women, the research became a participatory process that bridged the need to test sociological theory and concepts with the need to improve the quality of data and our understanding of women's reality. This research technique increases the likelihood that subsequent policy and/or extension recommendations will be useful to women and adapted to their values, opportunities and constraints.

The use of both qualitative and quantitative methods permits combining a comparison and statistical testing of a number of variables across a large enough sample with enhancement of understanding/interpretation of the data through a reduced number of specific and illustrative cases (Patton, 1990. 14; Reinhart, 1992).

Quantitative data were produced primarily through a household survey and document research. Qualitative data were produced primarily through more in-depth interviews with women, focus groups of women and men, and through life histories of older women. Document research provided additional data from both quantitative and qualitative research by others and on official statistics. Some qualitative data were used to construct conceptual/spatial/temporal variables that were organized in a systematic manner.
for comparison (using QSR Nudist) and to enter into statistical analyses (crosstabs and ANOVA through SPSS). For instance, women’s concepts of power were compared with and used to revise indicators constructed by the researcher. Women’s accounts of roles at different points of their lives were matched to relevant historical events. Women’s assessments of decision-making arenas were used to construct indices for measuring relative decision making power—a dependent variable in the analyses. The intent was not to contrast predictive validity but to a) produce more accurate empirical data through a system of cross checking, b) improve sociological concepts of certain key variables (power, for instance) by incorporating into these measures that are culturally and gender appropriate, and c) assist policymakers and practitioners with non-stereotyped information on women’s problems, values, priorities, and roles through women’s own words.

Qualitative data were produced primarily through original, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and life histories of women, supplemented by abbreviated interviews with men for purposes of comparison. This was particularly important to capture women’s perceptions, and attitudes about their roles, and decision making in the household, farm, and community; to understand how women conceptualize and construct their lives (and the representation of their lives in interviews); and to capture men’s perceptions of and explanations for change in women’s roles.

_Semi structured Interviews_

Semi structured face-to-face interviews were conducted using the semi structured interview schedules (see Appendix B). Interviews produced information primarily on 1)
roles and decision making experiences of all three generations of women at a same point in time—the time of the interview—and 2) roles and experiences of all three generations of women at a particular point in the life cycle—when they were “young wives/mothers.” This data was particularly important for evaluating the relations between individual characteristics (such as age), household structure, division of labor, and other factors in women’s multiple roles and decision making at the time of the interview and at a particular point in the life cycle across generations (which can be compared with information on relevant historical events such as initiation of extension work and changes in agricultural policies in the 1980s, changing markets for vegetables, structural adjustment policies, demands for labor that impact male migration patterns, etc.).

Semi-structuring of interviews allowed the researcher some control over the topics to be discussed, but also allowed the respondent to spontaneously move into issues relevant to her and others not initially anticipated by the researcher. First, the researcher constructed tentative questions using accepted sociological and feminist concepts and measures for production, reproduction, and decision making activities (see discussion of operationalization below). These were pilot-tested with a test group of women and revised to better fit local concepts and perceptions, leading to more culturally appropriate measures of power in this context. Second, in subsequent interviews, research moved back and forth between a conversation directed by questions on appropriate, pre-selected issues and variables to a conversation directed by the issues, questions, and ideas raised by the women interviewed. In this way, research captured both the type of information that allowed comparison between this study’s findings and, those of other sociologists—
improving the likelihood of making contributions to theory and empirical knowledge in the discipline—and the type of information that women defined as useful and that helps policy makers and change agents better understand women’s reality and their needs. This approach was based on a feminist commitment to providing the Lebou-Wolof women of Thieudeme with an opportunity to voice and give meaning to their work as farmers and to provide opportunities to increase women’s awareness of issues and factors not previously discussed by them that impact their opportunities and constraints. Interviews were conducted in Wolof (the local language and also the researcher’s native language). The researcher had ample opportunity to accompany and observe women in the home, the field, the marketplace, and in communal spaces.

Interviews focused on roles, status, experiences, needs, coping strategies, and other issues, in at least three conceptually-distinct arenas: Household (the domestic arena which includes activities and interaction with other household members, contributions of income or kind, division of labor, and decision making about issues such as child rearing and children’s education, migration and marriage/divorce, consumption rights and budget expenditures, leisure, etc.); production (typically farming and production of food for consumption and sale regardless of where production takes place [garden, field], marketing, wage work and other income generating activities, and decision making on production, credit, savings, technological change and skill development, access to extension, etc.); and community (“citizen” [legal, caste, and religious] rights and obligations, local customs and traditions that are gendered, leadership roles, participation and roles in mixed and women-only grassroots organizations that encompass persons from
several households, sources of support for organizations, roles in religious and cultural events/festivals, etc.).

Whether or not women conceptualize these distinctions among arenas/spheres was noted, but—following standard sociological practices—the researcher distinguished between them for analytical and policy purposes. At the same time, the researcher took note of issues that intersect these arenas in women’s lives. Such was the case of land. Decision making about access to farmland takes place at the village level and the household level, intersecting the three arenas.

Life Histories

Life histories were another method through which comparisons of roles and decision-making were made across generations. Like in-depth, semi-structured interviewing, life histories are potentially empowering to women and provide them with a means to think about and voice their experiences and concerns. From the vantage point of the researcher, “life histories offer the opportunity to observe a particular society through the lens of individual lives” and

“comes about as the collaboration between two individuals...an insider speaking about herself and her society and an outsider asking questions from her own frame of reference...A life history from the start embodies more than one person’s agenda, purpose, and interests” (Mirza and Strobel, 1989).

Doing life histories of women “can provide an invaluable re-creation of [their] collective past, and provide meaningful ways to cope with [their] present and future”
(Bloom, 1977; Gluck, 1977; Gluck and Patai, 1991; Minister, 1991; Personal Narrative Group, 1989). Women's oral history may play a critical role in explaining changes in general and particularly the perceptions women have of the changes occurring in their lives overtime (Davison, 1989). Construction of life histories can illustrate progressive change.

Other Sources of Information

Document research was critical to the construction of background information and macro-level, historical indices. Because women and men are not likely to be aware of relevant factors outside their communities that influence their opportunities and constraints, it was up to the researcher to identify these and bring them into the analysis of changing roles and decision making as described by the interviewees.

Women may or may not be aware of the way in which market changes impact their opportunities and constraints, but information on market demand may be an important contextual variable for assessing changing opportunities and pressures.

Available sources of information included data from official censuses and specialized surveys (in particular, agricultural surveys by local non-governmental organizations and international agencies), and historical and anthropological accounts of the region's culture. Also important were basic historical overviews of changes in extension programs, legal reforms affecting production and women's rights, macroeconomic indicators, and diverse academic and press accounts of regional and national issues likely to impact gender roles specifically and traditional production practices in general. Archival data on production patterns, import-export, and extension programs and policies were available from the Ministry of Agriculture. Official documents
and studies available in that institution and others also provided supplementary information on background variables such as population, land tenure, soil and water quality, and the organization of farming. When appropriate, knowledgeable authorities were interviewed. Archival data also were available in official government documents, plans, blueprints and reports issued on seminars on rural development and agriculture. Statistical reports have been published by the Department of Statistics on population composition, migration flows, income and production, and there are census data available on Thieudeme and its surrounding region. Other documents, monographs, books and research papers were accessed through organizations such as the local USAID office (Agency for International Development), the ISRA (Senegalese Research Institute in Agriculture), and CODESRIA (African Consortium For Research in Development).

Documents analyzed tended to focus on gender division of labor issues, farming systems research, soil fertility, and marketing system in different regions of Senegal. Information from archival research and other studies were used to situate the systematic analyses of roles and decision-making patterns in the appropriate historical-structural context.

Preliminary document research was carried out during the prior study and additional research was done with materials available through U.S. libraries and from researchers at U.S.-based institutions (including new survey data on Thieudeme and the surrounding region available through Michigan State University).
Operationalization and Measurement of Key Variables

The dependent variables in this study are "decision making" (the expression of power in everyday life) and "change" (in roles, status, and decision making power). As indicated above, three arenas of decision making were explored: decision-making in the arena of production (usually farming, but in some cases marketing, craft production, wage work and others), in the household/domestic arena, and in the community.

For this study, power was understood to be a socially constructed, multi-dimensional concept (Blumberg, 1984; Chafetz, 1991). As such, the construction of indicators/measures of power (for instance, through multiple items scales) as expressed in decision making benefited from the interplay between measures grounded in sociological theories and methods and, alternately, those emerging from the deconstruction of women's experiences and conceptualizations. In this way, both theoretical and instrumental validity were bolstered by the researcher's asking "the right questions" and "hypotheses [were] continually tested in stronger and stronger ways in the pragmatic routine of everyday life" (Kirk and Miller, 1986: 22-25, 30). Although the final construction of measures of decision-making power took place during fieldwork, preliminary fieldwork and feminist sociological research on gender stratification and power suggested the following dimensions might be important.

1) Measurements/indicators of power should differentiate between power "over," "to" or "with." That is, power can be expressed as the ability to get others to do what you want, the relative autonomy to make decisions over oneself, and the freedom to associate for mutual benefit. For instance, preliminary research in Thieudeme suggested that
traditionally women have had greater decision making power when it comes to decisions regarding how to go about doing their daily tasks than on renegotiations of the division of labor between women and men, and that, because of their social roles as mothers, they have had greater decision making power in domestic affairs than in community affairs. Even the preparation of food, typically women’s work in the home, is done by men for public events and festivals. Yet women have organized and joined self-help organizations.

2) Measurements/indicators should differentiate between decision making to address practical needs (for daily survival and to fulfill gender role obligations) and strategic needs (increased autonomy in all arenas, improvement in one’s status relative to others) (Molyneux, 1985; Moser, 1993). Feminist social scientists point to access to productive resources, control over surplus (not subsistence) goods and income, and ideology/definitional power (laws, customs, the gendered nature of authority and changing norms) as important factors that contribute to power differences (Chafetz, 1991).

Preliminary research in Thiedeme found that religious norms support women’s rights to control over their production and income even though, until recently, most women produced for home consumption (part of their responsibilities as wives and mothers). Research also suggested that women’s roles have expanded to include production and sale of a surplus while men’s ability to meet their obligations to the support of households has declined. The question remained as to whether this had translated into greater relative power for women, which women (for instance, are there age or caste differences), under what circumstances, and in what arenas? Furthermore, how do women see links between
their roles and their rights to make demands (for instance, access to land in order to produce food for their children)?

The following represent examples of the type of decision-making issues that were discussed in interviews with women. First, women’s roles were defined. Questions about production focused on activities (planting, weeding, handicraft production, etc.) and the diverse responsibilities that women juggle. This was a means to identify the content of “roles” and the terms used to talk about these roles (for instance, mother, farmer, and daughter). A focus on activities was important to help avoid confusion that may arise from a combination of role-normative responses and alternative meanings that women and the researcher may attribute to responses. For instance, many studies have found that when asked “what work do you do?” or “who supports the household?” women are likely to identify themselves as “housewives” who “help” the husband whom they identify as the main “provider” (Beneria, 1982). Researchers then translated “housewife” to mean “does housework” and ignored the subsistence production that may be an important obligation of the housewife. Similarly, for women “provider” may mean “the one who brings cash income home” rather than “the one who produces the daily food staples.” By focusing on how women’s daily work is constructed (tell me all the things you have done since you got up this morning) or how domestic and productive activities are structured (who cooked breakfast for the children, who weeds the field, who carries the produce to market?), interviews more accurately detected both what women do and how they conceptualize this. Subsequently, for analytical purposes, the researcher used this information to construct household, productive and community role categories.

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Second, as roles were identified by women for each conceptual arena (though women may not distinguish between them and there may be significant overlap in activities—for instance, subsistence production is likely to overlap with production for the market), questions were asked regarding decisions that must be made (for instance, how much produce goes to consumption and how much to the market), how those decisions are made (when and who is involved), and—in the event of conflict—whose will prevailed. This approach corresponds to methods applied to comparative studies of decision making by Sachs (1983) and by Garcia and de Oliveira (1995). It also is consistent with the research method known as “rapid rural appraisal” or “sondeo.”

To control for normative-response errors (telling the researcher what is socially acceptable/expected/generalizable rather than the range of real experiences), a) women were asked to describe some specific decision making events, and b) the researcher repeated questions at different points in time (varying the form of the question) to double check responses and recalled and compared these to men’s accounts when mentioned by men. For instance, with respect to farming, decision-making events included what to plant, when to plant, what inputs to use, whether or not to use new methods, when to weed or harvest, who will participate in planting/weeding/harvesting, use of inputs (for instance, land, fertilizer/pesticides, technical assistance; credit), control over output and any income that results, and other related issues. With respect to the domestic arena, questions on decision making focused on issues such as how decisions are made regarding whether or not to have more children, how much of the household’s or other individuals’ incomes (cash or kind) go to meet the needs of different household members (for instance,
children's nutrition or health care versus adult men or women's discretionary expenditures), if money is pooled then who manages this pool, who decides how long children attend school and are there differences between girls and boys, who disciplines the children, who is responsible for purchasing children's clothing/school books, who decides whether or not to save money and who controls savings, who performs basic domestic tasks such as cooking, laundry, care of children and elderly adults? With respect to the community arena, questions were asked about women's roles in extra-familial organizations and important festivals/events, participation in extension and adult education or other social programs sponsored by government or private agencies, leadership/office positions in mixed-gender organizations, when organizations arose and who started them, differences between productive or service organizations, how land is allocated by community leaders and how women increase their access to land (this intersects with the productive arena), contact with private development organizations and extension offers who offer grants and assistance, etc.?

To facilitate analyses, resulting data were organized—when feasible and useful—into categories, indices and scales that could be used to test statistical associations (within arenas, across arenas, among independent variables and various dimensions of dependent variables). Construction of measures emphasized the notion that decision making power is both cumulative (the more instances that women's decisions prevail, the greater their relative power) and stratified (for instance, women may have more say in production than over community affairs). Linkages between the two dimensions were explored as were potential differences in local perceptions by caste, age, membership in self help groups,
etc. (for instance, whether domestic power is more important than communal power in women’s lives, does membership in a group make a difference in women’s perceptions and exercise of power). Finally, differences in decision making and associations among predictive variables were contextualized—evaluated according to differences across classes, castes, age groups, the time frame of reference (time of interview, in the past)—and compared to the results of interviews with the select sample of older men and local authorities. Nonetheless, in the long run, the construction of scales and variables for multivariate analyses was not considered necessary since in some cases women simply did not differentiate among issues and arenas, attributed power in all arenas to religion and custom, and did not conceptualize decision making as “power.” Finally, some important indicators of power established by feminist scholars were impossible to measure since women do not talk about them (birth control) or provide comments that are less than accurate or truthful because of the interview context.

Change was the second dependent variable. There were several ways that change was measured and this has been discussed in part above. First, three generations of women provided information on their roles, tasks, decision-making, etc. when they were “young mothers.” The differences among them represent generational change. Second, the three generations of women provided information on their roles, tasks, decision-making, etc. at the time of the interview. For older women, these responses can be compared to their responses regarding when they were “young mothers.” This represents change over time in the lives of individual women and potentially their age cohorts. Third, a select group of older women provided more detailed accounts of changes in their individual lives through
their life histories and a focus group discussion. These three approaches to change as a dependent variable focused on the form/structure of women’s roles at different stages in the life cycle and different time periods.

A fourth way of assessing change focused on exploring likely causal factors that may explain and predict differences among women. This could be broken down into at least three sets of variables: a) the characteristics of women (for instance, age, marital status, number of children, educational level, etc.), b) the characteristics of local context such as households and community-level organization (class, caste, household structure, division of labor in the household, land tenure arrangements, structure and range of local organizations, extension practices and programs, local traditions, etc.), and c) factors outside the community (economic crisis, changing market demand for vegetables, wage opportunities for men, legal reform in rights of women and land tenure, etc.) that were associated with the content of roles, opportunities and constraints, problems and pressures that impact choices.

Alternately, independent variables could be organized according to whether they are “structural,” “cultural,” “demographic,” or “socio-economic” in nature. Structural factors include those related to productive activities, organizing, access to resources, caste/class and related. Cultural factors include traditions, beliefs about appropriate gender roles, legal proscriptions, technology and material artifacts, values and related. Demographic factors included age, number of children, marital status (and monogamous or polygamous) and related. And socio-economic factors included income, local labor market distribution, farm size, demand and supply of labor and related. Once again, in the
long run, it did not prove very useful to explore factors through computer generated analyses since there was very little difference in women’s stories.

Important tasks of the research were to explore whether and under what circumstances a) causality appeared likely (when specific changes appeared to be logically/conceptually related and temporally consistent), b) whether women perceived a causal relationship among the diverse events they participated in/observed, and c) how their perceptions influenced actions or translated into demands. For instance, did women express notions of strategic needs and interests and were these related to practical/daily survival needs/interests and in what ways? Example: If young women perceived they played a more important role in household survival as providers than did their mothers, did they demand greater access to inputs such as credit and land or demanded greater control over how to spend household income than their mothers did? On the other hand, increased access to inputs and decision making in farming (for instance, through reform in extension programs) may further increase their relative importance as providers and lead to subsequent demands for greater control. Did women make these connections or did they attribute, for instance, decision- making opportunities and constraints to other factors (religious, demographic, legal, etc.) beyond control or immune from change? Multiple research methods permitted placing events and perceptions in a broader context, teasing out possible relationships, and constructing better measures/indicators by contrasting researcher’s expectations with women’s experiences and perceptions.

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The final discussion of change and decision making includes a consideration of any differences in contrasting perspectives, for instance, that of the researcher as a feminist sociologist and those of the women interviewed.

**Fieldwork and Sampling**

Fieldwork started in August 1996 and ended in May 1997. Once in Thieu Deme, a first visit was made with the chief of village and the president of the rural community (the township) to inform them about the study, its objectives and its relationship to previous fieldwork in the village. The project was apparently well received by local authorities, and permission was given readily. Right there, the chief of village made the first arrangements for a meeting with the woman leader whom he considered to be president of the most important organization of the village that same day. (There are two women's organizations and several widely recognized women leaders.) [Note: The village chief is a member of the Sarr family—traditionally the ruling family and founders of the village. His son is the president of the rural community.]

At that first meeting with the woman leader, the purpose and objectives of the study were explained and an informal interview was arranged and carried out with another group of women leaders that the president called to that first meeting. At the end of the meeting, general agreement was reached on the importance of the project and on the need to call another meeting with all the villagers, particularly the village women, the following week. The purpose of the second meeting was to reintroduce the researcher, discuss and inform people about the project. About 50 women attended the second meeting, which
took place in a public place and lasted about two hours. Some men leaders attended the event too.

At that meeting, a first focus group discussion took place and it was the opportunity to assess gender relations in the community, what the priorities and crucial issues were for Thieudeme women, and also to test the validity of some concepts on change and decision-making that were listed on the interview guide. Changes were made following an assessment of women’s ways of conceptualizing reality and the issues that women signaled as important to them. The meeting also provided an opportunity to revise and set aside some variables and concepts that appeared unreasonable and potentially worthless and to identify leaders among the community of women.

For the household survey, face to face interviews and life histories, sampling was done following a discussion with the chief of village and a small group of women. Since this was an election year, there was a census of households readily available. Using this, together we assigned a number to each household of the village—a total of 123. Together, we discussed the socioeconomic situation of every single household on the list using criteria established by the villagers and with which I also agreed:

A “better off” household has cows, land, many fruit trees such as mangoes, a cement house, often more than one wife for the head. Among the households, only 20 were categorized as better off and all were included in the sample.

It was not possible to find an “intermediary” class between the better off and poor households. The other households were all poor—members of a status locally referred to as “scone.” A random sample was drawn from that group of poor households by putting
all their numbers in a hat and drawing the first 40 numbers that came out. This gave a total of 60 households selected for a survey to obtain necessary background information on the village. The women farmers selected for interviews were drawn primarily from the 60 households.

Once households were identified and social status confirmed by an in-household visit, a sample was drawn of 209 women. The sample focused on representing three generations of women—Generation 1: young wives/mothers in their 20’s-30’s with only small children, Generation 2: older wives/mothers in their 40’s-50’s with primarily older children, and Generation 3: elderly wives/grandmothers in their 60’s-70’s whose children are fully grown/married. Though most households have 10-15 members, not all include three generations so one difficulty was to find three generations of women in each household. From 1993, when the first study was conducted, to the time this research was conducted in 1997 most older women died because of a combination of poverty, deteriorating living conditions, malnutrition and recurring diseases. However, there were no difficulties finding women from the two younger generations in each household.

For the reasons explained above, it was impossible to have 60 older women from Generation 3. Instead, all 29 older women (from Generation 3) who were alive in the village were all interviewed for that purpose. The end result was a sample comprised of: 120 women from the 40 poor households (60 women from Generation 1 and 60 women from Generation 2, and the 29 women from Generation 3) and, from the 20 better off households, 30 women from Generation 1 and 30 women from Generation 2. That gave a total sample of 209 women. Choosing women from better off, and poor households
improves the likelihood of representation of a variety of roles associated with different positions in society, as well as differences in needs, values, perceptions or attitudes. In fact, the two richest women in the village (older women, members of the Sarr family) and the two midwives fell into the sample.

Additionally, a small sample of 9 men, three from each stratum, was drawn from selected households to allow comparison and contrast between women and men’s perceptions of change and decision making over time. All men interviewed were older men, long-term residents in the community with wives and daughters who were interviewed for the study. (Older men are more likely than younger men to have observed and formed an opinion on wives’ and daughters’ changing roles.) In addition, male heads of household were interviewed at the time of the household survey and local service workers (education, health)—including 4 men—were interviewed to obtain their impressions of change in women’s roles and relative power. In this way, their perceptions of changes (and explanations of factors that contributed to changes) could be compared with those of women for possible contradictions and clues to differences in perception (e.g., access to information on more macro-level events, etc.). In all, approximately 100 men were interviewed though most were unstructured or as part of data collection for the survey on household characteristics that provided background data.

Informal, focus group type discussions and one-on-one conversations with male leaders, local authorities, spouses and sons of the women interviewed and others also were taped and or jotted down in research notes and provided an additional source of information for comparative purposes.
Personnel

Two research assistants were hired. One was a woman student from Dakar since there were no educated women within Thieudeme who could conduct the interviews. The other was a man, a former high school student from the village. They received extensive training over a two week period to familiarize them with the study objectives, the interview guides—translated with their assistance from French to Wolof, the local language. That was intended to make sure we all asked the same questions to which we assigned the same meanings. Training also was given on data collection methods, and interview techniques—particularly on how to listen to the female farmers and take notes in the field. Both interview guides for the household survey and in-depth interviews were respectively pilot-tested with groups of men and women farmers. All interviews and observations were conducted in pairs or teams—the researcher with one or both assistants. Meetings were held at the end of each day with the research assistants and the researcher to discuss problems, share experiences and to get ready for the next day.

Some Difficulties in the Field

Because of their multiple roles and heavy workload, women farmers face a lack of time to sit and do interviews. Therefore some of the in-depth interviews had to be done at night in their homes. In addition, it was difficult to do interviews with older women—particularly for the life histories. They got tired and most of the time did not want to be bothered. They do not have the health or energy to sustain long interviews and give very short answers despite care taken to formulate questions and to break up the interviews into small time spots. Repeated visits to them were necessary to obtain adequate data.
In general, the women farmers prefer group interviews instead of individual ones because of the way their communal life is structured. There were always other people present who did not hesitate to jump in and express their opinion. Therefore, taped interviews include information from more than one person. Rather than attempt to code responses for individuals, a more interactive transcription was followed to make the best use of diverse and rich information.

Also, because of increasing poverty and a powerless government that tends to neglect the villagers and/or does not respect commitments and promises towards them, villagers tend to be distrustful of any researcher or person who seems to be in a position of privilege or authority. They identify researchers in general (but not white researchers whom they see as having money for projects and funding that can better their lives) with government agents who “use” them for electoral purposes. They consider most researchers to be “using” them without giving anything in return. It took considerable time to develop trust and rapport and mutual respect that would guarantee a high degree of truthfulness in interviews.

Even so, some informants asked for money as a condition of the interview and no money was paid initially generating some possibility that truthfulness and cooperation would be jeopardized. However, on frequent trips to Dakar (often to recover from a communicable illness), the researcher gathered donations of clothing and other items that she took back as gifts for villagers. And in January 1997, with the assistance of colleagues and friends from Columbus and Pittsburgh, the researcher was able to make a donation of
medical supplies with which the village initiated its own locally-run health care service.

This eliminated any final suspicions surrounding the researcher’s motive.

At the same time, it is a matter of concern that it was only at the end of field work that the researcher learned--from the school director--of an important factor in people’s perceptions of the causes of their problems--belief that the village is cursed. The “curse” belief affects not only villagers’ perceptions but also those of service providers who avoid interaction with the village. The rumor arose when several government agents died in a car accident after visiting the village.
CHAPTER 4

WOMEN'S CHANGING ROLES

In comparing the roles of women farmers in the past and present in Thieudeme, it appears that some major changes have taken place, particularly in the situation faced by the two younger generations of women today (those who continue to farm) and the oldest generation of women (who no longer farm). Changes have taken place in women’s domestic/reproductive roles, in their community participation and management roles, and in their productive roles. The most important change is the fact that women farmers today are involved in all aspects of production from the clearing of land to marketing what they produce; this was not the case for the oldest generation of women when they were farmers. Other important changes discussed by women which directly impact their roles, workload and status include changes in the land tenure system, the types of crops they grow, the gender division of labor in general, and the type of farming systems and tools they use today.

Some local changes discussed by women and men in Thieudeme reflect changes taking place in the broader context—that is, in other rural communities and Senegal in general. Others are related to local conditions such as ethnicity and ecology. Women are
fully aware of some factors, but others are understood less well or not at all. For instance, women show varying degrees of awareness of factors such as the changing nature of their local economy and its relation to changes in product supply and demand in the global marketplace, the growing importance of a cash economy and dependence on material goods, the Senegalese economic crisis and outcomes such as the implementation of structural adjustment policies. Nonetheless, each has had an impact upon the lives of these women farmers, their needs and their opportunities. The impact of natural factors such as the drought, which has plagued much of Senegal for over a decade, is better understood by the women interviewed. Each of these factors is discussed within the context of their changing roles in—in this order—production, reproduction and division of labor, and community and—in greater detail—in the following chapter.

**Change in Productive Roles**

Significant changes have taken place in the types of activities performed by women and men and the productive roles they fill. Furthermore, the changes in women’s roles have been more profound than those in men’s roles. This conclusion was reached through in-depth interviews with women and men farmers and with local leaders, and confirmed in interviews with agricultural researchers at the Senegalese Institute for Agricultural Research, a review of other studies, and direct observations. Changes include a shift in productive roles and the productive division of labor between women and men, particularly the intensification of women’s farm production and the addition of marketing as a major activity, the rise of women’s organizations, and changes in production practices.
The household survey found that 86% of the men in Thieudeme are farmers exclusively while 8% of the men work as car drivers in the cities and about 2% farm and raise livestock. Among the men who are farmers, one man also is the village nurse and one does ironwork (metal repair) part time.

Farming, and Farming Practices

When the oldest generation of women were farmers, they concentrated on part-time and seasonal subsistence production of hardy staples. In contrast, older men were engaged in farming full time but seasonally. They focused on cash crop production of peanuts and cotton for export. Men also cleared the land for women. Women often provided part time labor to men for farming men’s cash crops. A few women included cash crops on their own plots, but these were for household consumption and any surplus was sold by men who then turned what were minor cash amounts over to women.

Women of the oldest generation farmed only during the rainy season and most of their production was destined to feed the family, thereby fulfilling their responsibilities as wives and mothers. Older women did not need to farm more intensively since farm production was higher and staples could be stored. They also did not face a drought.

Furthermore, women’s interviews indicate men’s provisions were adequate to meet family needs. These factors were supported by the cultural norms regarding the gender division of labor: women were expected to supplement their families’ needs. They were not expected to be the main providers since that was men’s role. For this reason, older women did not engage in marketing. Any surplus derived from women’s millet,
beans and sweet potatoes (food staples) were taken to local markets and to rural cooperatives\(^1\) for sale by men.

All contemporary women farmers interviewed reported that they divide their time between farming and marketing. All farm full time and year round. They produce more perishable and labor-intensive produce and production is aimed primarily at local markets though women’s produce also goes to feed their own families. Clearly, women farmers in 1996-97 have more responsibilities in productive work and income generation than did their grandmothers and, for the middle generation, their mothers.

The division of labor described by the oldest women is attributed by women and Africanist researchers like Claire Robertson (cited in Guyer and Hena, 1984) to discriminatory policies and practices encouraged by the colonial system under which women were excluded from what were considered the more valuable export-oriented cash crops. Colonial authorities encouraged men to focus on cash production and, following independence, early government-sponsored agricultural programs followed that practice even when establishing extension programs and farming-marketing cooperatives (for men only). Crops such as peanuts and cotton were the main crops targeted by government cooperatives and they were purchased at prices designed to earn foreign exchange for the state through exports destined to satisfy demand in the world economy.

The interviews with women of all three generations confirm that the oldest generation of women concentrated their energies on hardy staples such as millet, maize,

\(^1\) Cooperatives were set up by the government to provide extension and credit to men and to purchase men’s crops.
rice, beans and sweet potatoes (with some variations among women). Some older women mentioned in their interviews that they also produced vegetables, including tomatoes and peppers, in very small amounts and these were grown in gardens in the yard rather than in the fields. These vegetables supplemented the staples in the family diet. Younger farmers today still produce hardy staples for subsistence, but the relative importance of what is produced has shifted to emphasize vegetables.

Older women farmed part time and only during the rainy season (Wolof = *navet*) from July to October. As mentioned above, they mainly produced crops for the subsistence use of the family and provided labor to men for cash crop production under men’s control. Part of men’s peanut production was saved for family consumption too. According to both older women and older men, each male household head had a storage facility for grain. This maintained enough for feeding families until the following harvest. Once the family had set aside its needed store, what remained was taken to the government cooperatives for sale by men:

“I grew millet and beans in my field in addition to helping my husband in his own field. Women then used their crops for feeding the family. We did not need to sell because we were entirely taken care by our husbands” (C#32, 60 years old).

In contrast, all women from the two younger generations confirmed in their interviews that they are growing cash crops for local markets--primarily vegetables such as carrots, cabbage, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, eggplants, red pepper and green beans--full time and all year around.
Many factors account for this shift from hardy subsistence crops to more perishable, cash-crop farming and from part time, seasonal production to full time and year-round production. The two best understood by women are ecological conditions brought on by the lengthy drought in Senegal and the expansion of poverty with economic crisis. Other factors less likely to be mentioned by women include declining international demand and prices for traditional Senegalese exports, and the implementation of structural adjustment reforms whose impacts include inflation, unemployment, declining real incomes and cutbacks in government services, scarcity of imported goods in local markets, and opportunities to export non traditional produce (more details are given on explanations for change in the chapter on factors in change).

About 80% of women interviewed from all three generations refer to the becor (drought in Wolof) as being the main--but not the only--factor that lead to the shift in crops. They stressed the decrease in rainfall as being the major reason for women to irrigate or water crops by hand. Once the tasks involved in farming shifted to include intensive watering, thereby increasing the level of women's energy, there was no incentive for women to limit themselves to traditional staples planted during the rainy season. The shift to vegetables had the added advantage of varying the household diet and of being highly marketable:

"We were forced by the drought to shift to vegetable farming because we would not find anything to eat or any money during the dry season. Farming vegetables is more marketable because of the change in the Senegalese diet. Most importantly,
farming vegetables means that we will be busy all year round generating income. It helps us to survive” (B#99, 50 years old).

About 20% of women—mainly from the younger generations—referred to the increased need for cash and material goods as being the main—but not the only—reason for growing more marketable crops. One typical answer is:

“Time has changed. Nowadays we need money for everything. Even in farming. We need money to buy seeds, fertilizers, and foodstuff, to pay dues in our organizations and to take care of the children. To send children to school we need money constantly to buy books and school supplies. We need to pay for health care. That was not the case of our mothers and grandmothers when they were younger wives. Their needs for money were not that great. They relied less on cash to farm. They used natural fertilizers. They ate simpler foods such as roots and locally grown cereals. They depended less on imported stuff to live” (A#127, 35 years old).

As noted above, in some of the interviews, women pointed to the relative importance of market demand or tastes as a third factor explaining the changes in crop production. This factor tended to be discussed under the general theme of colonialism. Colonialism introduced changes in the Senegalese diet in both urban and rural areas. Before colonialism, as stated by one of the older informants:

“We had a simple diet that consisted basically of lax [a sort of porridge made with millet powder] and tiere [Senegalese couscous made out of steamed millet powder]. We did not eat things like the unhealthy diet of nowadays based on rice.
and grease. We were healthier than this generation of women and we were also self-sufficient in terms of food supply” (C#26, 70 years old).

In Thieudeme specifically, the shift to vegetables and the intensification of the demand for cash production are recent phenomena that can be linked in part to the increase in rural-urban migration that resulted from drought and economic crisis in rural areas. More urban residents create pressures and incentives for greater involvement in food production by those who remain in rural areas. Local diets are also changing, but have taken longer because the competition of urban demand and urban incomes reduce the likelihood of low-cost, readily available produce in rural market areas. For instance, most villagers do not have access to or funds to purchase significant amounts of sugar rice, meat, or fish oil, products common in the new Senegalese diet. When money permits, these goods are purchased by women in village or city markets. Most villages in Senegal participate in a local market one day a week during which people from urban areas or surrounding villages come together to sell or exchange produce. These markets are another source of dietary change since local people tend to accommodate to what is immediately available and affordable to them.

Changes in crops have contributed to dramatic changes in women and men’s roles and relative workloads. Changes began under colonialism but intensified more recently with drought and poverty. This includes changes not only in the sexual division of labor and farming systems, but also in the specific practices and the tools women use.
Women are quick to discuss how drought and the deterioration of soil quality force farmers to develop new farming techniques and attitudes. The most obvious change is in watering and providing chemical or natural agents to care for perishable plants:

“Our way of farming has changed compared to what prevailed when our parents were farming...because of the lack of water, we do intensive watering mornings and afternoons. It is the worst part of farming today. In addition, many diseases have invaded our soils because of the lack of water and we have to fight them constantly with chemicals that also require money” (A#6, 38 years old).

Older women report that when they were active in farming (as young wives and even into middle age), they performed only basic activities such as seeding, cultivating and harvesting. Women were not involved in agricultural activities such as clearing the land or storage. Men cleared the land on which women farmed. Men were in charge of building storage rooms for their and their wives’ surplus production. Also, they took care of keeping and monitoring foodstuffs and allocating them to women of the household for cooking use.

The agricultural activities that women currently engage in in Thieudeme include: clearing the land and digging (Wolof = gab), smoothing and evening up the soil (Wolof = jimbī), starting the nursing bed or growing seedlings (Wolof = plan), transplanting (Wolof = jembe), weeding and cultivating (Wolof = baye), spraying fertilizers (Wolof = poroduit), spraying pesticides (Wolof = pompe), watering (Wolof = rosse), harvesting (Wolof = wite), transformation, storage and marketing (Wolof = diaay). It is clear that
younger women’s workload has increased significantly from those of their grandmothers and mothers.

The oldest generation of women did not use pesticides and chemical fertilizers to raise their production; they used cow manure. All younger women interviewed indicated heavy use of chemicals and none of them use manure or compost to fertilize their crops. They indicate that the new crops require a heavy use of chemicals in addition to being watered twice a day. They all mentioned how the new crops have chemical needs that are different from the natural needs of the crops their grandmothers and mothers grew.

“When I was younger, I used to watch my mother and grandmother farm. It was much simpler during their time because the weather was great and they did not have to use chemicals for their crops to grow. They did know about chemicals. Whenever they needed to give a boost to some of their plants, they used cow manure. Nowadays the soils are very sick, and the type of crops that I grow requires great care and use of chemical fertilizers and also pesticides to fight the nematodes” (B# 99, 50 years old).

This quote revealed another factor pointed to by women to explain the heavy use of chemicals and pesticides—the deteriorating quality of soils and increased salinity linked to the ongoing drought and the pressure of constant production on the land. Men farmers also use a lot of chemicals for their crops. This is a new phenomenon in Thierdeme for women as well as the men farmers who grow vegetables.

Women farmers today—that is, women of the two younger generations—practice intensive watering and they fetch water from artificial wells commonly called bemis. These
wells are dug by men and do not have to be deep because the water table is very close to
the surface in Thieudeme. With a bucket in each hand women run in and out the bëms to
fetch what they need to water their plants. They do this twice a day—that is, each plant is
watered once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Men and children help women
farmers with watering when they are absent from the field for marketing or for other
obligations. But most women water before leaving for markets and after they return so as
not to ask for assistance from already overburdened co-wives or neighbors.

Almost 90% of women farmers said the watering system is very labor intensive,
exhausting and probably harmful to their health. Women from all generations emphasized
the need for irrigation and for more sophisticated tools to assist women farmers today. A
common statement regarding issues of watering is reflected in the following:

"We really need help! I am not sure this interview will be on radio but I wish it
were. We need help getting machines for watering. We are extremely exhausted by
this manual watering system. It is taking all our time. If we had a better irrigation
system we will produce more vegetables because we will manage to farm bigger
pieces of land" (A#17, 30 years old).

In their interviews, women indicated that farm sizes have changed significantly and
that this is related in great part to the shift in crops and to farming practices. Women in
their 60s-70s stated that they farmed on “big” plots called tolli dîor meaning “big land” in
the local farming jargon. The tolli dîor measured at least 2 to 3 hectares and often more.
Older women commented on opportunities for bigger farms as related to availability of
land (less pressure on land due to population growth) during the time they were active in
farming. Also, with rainfall predictable and adequate and with subsistence farming of hardy staples, farmers did not worry about being able to handle larger farms. The oldest generation of women farmers did not face the burden of watering, the costs of inputs, the time needed for marketing and for organizing:

"We were lucky enough not to deal with watering. God gave us enough water and took care of our farming by making it very productive. Soils were of great quality. Life was much better before. Even people in this community were better. They used to help each other out" (C#32, 75 years old).

In contrast, about 75% of the two younger generations of women stated their farms measured less than one hectare or what they refer to as "small" pieces of land—a little less than a hectare.

Contemporary women farmers (from the two younger generations) relate the limited size of their fields to their own capacity to cover more acreage—the exhausting watering system; the new financial demands of vegetable farming such as the prices for pesticides, fertilizers, other agricultural inputs; and the competing time demands of marketing. These production techniques also provide the advantage of potentially increasing production without increasing the amount of land farmed. On the other hand, some younger women mentioned the fact that husbands give their wives small pieces of land because men want to keep for themselves as much land as possible to maximize their own profits in these times of economic crisis.
“Times are hard for everybody. Each one of us is fighting hard to make more money out of farming. Our husbands give little land because they want also to maximize profits. But what can we do? It is their land!” (A# 127, 35 years old).

The tension over the amount of land available to women has contributed to conflicts between husbands and wives over polygyny. Younger women view additional wives as a threat to the amount of land under their control, since husbands tend to divide up the land used by women rather than give away more of the land the husbands work themselves.

Tools

As women’s responsibilities for farming have increased and crops diversified, tool use also has changed. All women in their 60s-70s who were interviewed confirmed that when they were young wives and active in farming, they used simple tools such as rudimentary spades (Wolof = hiler), hoes (Wolof = daba or larmet) and cutlass (Wolof = diassi). In contrast, by 1997, each agricultural activity had a matching specific (and more sophisticated) tool as described by one informant from the youngest generation:

“I do water as I told you with a sprinkling can [Wolof = rosoir] and buckets [Wolof = sau]. I make nursing beds with a shovel [Wolof = pelle], mix up the soil with a pitchfork [Wolof = jimbikaay or fourchette or dibon]. For digging and cultivating I need a [modern] spade [Wolof = diassi] and a hoe [Wolof = gabkaay]” (B#81, 49 years old).

Younger women in Thieudeme learned about these new tools through a variety of sources such as the national radio, communication with other farmers in surrounding
villages who have been in touch with extension agents, and through stores where they purchase seeds and other inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides.

About 60% of the younger two generations of women interviewed own a few, but not all, the tools they use for farming. They borrow tools such as sprinklers, water pumps, pitchforks from neighbors or from their husbands. A few women rent tools from better off male farmers. This does not seem to be widespread in Thieudeme since only about 10% of the women interviewed talk about it.

All women owned the buckets they use for watering and their own spades. Those are the most basic, simplest and least expensive tools. (A big bucket cost about US $2 and a spade US $4.) The 40% of women who buy and own additional tools tend to be those who have the larger plots of land and who earn more income from their farming. Most of them belong to better off families of the village and this may have given them access to additional land and tools in the first place. In contrast to today’s farmers, 90% of the women from the older generation stated they owned the tools they used when they were farmers, the remaining 10% used their husbands’ tools.

Since husbands’ roles also have changed with the crisis, women and men perform many of the same agricultural activities. Men and women farmers nowadays produce exactly the same crops. They no longer produce export crops such as peanuts or cotton because the drought made these very risky crops and many men farmers encountered great losses because of the lack of rain. This is one reason why men’s tools are not always available for women to borrow unless the husbands have more than one of each tool. That is not the case very often, because the majority of farmers are relatively poor in
Thieudeme. Therefore the majority of women--who rely on their husbands for tools--have to deal with the pressure of accommodating their work schedule in function of their husbands. This creates a lot of pressure on women and anxiety and conflict over buying, renting, and sharing tools. The lack of a sufficient number of tools and of some of the time saving devices available on the market exacerbate women's work load and stress and depresses their productivity compared to farmers, primarily men, who have more opportunities. According to most of the women interviewed, about one third of the men have efficient time saving devices such as water pumps and sprinklers for watering. They also have special pumps for spraying fertilizers. But most men will not lend these items to their own wives or anyone else.

**Marketing**

In the recent past, the organization of produce markets has undergone dramatic changes. Older men farmers took cash crops such as peanuts and cotton to government organized local cooperatives for sale. Those cooperatives were in charge of buying directly crops destined for export by the government. At times, the government provided subsidies to farmers, but also commonly set prices that were lower than what farmers might otherwise get on an open market. As part of structural adjustment reforms, the government is no longer involved directly in markets or exports nor does it provide subsidies. So cooperatives have disappeared. Men also do not consider direct marketing to be an appropriate task for men. Now it is considered part of women farmers' roles perhaps because of African women's traditional predominance in markets and trade.
Marketing has become a main activity for women farmers in contemporary Thieudeme. Interviews done with women of the two younger generations confirmed that they are all involved in marketing their crops. But there are important differences among women in the absolute and relative time allocated to marketing, in the way they market and in the clientele they serve. For instance, older women who have grown children and those who are in a polygamous relationship—spend more time marketing because they have someone with whom to share household tasks or no longer deal with childcare issues. These women may go to market as many as three times a week during peak harvest time. Women in polygamous relationships (about 58% of the sample) say they take advantage of their days off from household chores (which rotate among co-wives) to travel to markets to sell their harvest. Women without co-wives must leave chores done and children with grandmothers or sisters.

Not only has marketing become an integral part of farm production for women, but women have become increasingly interested in cash incomes in general. They have become aware of consumer goods through advertising and exposure during trips to markets. They are interested in buying furniture and kitchen utensils, cloth and clothing, and luxury food items such as sugar as well as staples they do not produce such as rice. Their cash incomes and presence in markets gives them both information and access their mothers and grandmothers did not have.

Even though women most commonly take their own produce to market, there are three main marketing circuits that were identified by the study. 1) Women travel long distances to cities such as Rufisque, Thies, Kaolack, Thiaroye, and Castors to market their
produce. 2) They go to nearby villages such as Keur, Abdou, Ndiaye or Cayar. 3) They also may sell directly from their field to traveling retailers and intermediaries. The marketing practice often varies by produce type. For instance, cabbage tends to be sold directly from the field while cassava tends to be taken to nearby towns. Carrots are most likely to be sold in larger city markets.

Women as well as men farmers often choose the produce to grow not only according to market demand but also by what produce can be grown during a specific season. For instance: they all know that during the dry season (November-January) cabbage and onions grow well while tomatoes, pepper, okra, eggplant and onions grow well during the raining season. Moreover, the choice of cabbage over other crops is explained by the following statement:

“The reason why we prefer cabbage is because it takes only two months and ten days to grow. It is not like tomatoes that take four full months to grow including three intensive months of watering. And, you know, sometimes by the time we arrange for transportation, to markets some of the tomatoes are too ripe and end up being unsold. Growing cabbage is more profitable and faster for us” (A#12, 27 years old).

In fact, in most of the interviews cabbage was very popular for reasons that include both profitability and low demand for inputs.

Direct observations revealed that men farmers are more likely than women to sell their crops in the field to wholesalers who travel from village to village buying crops. It is not entirely clear why this is so. It may have to do with the fact that men are likely to have
larger quantities to sell or due to relations established prior to the decline in cooperatives. It also may be because selling from the field earns less cash than marketing directly. And, for women, the opportunity to travel to markets together and to experience urban markets and access information and goods is an important incentive to maintain direct marketing.

In the past men in cash production were able to get assistance from local officials or farmers' cooperatives that channeled goods into food distribution systems, influenced and benefited from pricing policies, and negotiated transportation for certain foodstuffs (such as peanuts). No woman interviewed received any kind of assistance to transport or market the items they produce—not in the past nor in the present—except, in the case of the oldest women, for goods transported by their husbands on their behalf when these women were farmers.

Women's interviews suggest they have a stake in traveling to markets though this is not articulated consciously in interviews. They mention things such as opportunities to bargain with clients and access information and experience things they might not otherwise be exposed to. (In other words, marketing gets them out of town and gives them a greater sense of control over potential income levels). It also may be that local cultural beliefs—which identify marketing as a woman's job—discourage men from going to market. Today women constitute the majority in markets not only in Senegal but in most places of West Africa. Markets where vegetables are sold nowadays are different from the male dominated cooperatives where male farmers gathered and sold crops.

When interviewed about marketing practices and aspirations, most women farmers reported they liked to go to Thiaroye or Rufisque (the larger towns) for marketing not
only because they could get better prices for their produce than in small towns or locally, but also because they had a wider variety of choices in the products they need to purchase for home consumption (sugar, oil, rice, etc.). In particular, women mentioned that their travel to larger markets gave them the opportunity to purchase items for their households that are not available in nearby village markets such as spices and imported items such as macaroni, fresh milk, tomato paste.

Women also comment on long-distance trips giving them an excuse to escape the household environment, to discuss with and meet other people, and to ride on a bus instead of having to walk to more nearby markets carrying their produce on the head. Even so, selling in the field also was described as the most convenient way to sell produce, but women stated that this alternative was dominated already by male farmers because of they produce bigger amount of crops than women do. Actually,

“Going to markets gives us the opportunity to take care of our personal businesses, we meet with friends, chat a lot on our way to market and also discuss our women’s issues. We do not have the opportunity to discuss a lot while home or in the field because we are too busy, but riding to the markets is kind of a break that we use to exchange experiences” (B#32, 45 years old).

Many issues were raised by women farmers regarding the logistics and politics of marketing. For instance, women do not go to markets on a daily basis. They manage to go when they harvest enough to make it worthwhile or when harvest is perishable. In the case of distant markets requiring expenses for transportation, they have to harvest at least 50 kilograms to make the time, energy and cost of the trip worthwhile. A major issue is the
serious transportation problems to get to city markets since the village is not on the main road. There is only one bus that leaves a nearby village around 5 am and only goes to bigger, more distant cities such as Rufisque. Women may hitch a ride to the bus stop on the main road or pay a pickup truck owned by one woman in the village. Each woman has to deal with her load and find other ways of reaching alternate markets. Often women experience losses because of the combination of transportation problems and a lack of proper storage and transformation techniques prior to and during travel to market. Perishability is an important issue in the timing and frequency of marketing trips. One informant explained:

"We need support to be able to sell our stuff very quickly and come back to our fields. You know it is difficult to harvest and to go all over the place trying to sell things. Once we go out of town to sell our produce, we have to stay there at least a couple of days. This is a problem because we leave our children behind and we do worry about them. We need a distribution system that is more efficient and closer to our homes" (A#81, 32 years old).

Once they reach the market, women hire an assistant—a coxeur (a young man or boy who acts as intermediary) to bargain prices with potential clients, but always under the supervision of women. Coxeur is identified as a man's job but not for Senegalese; most coxeurs are from Guinea. Being a coxeur is an occupation for often marginal, primary school drop out boys who hang around markets and public places doing odd jobs like carrying heavy loads. These young men work closely with wholesalers (also Senegalese women or men from Guinea rather than Senegal) and they have a good knowledge of
client needs. They keep tabs on the products that are in high demand and keep up on the
daily variations in prices. The help of the coxeur is invaluable to the women farmers in
other ways. For instance, women can watch their many bags of produce while the coxeur
goes around and looks for potential clients--both consumers and wholesalers:

"We do not have any help for marketing. We ride the bus to the market and when
we get there, we let the coxeurs negotiate prices for us with the wholesalers. In
return we pay them [US $2] for each bag of vegetables they sell" (B#119, 48 years
old).

Despite the various problems women farmers are dealing with and the complexity
of marketing processes, they think their involvement in marketing is good since it allows
them to generate cash and to take care of their immediate basic.

Approximately 18% of the women show additional entrepreneurial spirit. They
take advantage of their time in the cities to purchase goods not always available in the
village or basic necessities in high demand so that they can try to sell them for a profit
upon their return. The following statement illustrates this well:

"I do not have help for marketing my produce but I have to do it. Marketing is
crucial for my welfare. With the income I buy sugar and spices and sell them in the
village in order to generate more money" (A#103, 34 years old).

Local marketing of goods purchased elsewhere is a new activity and is only an
occasional source of additional income. It creates its own problems. For instance, women
mentioned they have to compete with prices of the local store already established in the
village. In order to attract clients, they may sell goods on credit and then have difficulties recovering even their initial investment.

Women also speak of the importance of marketing within the context of hard times when men cannot meet their obligations for the depense (that is the sum of money husbands are obliged traditionally to provide to their wives for household maintenance). Like women in so many other countries undergoing structural reforms and economic crisis, women have had to fill in the gaps left by men's declining incomes, high inflation rates, contracting wage employment opportunities, and cuts in public services. With the income women make when they market their produce, they buy foodstuffs, clothes for their children and other necessary goods. Conceptually, most women speak of their work and incomes as supplementing the depense. Yet many accounts suggest that women's contributions to the household are replacing men's contributions in importance. As an old man in his 70's expressed it:

"Women's contribution is greater than men's contribution nowadays. It is not a supplement...because of the progressive withdrawal of men from their responsibilities, women took over on everything to save the lives of all of us!"

In the more fortunate cases, once basic needs are met women may purchase nonessential status goods like furniture and dishes and clothing for themselves.

Despite the physical hardships involved and the stress they report, the two younger generations of women see their new productive roles (marketing, full-time cash cropping) as very fulfilling; they take pride in providing for their families and in earning cash. Many
mentioned that they have gained more respect from their husbands and the community since:

“Nowadays we are more involved in community life than before. We have money and our organizations are in charge of managing community belongings such as the [grinding] mill. The money we make out of farming and reinvest in our families and communities plays a great role in changing men’s perceptions about women’s capabilities” (A #80, 36 years old).

Also important to these women farmers is the fact that marketing gives them the possibility to participate in self-help organizations. Their incomes provide them with cash to pay dues and participate in rotating credit organizations and self-help organizations and projects (like the millet grinding mill) that reduce their labor and help them accumulate funds for major expenses such as agricultural inputs and tools needed for farming.

(Organizing will be discussed in greater detail below)

Conflict over Role Change

In conclusion, women’s interviews reveal that they see both full-time production and marketing as central and vital in their lives. Young women believe that without their cash generating activities and self-help organizations, life would have been much harder and they would not have the degree of decision making control and independence that they have.

“Even though our farming practices are very exhausting, we are grateful to be able to do it. The money we are making is of tremendous help to the whole family and
community, and it allows us to solve problems that our mothers and grandmothers could not deal with” (B#99, 50 years old).

Not everyone agrees that younger women’s full-time farming and marketing is a positive change. For instance, older women see these younger women as money oriented and materialistic. Most older women state that younger women have no respect for their husband and, if they want to have good children in life, they need to respect and support their husbands instead of putting priorities on money making.

Interestingly, the men from different generations interviewed (nine of them in depth) overwhelmingly viewed the changes that are taking place in women’s roles as beneficial and valuable. Some focused comments more on benefits for the whole community (such as the quote above) while others emphasized benefits for themselves and their families.

Men between 30-50 years old conceptualized the benefits in the changes in women’s roles a little differently than men who are in their sixties and older. Younger men tend to see women’s new roles in farming and opportunities for making income through marketing as being very positive and helpful to them (men) as heads of the households, since women contribute to sustaining the household—which is supposed to be the husband’s traditional responsibility. These younger men put more emphasis on the relief they get with respect to their burdens as providers, rather than with regards to the impact the changes have in women farmers’ lives. One male informant in his 40’s emphasized:

“We are very lucky to have our wives so involved in farming and marketing. They are doing an excellent job in terms of caring for the family. They bring in money
for feeding the family and that is a big relief for us husbands. We cannot do it all nowadays. Our wives need to be involved too!"

Older men think that women’s new roles are valuable for society. Moreover, they believe it is important for women to have the autonomy for taking care of all their personal needs and those of their relatives. However, they condemn the exploitative situation of women whom they see as overworked because of their new burdens in providing for the family. Older men think that younger men have lost their values as providers and that they are taking advantage of changing women’s roles as an excuse for not taking proper care of their wives and children. One man in his 80’s stated:

"Women nowadays should be praised for their roles in agriculture and in the families. They are in charge of everything regarding household survival. I respect them because they are both the men and women of households of this village. They farm, market, cook, and take care of their children and of us, the elderly. Their husbands have no shame. Since they do not want to face their responsibilities as men, they leave all the burden to women in these times of difficulties. When we were young husbands, we treated our wives like queens and gave them respect. That is no longer the case with younger men."

It is interesting that both older women and older men criticized younger members of their gender, but neither criticized members of the opposite sex.
General Changes Influencing Production

A wide variety of changes were detected in many aspects of production by the study and change in women's roles, status, and power in general cannot be understood without examining the most important productive changes in turn. These include access to and control over land, farming systems, and the sexual division of labor.

Access to and Control over Land

Thieudeme controls about 1,200 hectares of land. The village (residential areas and schools) occupies about 16 hectares and the rest of the territory is comprised of fields and unoccupied surfaces. These include dry lake beds of Tanma Lake (North) and Mbaye Lake in the South Western part of the village. These two lakes are not usable because of the lack of rain and levels of soil salinity in the area. The Western part of the village has yellow dunes that also are inappropriate for farming purposes.

There is a traditional, communal land tenure system under which families obtain their share of use rights (land is owned by the government) through inheritance according to their position in the social hierarchy (CERP/CLT/, 1995). Families such as the Sarr who historically founded the village have more land (regardless of their socioeconomic status) than the other families who migrated in the village. However, having more land virtually guarantees both economic and political privileges.

Land tenure is one of the most complex issues confronting this research. Not only are there conflicting practices in effect and conflicting perceptions and terms used by those interviewed, but the laws and customs which should govern practices have changed.
frequently over several decades. Not only has this added to the confusion, but it has led to the development of spontaneous, parallel informal land markets and practices whose legality is, at best, questionable. These increase women's vulnerability even as they provide new opportunities for accessing land, both of which are discussed in some detail below. Confounding people's ability to explain the reasons for changing practices are little-understood factors such as the source of pressures (population growth, production practices, shifting demands for produce, varying nonfarm income opportunities, government land and agricultural policies) and the changes taking place in social organization (caste and ethnic makeup).

Farm size per household in Thieudeme averages 5 hectares. Since male heads and male household members are responsible for giving a piece of land to their wives and other female relatives, the larger a household and the more wives, the smaller will be the plots both men and, especially, women receive. In Thieudeme, the average size of land held by men is two acres. Women farmers who access land through their parents or who are in monogamous relationships held on average a little less than one acre of land. Only a few woman farmers who had the opportunity to access land both through male family relatives and through their husbands held more than one acre. Women farmers who are in a polygamous relationship and who only rely on their husbands to access land, held the least amount of land—less than half an acre—because they have to share with co-wives whatever plot of land their husbands reserved for wives. Husbands tend not to reduce their own plot size to compensate for additional wives.
Variations have been also noticed with respect to the size of land held by men. Though men held an average of 2 acres, men from the Sarr family—that leading family of the village for many centuries whose descendants tend to be the more powerful chiefs and local authorities—held more land than any other men from Thieudeme—whether or not farming was their only activity. Some have up to 10 acres of land.

Since customary land tenure still prevails in Thieudeme despite the 1964 national law on land (see discussion in Chapter on Factors in Change), at least theoretically in 1997 women’s basic means of access to land continues to be through inheritance of trees from their families or their claims to usufruct rights to farm land from male family members. This still leaves to men the decision of whether and how much land to allocate to them—with the one exception of wives’ continued rights to receive a plot of land from the husband. The amount of land, however, continues to vary according to terms negotiated by husband and wife with the input of other family members. So, even though laws and normative customs regarding access to land have changed over the years, women have no legal or customary rights to inherit land or to participate in decisions regarding land allocation or transfer except in the case of land they manage because they own trees on that land.

Nonetheless, the introduction of capitalism, the notion of private property, emphasis on a market economy and women’s increasing importance to households as producers are associated with the introduction of diverse parallel and informal mechanisms through which women are able to access land. These have been reinforced in the most recent decade by the national economic crisis and men’s declining ability to support
families. That is, crisis and poverty have created pressures that potentially empower women farmers in the sense that younger women are more likely than older women to pressure male relatives for land and more likely to argue over land and to take advantage of non traditional and extra-legal means of obtaining land in addition to negotiating land through husbands and male relatives.

Research revealed three common practices that women use to increase their access to land: sharecropping, "purchasing" of use rights, and pawning. Women farmers interviewed were asked how they get to farm today and, in the case of the two older generations of women, when they were young wives. They also were asked whether or not they have rights to land. The discussion considered how women got their first piece of land (usually through the husband), but focused more on how women farmers who already have land acquire more land. The discussions elicited in the in-depth interviews show both women’s knowledge of norms and laws (or lack of knowledge) and the extent to which practices adhere to or deviate from norms. For instance, 56% of the women between 20 and 50 years (most of them whom were farming at the time of the study) said they could access land in 1997 through what they conceptualize and refer to as a type of inheritance or acquired use rights. One informant put it this way:

“Anyway women can inherit land despite constraints and restrictions put forth by traditions since her father or brother can always give her land for her personal use. It depends on families...Also, if your brothers are nice, they may allow you a piece of land” (B# 23, 45 years old).
This is a sort of response that is common to women from Thieudeme or nearby—the notion that the surest or easiest way to access land is through one’s biological family or maternal family of origin.

Some 24% of the women farmers said they obtain land almost exclusively through their husbands. The norm in Thieudeme (inherited from old customs) is for a husband to give a piece of land to his wife as soon as she joins his home; this practice is commonly called *doggal tool*. It is worth noting that most women for whom this was their main source of land today are not originally from Thieudeme. They do not have options of land nearby held by biological relatives. Of all women farmers, they are the most dependent on land allocated by the husband and tend to hold less land than the average for women.

The remaining 20% of the women have access to additional land using the new informal alternatives of renting/purchasing, pawning, or sharecropping (in Wolof, these three alternatives are known respectively as: *lwwe*, *jende*, *Taayle* and *bay book* system). This system is described as follows.

For rental or pawning of use rights:

“The owner requires a certain amount of money for a certain number of months. When the contract is over you give back the land. For pawning, you lend a certain amount of money to the landowner/holder and whenever he returns your money, you give him back his land” (B#91, 50 years old).

Also,

“A woman does not acquire land from her father, she can get it through her husband or she can share with somebody... What I mean is that she can work on
someone’s land and then share the crops with that person. If she got money, she also can buy or rent it. Money opens the doors to more” (A#48, 29 years old).

The bay book system also includes an exchange whereby one person provides another with land and seeds and the profit is equally shared after the first person deducts the money provided for all inputs. This is the sharecropping option.

Control of this system seems to be dominated by men farmers. Only one woman farmer in her 70’s who is from a wealthier family confirmed having control over a large amount of land that she allots for rental or sharecropping. This particular woman farmer is very respected in her community. However it is not clear whether or not she gained that respect from her accomplishments (she owns the only van providing public transportation to the villagers in addition to having land and agricultural inputs) or because of her noble origins. She belongs to the family that founded Thieuemere and a male relative is the chief of the village.

Getting land through family channels is still the most common in 1997 because most women farmers cannot afford renting or sharecropping land. Beyond lack of money, women also fear the risks they have to take—particularly for sharecropping where payment is not contingent on the relative success of production. Payment is due whether or not farmers have a good season. Many interviews have demonstrated that because of the drought and the poor quality of soils, neither men nor women farmers are enthusiastic about sharecropping. Farmers have reported significant losses when undertaking sharecropping. Since under the formal 1964 land law it is illegal to sell, buy or transfer land—all land being property of the state—women who buy or rent land (use) under the
concept of private ownership of use rights are not aware of formal land laws and administrative procedures. In case of dispute, women farmers end up losing money and the land, particularly when their counterpart dies or is obliged to allocate an inheritance. Since women cannot receive official land use titles because of local customs that reserve these for male household heads, they will never have the authority to transfer the land legally nor to be able to pass it to their daughters for use.

The fact that a significant though still small group of women look to options beyond the custom of obtaining land through the husband has many possible explanations. Economic crisis (declining male incomes combined with inflation), decreasing availability of communal lands with population growth or because land use remains with the original family regardless of need, alternative non-farm uses of some land, new opportunities opened up by the possibility of informal sale and purchase of land, and the inherited colonial notion of private property are important factors. For the women interviewed, the most immediate explanation is found in the changing economic conditions under which household decisions are made, particularly men's competing needs for land. As one informant put it:

"Things have changed because men do not provide their wives with land as they used to do. Now, because of crisis and hardship, they want to keep bigger plots in order to maximize their chance of generating more income" (B#29, 40 years old).

Polygamy was also cited by some women as being a problem—though not a new one—for plot size because if a husband has two or more wives, consequently each woman will get smaller pieces of land.
When asked about changes between the contemporary situation and the past, interviews revealed that women in their 60s-70s conceptualize land ownership differently than younger women. In fact, land ownership seemed to be an accepted notion for these older women. All women of this generation referred to family status as a critical factor in accessing their first piece of land. And all women in that generation said they farmed on what they considered to be big plots of land because at least some of their land was obtained through their families of origin. These women all claimed to have come from better off families who belonged to the noble caste. The notion of better off often referred to differences between household welfare in the past and the present. It does not necessarily mean that older women interviewed came from richer households of the Thieu Dame of their youth.

Another way women of the older generation obtained land when they were young was through marriage since local norms have long dictated that a husband provide a wife a plot of land on which she can fulfill her subsistence responsibilities to the household. Thus, for women of the oldest generation, families “owned” lands, women “owned” use rights to land, and inheritance implied ownership of land in ways that younger women—exposed to some extent to the 1964 law and its contemporary application—do not. Nonetheless, it is younger women whose needs to increase production and income are leading them to engage in informal practices that typify notions of private property and the transfer of at-least-temporary land rights through the payment of money to an owner.

In summary, the interviews on land and a review of both formal and informal and legal and customary laws reveals that, in general,
a) Despite differences in conceptions of land ownership between custom and law and across time, women of all three generations have had no legal rights to own or inherit land though their families of origin and spouses were compelled by local customs and perhaps by family interest to provide them with land for farming and, in some cases, trees (thereby transferring land on which the trees stood) for women to generate an independent income for themselves. However, all women conceptualized their rights as including usufruct rights to use of land. All women also stated clearly that women have always had control over the income they earn from the trees and land under their control—except in cases where rental or other contractual agreements were tied to land access use.

b) Ironically, younger generations of women have more opportunities than their grandmothers even as their usufruct rights become less secure due to men’s competing needs to retain land for their own use. This is directly attributable to the shift to and growth in a cash economy combined with increased pressures on both men and women to engage in cash cropping as a household survival strategy.

Money has become a potential equalizer since she who has money can obtain land despite lack of legal or customary rights. Participation in a cash economy has expanded women’s options and potentials for increasing their own wealth and improving household well being—even as it increases their burdens. Women’s options and potentials for increasing their own wealth and improving household well being—even as it increases their burdens.

In spite of continued circumscriptions on women’s rights to own and inherit land, interviews revealed that access to land is not viewed by women farmers to constitute their
most important problem. The issue for women farmers today seems to be the worsening quality of the soil, a concern that has been raised in all interviews conducted. In fact, farmers of Thieudeme are dealing with soils contaminated with various diseases and parasites such as nematodes and high salinity that destroy crops and affect productivity and income. As one can expect, lower income farmers—especially women—have the hardest time facing such problems since they lack the needed funds for buying recommended pesticides. Actually, the majority of women farmers are confronted by a lack of knowledge and information on how to deal with these issues. There is no local extension service available to either women or men farmers.
The Shifting Division of Labor

The oldest generation of women experienced a gender division of labor that allocated to men cash cropping and marketing of produce through government-sponsored cooperatives and markets and to women part-time subsistence farming and domestic tasks. In this division of labor, men were responsible for the household's financial affairs and the cash (depense) needed to purchase goods not produced in the household. The two younger generations of women experience a sexual division of labor that is less pronounced in the area of farming since both women and men are involved in full time cash cropping and some subsistence production. However, women continue to be solely responsible for domestic tasks even as financial responsibilities have shifted from men to both women and men—in some cases to women primarily. Though both men and women engage in cash cropping, only women's cash cropping has led to their direct marketing of produce. Marketing also has led to women's greater involvement in non-household organizations, such as women's self help groups and a government-sponsored organization. This has taken place even as men's involvement in organizations has declined. Household-level organizing under the direction of men—particularly cooperation among co-wives—and deference to male authority also have declined. Women see these changes as both an opportunity for greater autonomy and greater recognition of their contribution on the one hand and as a further increase in their burdens on the other. Furthermore, women's community organizing—like other aspects of role change—is seen as a mixed blessing as will be discussed below in the chapter on decision making.
Even though the gender division of labor in Thieudeme is characterized most obviously by women's involvement in direct marketing of their produce and their continued responsibility for domestic tasks, more subtly it is also characterized by qualitative differences in men and women's farming tasks and by differences in access to tools and to land that were described earlier. From the vantage point of both the women and men interviewed, women bear the greatest burdens and are more negatively impacted by role changes than are men.

Though the task women and men perform are similar, interviews and direct observation points to two tasks where there is cooperation among men and women in each others fields. This cooperation has resulted in a new division of labor between women and men—digging and preparing land for farming involves more labor by men than by women and watering involves more labor by women and children than by men. All women are involved intensively in watering not only their own farms, but they also help water the farm of the husband. In turn, husbands help in digging and preparing the soil on women's plots. Digging and watering were described by all younger women interviewed as being the most difficult activities in vegetable farming today in Thieudeme. The relative burdens for men and women in watering and in preparing the land are conditioned by the fact that men are more likely than women to have more effective tools, including for some men access to watering aids that women do not have (refer to discussion of tools above). For women, this represents the most backbreaking aspect of their work and the one that generates the most complaints. As one woman in her 40s put it:
“Because we grow the same crops such as cabbage, eggplant, pepper and others...the work is the same for both men and women. Women are very tired from watering...that is killing us. We really need help in finding ways to make it easier.

We are working night and day and yet getting poorer because of low productivity. This is affecting our power to purchase food and consequently our health is deteriorating” (B# 91, 50 years old).

Though women of all generations agree about the details of changes in women and men’s tasks and workload, women of different generations do not always agree about whether younger women are worse off than their predecessors. Women in their 60s-70s maintain that when they were actively involved in farming, they worked more than the younger generations for the following reason:

“We old women used to farm like men. We carried our babies on our backs and then started with the spade. We seeded, weeded, and gathered the harvest, and then we were supposed to separate the peanuts and the weeds. We did a lot in farming, and on top of that we had to fetch water covering long distances. Farming has changed a lot; it is easier nowadays. They have all kinds of devices available for various farming duties and steps. They do nothing in farming compared to us...We used to wake up early, pound a big quantity of millet, cook breakfast, and fetch water before going to the field. We were overworked” (C#112, 66 years old).

On the contrary, women in their 20s-50s believe they have it harder:
“My grandmother did not water her field; they were not farming like us all year around. They farmed only during the dry season. Now because of the drought we have to water everything we plant. Our grandmothers used to plant but not water, they also were not involved in marketing as we do today” (A#26, 38 years old).

It is this observer’s opinion that, in spite of various improvements introduced in modern agriculture such as fertilizers, pesticides, and machines, younger women involved in market gardening have a heavier workload than did their mothers and grandmothers. As discussed earlier, women now farm all year round and their crops are perishable produce that they must water twice a day by hand. That was not the case in the past with rainy season type of farming. These younger women are dealing with new crops without having the needed technical support that requires a changing farming system.

**Extension Services**

Extension services are not provided today in Thieudeme. All women and men interviewed affirmed they never had been visited by an extension agent in the village. When asked where they get information about new crops and technology, they all answered they get it from the store that sells agricultural inputs in the neighboring city of Rufisque. Interviews with local authorities elicited the opinion that a lack of transportation is one of the reason extension agents cannot reach Thieudeme farmers. Since Thieudeme is not on the main road, it is not accessible to the government extension agents. A second possible factor is the “curse” people believe operates in Thieudeme. At any rate, extension services are notably deficient and scarce throughout Senegal.
**Change in Household Relations and Tasks**

Direct observations of women farmers and interviews have shown that changes have taken place in household-level relations and organization:

First, the structure of the household has changed. When older women were young wives they lived in compounds [Wolof = *keur*] that grouped many nuclear families related by blood. Within the *keur*, authority and hierarchy are determined by gender and age followed by marital status and position within the marriage. Families produced and consumed together and helped each other. There was much solidarity, particularly among women from the same generation who helped each other on their farms and with household chores when women had babies.

Changes began taking place in the early 1970s. For instance, even though the compound still regroups many families, they generally do not produce and eat together even though they may share the same living areas. This can be explained by the economic crisis and the decreasing ability to provide these big families with daily meals. It seems easier for women struggling to cook something to do it for one family instead of a combination of families.

Solidarity has declined among younger women in their 20s-50s. Women attribute these changes to more responsibilities and being overworked. The economic crisis, and recent economic reforms such as structural adjustment and their consequences such as decreasing buying power, lack of subsidies from government, scarce basic resources affect social relations previously based on solidarity that is the foundation of the Senegalese
society. As shown by Carolyn Somerville (1996) in her study of structural adjustment and devaluation in Senegal:

"The tradition of solidarity in the face of adversity has also been marked by the current crisis. The Senegalese are known for their hospitality and a complex of social and religious practices that reinforce and praise those who give to the needy. Economic adversity severely tests the culture of solidarity. Although solidarity is far from being a relic of the past and still continues in vigorous practice today, many wonder about the extent to which solidarity is possible given the pressure being placed on the few income earners in a family" (36).

Moreover, her study echoes the comments of women in Thieudeme in content, though her respondents articulated reasons that were not present in the interviews in Thieudeme. They are given here because of potential relevance. For instance, when respondents were asked about the impact of the economic crisis:

"The three most frequently cited effects were that there has been a degradation of family and friendship ties (28 percent), greater exhibition of individualistic and opportunistic behavior (20 percent), and a decline in tradition and solidarity (17 percent)" (28).

Importantly, within the Thieudeme households younger women are challenging norms and cultural beliefs and therefore rejecting values based on male authority and on their marital position, undermining traditional relations of authority and deference. For example: "second wives" in Thieudeme confirmed that they do not follow first wives’ will
and decisions as their grandmothers did. They say they are human beings and want to be considered as "real" wives. Informant (B#118, 40 years old) emphasized that

"Things have changed nowadays. We cannot follow the first wife any longer even though we give her respect as a sister. During the time our mother and grandmother were young wives, their husband had the power to decide or designate the decision-maker in the household. That power was given to him by our society, our culture. It was the belief that second and other following wives had to respect the decision of the first wife who entered the house. Nowadays those beliefs are changing because we provide for our selves and therefore will not let anybody decide for us."

It also is probable that these cultural norms are being lost because first wives were in charges of managing household functioning, particularly distributing to other wives (when it is their turn for cooking) foodstuffs and other goods purchased or produced by the husband. Now women are providing many household items and cash on their own.

In the past, the first wife was empowered by the husband and was even in some cases powerful enough to divorce (for her husband) wives who challenged her authority. First wives had the power to choose a second or third wife to her husband after some years of marriage with him. Therefore, it was risky at that time to challenge her power in the household. Younger women today have been demystifying their husbands because of their own work and travel which exposes them to alternatives. Since men lost their ability to provide sufficiently, they also lost their ability to impose the venue of a new wife.
Ironically, men's problems created problems for first wives. This fact may also impact older women's negative views of younger women as disrespectful of husbands.

One thing revealed by all interviews and observations is that the gendered division of labor in the household has not changed significantly. The nature of household tasks women performed in the house today such as cooking, washing caring for the children and the elderly is the same as the tasks their grandmothers performed when they were young wives. However, today the time and importance women put on these household tasks have changed. Younger women spend most of their time in the field or marketing.

Therefore, a decrease has been noticed in the amount of time devoted to domestic tasks. This has implications for the quality of care provided to children and elderly. Women believe it has decreased, resulting in a lack of hygiene in the household, poorer health and a lack of supervision of children—especially since elderly women, those who usually care for small children, are too ill or no longer alive to do so.

Of course, a major change within the household indicated by the study is women's increased financial responsibilities in the household. Women in their 60s-70s did not have to be the main providers of the family. Their husbands provided the daily "depense" (amount of money and grains destined to feeding the family). Under Islamic law and local custom, Senegalese men are expected to give to their wives the depense. Women are only expected to supplement the depense if they can. In contrast, in 1997 women's production, instead of supplementing men's maintenance, is sustaining the household. One woman in her 30s described the situation:
"We women have to care for our family. With our money we buy beds, clothes and food for our children. Men do not have the means to spend anymore on the children. Therefore we have to take care of them. In this area mothers are the ones providing for their children" (A#48, 29 years old).

Another woman in her 40s emphasized that:

"Women are the ones taking care of all family matters such as feeding, buying clothes for children... It is our responsibility to buy clothes, to cook and to watch out for the family’s well being. Sometimes when our husbands can afford it, they give us some money and we add it to our money and cook for the family. It is only when it is time for some annual religious events such as “tabaski” and “korite” that fathers buy clothes for the children. They do it only if they can, otherwise it is our responsibility. We mothers we do not do it once in awhile but we do it the whole year. It is a shame for a mother to see other people’s children well dressed while your own children do not have clothes to put on. That is why there is a need for us women to work to enable ourselves to take care of our children (B#118, 40 years old).

**Concluding Comments**

In the following chapter factors that influence women’s changing roles in production will be discussed at length, including those factors recognized by women and those that they do not perceive or understand. Subsequently, the analysis returns to changes in women’s roles and lives through a focus on organizing, authority, community life and decision making.
CHAPTER 5

COMMUNITY ROLES, DECISION MAKING AND POWER

Younger women farmers in Thieudeme have higher status, greater freedom of movement, and greater decision making power than their mothers and grandmothers had when they were young wives and farmers. Even so, men as a group still have greater decision making power and maintain privileged access to and control over productive resources than women, who are (to varying degrees) dependent on men for access to critical productive resources like land and tools. The greatest difference in relative power among women appears to be between women of the two younger generations and women of the eldest generation.

Women's relative power and their opportunities for dealing with responsibilities have improved in varying degrees and under certain conditions in many aspects of all spheres of daily life—household and community, production and reproduction. Nonetheless, even the eldest generation of women had significant power in selected aspects of daily life and, in some ways, women also have lost relative rights and privileges. In parallel fashion, the burdens and responsibilities of women also have increased relative to those of men. Thus, there are important trade offs and differences among women. Still in question is whether measures of decision making power translate into a situation where young women today and their families are better off than were the women and families of previous generations.
This chapter is divided into two parts. The first includes discussions of changes in women’s roles in community life, community authority and organizations, and women’s organizing. The second considers the concept of relative power, the indicators used to assess power, and women’s perception— if relevant to women— of relative power in different spheres. Some factors— like colonialism, drought, economic crisis, land tenure, and government policies— that influence burdens and opportunities have been discussed in the preceding chapter on role change or will be considered in a subsequent chapter.

Community Life, Organizing and Women’s Changing Roles

Women’s relative decision making power is best understood within the broader context. This includes the already-discussed changes in women’s access to and control over productive resources and income and their relative contribution to household well-being. But it also requires some understanding of opportunities and limitations imposed on women outside the household (which, in turn, impact household level dynamics). Therefore, it will be useful to provide an overview of community authority and organizations, of women’s roles in traditional community events and organizations, of recent changes related to political and administrative decentralization, and of new opportunities and pressures for women’s organizing.

Women’s relative decision making power is best understood within the context of community authority structures and organizations and the changes that have or have not taken place in these in the last decades. In particular, the type of organizations to which women and men belong have changed as a result of the implementation of structural adjustment reforms and political and administrative decentralization. They also are affected by the presence of non governmental organizations and international agencies who have targeted women for special programs and as beneficiaries of legal reforms. Finally, what goes on in the household will likely be related to changes in the perception of women at the level of communities, by men and women both and, in particular, opportunities for assuming leadership that was denied to them in earlier generations.
Figure 1: Community Organizations

The chief of Village is the supreme authority of the village. He makes all major decisions with respect to all matters such as land disputes, family problems, inheritance issues that might affect social cohesion. In case of conflict he is assisted by a council of composed of the elderly of the village (all male). If conflict cannot be resolved at the village level, the case is submitted to the rural community president's office.

The Gendered Nature of Community Life

Not only do women and men participate in segregated organizations, but women's contemporary organizations serve functions and meet needs that women of the oldest generation did not have. The younger women continue traditional activities of women in community life—though the relative degree of time and energy devoted to them has changed as has the possibility of providing financial support. The context of economic crisis and expanding poverty have displaced the importance of communal activities even
as they rob women of the time to participate in activities which were once a source of pride, organizing and status.

Among women's traditional activities are ceremonies such as naming ceremonies, weddings, and funerals. These are the most common activities under women's control in Senegal. Women have played important roles in planning and organizing community ceremonies which, in turn, continue to play an important role in the community life in Thieudeme. These ceremonies reinforced social cohesion in the community and strengthened or created solidarity among people. In the past, ceremonies also were an occasion for gathering the elders and formalizing relationships such as marriages or engagements. But these community activities have changed in importance and are now secondary priority for the people of Thieudeme. This is a pattern of change that has become generalized throughout Senegal as the following statement by Somerville illustrates.

"Besides devising schemes to turn their own economic difficulties around, the crisis has forced Senegalese to alter traditional customs and practices. Wedding, birth, and other life events have, in the past, been spectacular and extravagant affairs for which no expense was spared. Quite a few Senegalese question the amount of money spent to clothe and feed family and friends and to pay griots to sing the family praises during such events. Respondents of this survey indicated a new approach to traditional ceremonies. Unable to eliminate them all together, families are searching for ways to cut down on expenses. For example, nowadays the birth of the first child might require the expenditure of considerable sums of money, but the births of children born subsequently are celebrated with less fanfare, if they are celebrated at all" (36).

A major change that was found in all interviews is in the importance self-help organizations for women in Thieudeme. During the time older women were young wives they were not very involved with organizing for productive purposes. The type of
organization that they had was socially oriented although that included social events surrounding harvests. Older women report that the village had only one large organization called "Mhootay" which grouped all women of the village and was run by the oldest women. They got together primarily for ceremonies such as weddings or naming ceremonies and to celebrate the end of the farming season, though occasionally they also organized women for farm work that required cooperation--particularly for harvesting. During the time older women were young wives, they got together to help each other harvest and transport their harvest to their homes with or without the intervention of an organization. This voluntary communal work is praised throughout our interviews with older women who confirm that:

"After performing communal work--particularly for harvesting--it was a big celebration for us to get together and recognize our accomplishments as women but also as a community. Actually, it was a big feast for our community as a whole. Our husbands and children participated even though women were the primary organizers. The chief of village used to provide us with cows and all we needed to make the event a success. We sang, danced and ate. We had a happy life" (C# 18, 72 years old).

For more important ceremonies and celebrations, women pooled their savings or borrowed or asked for money from their husbands. This social organization did not require payments of dues and did not have any rotating credit functions. It was primarily a source of psychological support and community bonding and it was a source of status for women who participated in organizing events. Another older woman expands:

"Our organization was different, it was not money oriented. We got together to play, eat, and dance--particularly after harvesting. We always received money from our husbands or even the chief of village. Most of the time after each season the chief gave us a cow and some staples such as millet to celebrate. It was a time for getting together and for dressing up and celebrating the new crops. Things have
changed nowadays because these younger women have greater needs for money because of the hardship caused by the drought" (C# 112, 66 years old).

Younger women belong to several organizations none of which involves helping each other harvest or work in their fields. Solidarity is now focused on coming together so that individual women can access credit and traveling together to markets. However, younger women continue to organize and coordinate community ceremonies—much less lavishly than in the past and as one in a long list of burdens and responsibilities.

Men farmers in Thieudeme have not in the past and do not in the present have the same organizations that women have. According to the interviews, men have always organized in “dahiras” that are mixed gender religious organizations in which people get together to discuss religious issues, sing religious songs, worship, and make donations to their specific religious organization for renovating and buying equipment for their mosque. Though women can be members, most prefer not to since it would mean an obligation for making donations and most women do not want to use their funds for this purpose.

Another type of organization for men are the local branches of political parties. These are mainly active around election time. Most men in Thieudeme are members of the Socialist Party (PS)—the major government-controlled political party. Politics intersects with caste and class in Thieudeme. For instance, the Rural Community President who is a member of the Sarr family (the village’s Chief is a Sarr and the Sarrs are founders of the village) belongs to the PS.

Men used to belong to cooperatives organized by the government. The purpose of the cooperatives was to provide farmers with credit and agricultural inputs. In addition, farmers could sale their crops such as peanuts destined to exports to the government through their cooperatives. As discussed by Cruise O’Brien (1979) “State marketing ‘cooperatives’ since independence have established a legally guaranteed monopoly on the provision of commercial services to the peanut producers-supply of credit, seed, fertilizer,
tools; but above all, marketing the crop at the producer price annually decreed by the government marketing agency" (218). Cooperatives ended when the Senegalese government withdrew its subsidies and following the drought of 1968-1973, the decrease in crops production and the slow raise of producers prices. More recently male vegetable producers in the Niayes area have been organizing into a large union aimed at providing them with the possibility of accessing agricultural inputs and exporting their produce. The union is at its beginning and looks very promising. The union is male dominated.

At the time this study was conducted there was no known socially oriented men’s organization in Thieudeme. Moreover there were no known men’s organizations for helping each other harvest or for celebrating. However, as in the past, men continue to assist for ceremonies organized by women.

In Thieudeme in 1997 there were four organizations to which women belonged: three self-help organizations and the mixed gender religious organization. Self help organizations include what the younger women of Thieudeme call the “masse” (a type of rotating credit organization) and the “groupement” (a government sponsored, multipurpose women’s organization). There are two masses and one groupement in Thieudeme. All younger women interviewed belong to at least one masse and about 70% also belong to the groupement. Older women belong to neither. About 10% of the younger two generations of women take part in the religious organization or dahira.

With respect to the masses one woman described a typical routine:

“We get together every Tuesday and Thursday of each week to put money together, 500 CFA each ($1), and then give it to one member. Before, we used to give the pool to members who have a wedding or a naming ceremony. But we stopped it and started proceeding randomly. This new method is good because when you receive the money the day of a ceremony you may waste it right away trying to satisfy guests or to please in-laws. Now we can do positive things with the money. We can
buy tools, seeds, and rent or lease land. Also it helps because we are in charge of feeding the children and caring for their education" (A#22, 27 years old).

The decrease in importance of ceremonies and traditional responsibilities for guests and in-laws is mainly explained by the economic crisis that led women to focus more on survival strategies. Consequently, whatever activity does not generate income or resources ran the risk of being sacrificed in favor of more productive activities. The negotiations involved in arriving at this decision and its implementation represented a shift in women’s orientation from an identity based on membership in a specific household to an identity that included membership in women’s organizations. It presented women with the need to suspend traditional responsibilities and defend new roles. It provided them with the means to do so and it led to a new consciousness of the importance of women’s contributions. This, in turn, raised questions regarding women’s acceptance of patriarchal practices that maintained male decision making privileges. Though it did not come up in interviews, in all likelihood, men’s inability to support families or to contribute cows and millet to ceremonies meant that men were not likely to fight women’s decisions to shift their energies from traditional community activities to women’s organizations.

Nonetheless, the opportunities of access to credit and the legitimacy organizations lent to the use of credit for women’s priorities must have been liberating in a strategic sense—reducing women’s dependence on men economically and enabling women to expand the realm of decision making—even though within the context of economic crisis, women spoke of these changes as necessary to meet responsibilities and their practical (daily) needs as wives and mothers. Certainly, these new organizations, like the new activity of marketing, introduced women farmers to new issues and skills about decision making over investments that could best improve their financial security.

The women interviewed insisted on the great positive impact these masses have on their lives. They provide women not only with cash when it is needed, opportunities for
meeting other women and for exchanging ideas and material and psychological support when needed.

Each mass is lead by a woman President—an older woman agreed upon by the members—who is in charge of gathering the pool each week and also in charge of organizing the lottery and making sure each member receive the pool of money. There are no significant differences among the masses except for the amount of the dues. The most expensive one requires weekly dues that amount to 500 CFA while the other mass is cheaper with weekly dues of about 300 CFA a week. Some women participate in both. The masses are popular in Thieudeme and widely accepted by husbands and community leaders who see them as providing women--therefore the family--with the means to cope with hardships. But women’s interviews also revealed that for many women, membership represents not only a type of financial investment and security, but is also a source of self esteem and empowerment through their achievements on the one hand and through increased access to productive resources when needed. Though women do not conceptualize the masses as a means to reduce dependency on husbands, in fact, their interviews reveal that this is exactly what masses do in a situation where husbands have “lost the ability to provide” for families and where they retain land for their own farming rather than allotting more to wives.

In contrast, the groupement is highly structured and multipurpose women’s organization that was established through the encouragement and incentives provided by the national government. As an officially approved organization, it is able to access grants and assistance provided by international non governmental organizations. It also serves a tool of the ruling party in its attempts to garner votes at election time.

According to its President, the groupement functions as follows. The organization was created officially on June 13, 1988, in the Thies region. It has 192 members, all of whom are women. The groupement also has 7 men involved who are not members, but who “help” women—particularly with logistics during functions. For instance when the
groupement organized their annual "diangue"--religious ceremony--these men helped the women set up tents and chairs, take care of security and other physical duties that might be needed. They are supporters of the organization and are farmers from Thieudeme. The officers of the groupement are the President, the Vice-President, the treasurer and the secretary who are elected on a yearly basis. However, leadership tends to be limited to women with close ties to the political party.

The groupement in Thieudeme belongs to a federation of 33 groupements which, together, make up a type of union. They get together, discuss issues of each groupement and make decisions on matters such as how much money to allocate to each groupement. Groupements are supported by many funding agencies such as USAID, UNICEF, World Bank and European organizations that reached an agreement with the Senegalese government in the 1980s--related to the United Nations Women's Decade (1975-1985)--to encourage women, particularly rural women, to organize and participate more effectively in the economic development of their country. It is in that same context (1982) that the Senegalese government developed its gender action plan. This plan is credited with increasing the visibility of women and their contributions.

Women can get credit through their groupement to start income generating activities though few do because of higher interest rates and ties to political parties. The women who belong to the groupement pay monthly dues of 150 CFA per month (30 cents). The dues paid by the women are used to buy plastic bags for the nursing beds the groupement operates for a reforestation project and pay travel expenses for women's meetings. At meetings women discuss issues related to the functioning of their groupement, how they use the money borrowed, repayment issues by the members who borrowed it. Also the groupement uses a portion of its funds to pay dues to the Union of 1600 CFA a month ($3). If a member does not attend meetings or participate in a groupement assignment such as getting together to buy seeds wholesale, starting nursing beds, planting, watering and selling their plants to reforestation organizations, there are
fines and penalties. Groupements also engage in collective activities—such as group farming—to generate more money from investments which uses the credit available. The profits made out of such activities are then shared among members. The groupement has 6 hectares of land that has been allocated to it by the rural community through negotiations involving officers of the government and local authorities. However, most women do not have the time to participate in group farming because of their individual farming and marketing activities. The fact that they place individual activities above group activities could indicate the need to maintain control (group work is riskier) or a continued identity as a member of a households rather than as a member of a social group—women or farmers.

The groupement has been actively working with the Canadian project that takes care of environmental issues. The Canadian organization has taught women farmers how to plant trees to stop desertification.

Even though the groupement is more structured than the masses, it was less popular at the time this research was conducted. There are several reasons for this. First, its leadership has been criticized for being very rigid and not being understanding of women’s burdens and responsibilities to families. Half of the women interviewed viewed the groupement as instrumental and manipulative (particularly during elections) because it was created by and is controlled by the leading political party. Its membership has dropped significantly over time because of its lack of flexibility and a failure to produce immediate positive outcomes such as income to offset its demands on women’s time. The following statement illustrates the issue raised by women:

“I use to be part of the groupement but I got out because the President told me that I cannot miss all these meetings. Since I am busy going to markets, I missed many meetings and was asked to get out” (A#81, 32 years old).

With respect to the relative utility of the groupement as a source of credit:
“Sometimes we can get credit from the groupement, some other times we cannot. Even if they let you borrow money, you have to pay them back with high interest rate. Even if you do not have the money to pay back, when it is time there is no flexibility, so you have to go borrow it somewhere else but you must pay back...It is a little money. You will be surprised, but whenever we receive money it has to be shared among all members of the groupement. We only get 1500 CFA each or at most 2000CFA ($4). What can you do with that type of money? Nothing...We do not make profits out of it. It is useless to be part of it because it does not bring development to the village” (B#32, 45 years old).

However, there are benefits brought by the groupement that women definitely appreciate. For instance, it provided them with a “moulin a mil” (a millet-grinding mill) managed by all women members. One woman stated:

“This grinding mill is a lifesaver since it is a time saver. We used to grind millet manually and the worse thing is that we or our children used to walk to other villages who have mills and got attacked very often by guys who take away our money and grain. The mill is a source of security for all women of the village” (B#119, 48 years old).

Nonetheless, the fact that the mill breaks down periodically and requires costly maintenance and parts has added to women’s financial burdens.

The organization can also provide them with technical assistance such as how to manage the environment by planting trees and fighting the drought. It gives them new skills and roles in their community such as book keeping and management for the mill.

The religious organization, the “dahira”, gathers women for more traditional ceremonial activities. Its members put money together to contribute to religious ceremonies and to make donations to their religious leaders. However the money does not benefit them directly. Women insisted in their interviews that the dahira” provides them
with spiritual comfort and solidarity but not with income. That is why membership is much lower.

**Relative Power: A Feminist Sociological Analysis**

Research does not replicate empirical findings and conclusions that women farmers suffer decreasing social status as proposed by many Africanist scholars (such as Rogers, 1984; Van Allen, 1976; Okonjo, 1976; Elson, 1991, Mlay et al, 1996). Rather, the situation of farmers in Thieudeme appears to support April Gordon’s (1996) thesis that changes resulting from an expanding market economy can, even as it creates more burdens for women, lead to an increase in their status and relative well-being. But the relationship is a complex one, not linear, not necessarily short term, and certainly dependent on both a particular confluence of economic, political, ecological factors and the way in which power is defined and measured by researchers and by women themselves.

**Indicators and Context of Power**

Most of the women interviewed in Thieudeme do not refer to power in the way that sociologists and anthropologists do. They conceptualize power differently and sociological notions of power as control, independence, and influence over others have varying relevance to actions and opportunities in their lives. Sometimes, the concept of power is entirely lacking in women’s accounts of experiences either because “power for women” is not a relevant or conscious issue or because the circumstances of their lives are simply not framed in ways that facilitate relating them to differential power.

Both sociologists and feminists base their notions of relative power on discipline-based theoretical tools and accepted usage. Therefore, the analysis that follows is based primarily on sociological and feminist methods for established for defining, identifying and measuring relative power.
As discussed in the literature review section, studies done by authors such as Molyneux (1985) and Moser (1993) pointed out the need for measurements/indicators of power to differentiate between decision making that was to address practical needs and decision making to address strategic needs. Strategic gender needs are derived from an analysis of women's subordination to men (for instance, legal inequality, economic dependence). As Molyneux (1985) put it, strategic needs also may include

"The abolition of the sexual division of labour and childcare; the removal of institutionalized forms of discrimination such as rights to own land or property, or access to credit; the establishment of political equality; freedom of choice over childbearing; and the adoption of adequate measures against male violence and control over women" (Qtd. in Moser, 1993: 39).

In contrast practical gender needs are the ones formulated from women's specific daily situation:

"Unlike strategic gender needs they are formulated directly by women in these positions, rather than through external interventions. Practical needs, therefore, are usually a response to an immediate perceived necessity, which is defined by women within a specific context. They do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality... nor do they challenge the prevailing forms of subordination even though they arise directly out of them" (Ibid: 40).

In the context of this research, findings have shown that the reality of younger Thiedeme women farmers is different from what Moser (1993) and Molyneux (1985) predicted. In fact, because of the income they make out of marketing their produce, the two younger generations of women farmers of Thiedeme contribute greatly to meeting their practical gender needs such as buying food, clothes and paying for health care and their children's education. But in their attempts to develop mechanisms to support meeting their practical needs and contribute to their families and community well being, these women farmers have constructed more opportunities for decision making in areas
previously and exclusively dominated by men such as children’s education, access to land, access to cash. In doing so, they are really challenging existing forms of women’s subordination to men. Moreover, findings confirm what some feminist social scientists (Chaftetz, 1991) have demonstrated. That is, access to productive resources, control over surplus goods and income, and changing ideology/definitional power (customs, the gendered nature of authority and norms regarding appropriate behavior) are important factors that can be associated with other forms of differential power such as money—which Blumberg (1984) argues is the most important power variable of all. Younger Thieudeme women farmers have greater decision making power over their livelihoods and full control over the disposition of their incomes—though most make some decisions based on social norms and household responsibilities.

“Increased income under women’s control enhances (1) their self-confidence, (2) their say in household decision making, in the areas of fertility, economic decisions (such as buying, selling, or allocating major resources), and domestic decision (such as the education of sons and daughters), and (3) their sway over others ‘life options’ (such as marriage, divorce, and freedom of movement)” (Blumberg, 1995: 5).

Another source of empowerment is through organizing. Self-help organizing has been for Thieudeme women farmers a source of income, credit, power and self-esteem. Women also support each other’s decisions and collective decisions by women are difficult for individual husbands to counter. Furthermore, as shown by (Gadio and Rakowski, 1995) in a study of rural-urban migrants working as millet pounders on the streets of Dakar:

“Through collective organizing, women have had the opportunity to see themselves and other women as competent, important member of their households, their community, and their society. Thus group organizing had the potential to break down male dominance and control and to promote female autonomy and empowerment” (12).
**Decision Making in Production and Income**

“Decision making in production and income” refers to women’s decision making power over all processes of production such as: choice of crops, when to plant, what to plant, weeding, watering, when to harvest, what to harvest, what to sell and where to sell it, whether or not to spend on agricultural inputs such as land, fertilizers, pesticides, technical assistance, and credit. Decision making in marketing was also assessed as to who made the decisions about what crops to market, what quantity of crops to take to market, and what quantity to keep for the household. The study also determined how decisions about prices were decided, dealing with the intermediaries, decisions on income expenditure and savings.

Even though the study found that many changes are taking place with respect to tools, crops, farming practices, roles, and division of labor, all three generations of women confirm that women farmers' decision making in production is not a new phenomenon. When asked about decision making, women most commonly expressed amazement, especially when the topic of discussion was farming or control over income. A typical response from an older woman was:

“We [women] are used to making decisions about what and how much to plant according to our family size. We made decisions on harvesting and seeding. We used to sell surplus crops, even though marketing and transportation were done by the husbands” (C# 112, 66 years old).

The range of choices of crops was not difficult to make for women of the eldest generation because they were mainly growing millet, beans, sweet potatoes and providing labor to men for peanut cultivation. It was more a matter of the relative importance to be given to one or another crop. Also, the principal division of labor was between men's responsibility for peanut production, the main cash crop, and women's responsibility for the millet destined for family consumption (with surplus for sale).
In comparison, about 85% of all women of the two younger generations (20s-50s) said they have more power over production since, in addition to decision making over subsistence crops, they are as involved as men in all steps of cash crop production--ranging from the decision to shift to cash cropping, the choice of crops to plant, when to plant, watering, harvesting, deciding on what inputs to purchase, to marketing what they produce. Moreover, they state emphatically that they have total control over their income. Husbands control only land decisions, though younger women seek to influence the outcomes of decisions or to get around limitations by turning to other relatives or paying for access to additional land. Only about 15% of the younger women interviewed deferred to husbands for making decisions related to production, but these decisions were for hiring of external labor for harvesting. One woman emphasized:

“My husband has to help me decide on things such as land issues, getting outside seasonal help for cultivating or harvesting. But I decide myself on other matters such as what to grow, or sale or what inputs to buy. It is my field I have to make the major decisions” (A#22, 27 years old).

All the women of the younger generations expressed absolute amazement when asked about decision making over the income they make out of farming, marketing or other activities. A typical answer to the question on decision making about income is illustrated in the following statement:

“I work very hard to make money. It is out of my sweat that I make this money. I do not see how my husband or anybody else can tell me what to do with my money! I know what my priorities are and spend my income on things that I need for improving my farming such as seeds and fertilizers. Paying dues in the organizations is very important to me and I know that it is one of the first things I would do... Even though sometimes husbands try to tell us what to buy or do, I just
ignore him and do my things. Know that no one will help me if I need money. Then I need to control and manage my income myself." (A#127, 35 years old).

In addition, women of the two younger generations also claim a role in negotiating with the husband over his production and income generating strategies. As reflected on the following statement made by informant A#22, 27 years old:

"Since I participate in maintaining our household I have a say in discussing my husband's income and mine. We discuss what to buy, we need to find solutions to this crisis. We discuss very often strategies to find more ways of making money. Agriculture itself is no longer enough. Many people in this village are trying to migrate to find work. I even suggested Italy to my husband because he is young, he can travel and try other activities. We heard there is a lot of money there! Two people from the village migrated to Italy a couple of years ago and they are sending back money helping their families. I think it is a good alternative."

When the older women were active in farming, the cash economy was not as important as it is today. They were farming mainly for family consumption, only the surplus crops were sold at nearby markets and cooperatives by men. But the money from sales also belonged to women. Most of the time, women saved any extra cash from their surplus after they bought necessary items such as cloth and helping their close relatives. Extra money might also be used to buy cattle and valuable items (a type of capital good or non-cash savings) for use in case of emergencies. When they were young wives, older women did not get the *deponse* in cash as is the case in contemporary Thieudeme. Instead, their husbands provided them with the basic crops they needed to cook, such as millet—the main staple at the time—and meat from the cattle men raised. From their gardens these older women got whatever they needed to supplement the meals. Diets also were different when these older women were young wives. During that time farmers used to grow what they needed to feed themselves. Moreover, these older women got their clothes and
jewelry from their husbands and from the money made out of women’s surplus crops sold by their husbands.

The reasons for women’s traditional decision making power over production is clear. Islamic law mandates both that once a woman joins her husband’s home, he has to provide for her and that men cannot demand a share of the goods and income of women. Once women moved to their husbands’ household, older women did not get clothes from their biological families unless they were in serious financial troubles. Also, when older women were young wives they were not confronted with issues such as children’s education since schools were not very popular or available. Only a minority of urban residents or the rural elite were given the opportunity to attend school.

Just as younger women are more active in marketing their own produce and have greater responsibility for supporting the family economically, they also spend more on personal needs such as clothing, jewelry and furniture. About 90% of younger women from the two younger generations interviewed stated they spend most of their extra money on household or personal goods and 100% of these women also revealed that they invest much of their money in their self-help organizations. Paying dues in their self-help organizations is one reason younger women need cash beyond their family obligations. Older women did not belong to the same type of organization nor did they make “investments” in their organizations.

Whether or not greater decision making power in production and income control is considered to be an improvement is contested by women of different generations. The oldest women often criticized younger women for their independence and lack of submissiveness to male authority since they state in their interviews that:

“Younger women seem to have more decision making power in their homes because of their increasing responsibilities. That is a reality. Times have changed and men nowadays cannot take care of their wives as their fathers and grandfathers
did. However, younger women should respect their husbands and give them more consideration and care instead of acting as if they are the authority in their households. Times have really changed and these youngsters are losing our good values” (C# 26, 70 years old).

Younger women, however, claimed the right to intervene in men’s decisions because of the fact that they are now important contributors to the household’s support. About 45% of younger women interviewed said that in addition to making decisions in expected areas such as cooking, cleaning, taking care of the elderly and the children, and family expenditures—as their mothers and grandmothers did—they now participate in other important decision making such as whether or not to send the children to school and that they are beginning to approach the issue of family planning.

**Decision Making in Reproduction**

Decision making in reproduction includes issues regarding the domestic arena such as children’s nutrition, education, clothing, whether or not to have more children, whether or not to pool money, who manages pooled money, who decides on saving money, who manages savings, who performs and decides on standards and division of labor for domestic tasks such as laundry, cooking care for elderly and childcare.

Decisions regarding cooking, cleaning and management of household chores have not changed much from one generation to another. Older women as well as younger women and all men interviewed perceive those to be part of women’s domain. The following two quotes illustrate:

“I made all decisions regarding cooking and family well being, because I am the woman of the house and I am in charge of all matters regarding the functioning of the household. It is shameful for a husband to interfere with decisions regarding the kitchen or washing!” (A#26, 38 years old).
“Our husbands never interfered with our decisions regarding the household well-being. They knew that women are the best at organizing things and caring for the family. We decide on what to cook and how to manage the household once we get the resources we need to do so. And at that time we got more than enough from our husbands to take good care of everybody. A decent husband never makes decisions about cooking, washing or buying for the household. It is not accepted by women or by our society” (C#112, 66 years old).

Despite the crisis and women’s incursions into “men’s affairs,” it appears that it is still not culturally accepted for men in Thiëudeme to intervene in decisions considered to be a woman’s domain. The logic behind men’s lack of change on decision making is twofold: first of all women resist that type of change since women consider it to be an insult for a woman to see her husband interfering with matters related to kitchen, cleaning, cooking deciding on what type of food to eat or to buy. This has to do with cultural ideology regarding appropriate social roles. However, it also could be related to efforts to retain traditional arenas of control because women conceptualize the current crisis as temporary or because they do not expect to lose power in one arena simply because they have gained in another. Furthermore, it is clear from interviews that women in Thiëudeme, like African women in general, have always been able to become involved in income generating activities. If not in agriculture, they could have other activities such as braiding, cooking, housekeeping. What has changed is the intensity of their income generating activities and the usage of that income.

Children’s Education

Women farmers from the two younger generations confirm that they are increasing their participation in making decisions about children’s education, even though educating children is still a man’s responsibility. Men are supposed to pay for children’s education in principle. In reality, education is free and a mother pays for books and other supplies.
This was not the case for their mothers or grandmothers when they were farmers with children of school age. About 30% of the younger women interviewed say they participate in decisions regarding their children’s education. The other 70% state that such decisions are still made by men in the household. Nonetheless, the growing number of younger women participating in decisions regarding children’s education can be understood in relation to women’s greater contribution to children’s well-being such as clothing and school supplies. The low enrollment of children in school in Thieudeme can be explained in part by this big responsibility left on women’s shoulders, the lack of money, but also by women’s needs for children’s labor in household and field and by a general distrust of the value of an education that is conducted in French and imparts skills not directly useful to rural life.

Based on observation, discussions with women and with the main teacher of the village, women in Thieudeme are even less likely to perceive the importance of education particularly for their daughters. Girls are definitely a minority of students. As illustrated by the interview with one of the teachers:

“School enrollment is still low in Thieudeme and parents do not believe in this kind of education since they do not see any immediate rewards. Also school starts in Senegal in October which is a bad time for these vegetable farmers. It is their lower season, they do not have money during that time and therefore cannot afford buying school supplies and books. They would rather take the children to the field and teach them how to farm. Fathers make decisions on enrolling children and since they need labor for the field, you know... Women farmers sometimes refuse to send girls to school even if the father agrees. The belief here is that girls should stay home to be trained for their future social roles as mothers and spouses. We always have more boys enrolled than girls. More than 75% of our students are boys. Only this year [1996], we had the reverse happening in Thieudeme for the first time.
because of an intense campaign that we did with the villagers to increase girls' enrollment in school. From a total of 31 students enrolled in 1996, we had 17 girls and 14 boys."

*Family Planning*

A sensitive area in which small but important changes are taking place is in family planning. Family planning issues are still not openly discussed in Thieudeme because of a combination of cultural and religious taboos. Therefore, it was more difficult to glean information and the information obtained is far more selective and limited in scope.

With respect to family planning, men have normative and legal control. Even though women cannot have access to birth control methods without the consent of their husbands, all expressed in their interviews a strong desire to practice family planning. Most of the very young women interviewed also are taking greater initiatives in birth control and mixed-gender organizations. Some buy birth control during marketing trips and without the husband's knowledge. About 80% of the younger two generations women expressed a desire to use family planning aids, but many were unable to obtain the husband's permission.

Family planning programs are run by government agencies in a neighboring small city (Kayar) and by NGOs. But none of those NGOs intervened in Thieudeme. This constitutes a main obstacle to these women farmers who are enthusiastic about the idea of spacing births and of reducing future family size--acts they acknowledge will bring them greater well-being and more freedom and mobility. As illustrated by one younger woman:

"You know, when a baby is born we have to feed and buy clothes for her/him. And, as you know, men do not or cannot provide any longer for these babies. They must therefore be understanding in taking efforts to limit these births. They should help us get access to family planning instead of acting as if they are deaf! Their
understanding is a must because the health care providers will never gives us birth control services without the agreement of our husbands. That is the law” (B#73, 41 years old).

**Polygamy**

Polygamy is the norm in Thieudeme. Among the male heads of households interviewed (over half of all heads), 58% were in a polygamous relationship at the time of the study. Most younger women interviewed do not like polygamy even though their choices and decisions are limited when a man decides to bring another wife. Older women claimed to not have considered whether or not polygamy was positive or negative. It simply was beyond their control. In general, it was difficult to get women to discuss the polygamy issue openly (and usually in crowded spaces) since it is not considered proper/accepted to express it. It is sign of greed and lack of confidence for a woman to show her disagreement. But these values were more applied and accepted with the older generation of women. Younger women express their disagreement to their husband and some take measures such as divorce as a means of exercising pressure and control.

More details are given about polygamy throughout their interviews in chapter 4.

**Decision Making in the Community**

As indicated above, the official authority structure in the village is made up a chief of village assisted by a group of the eldest men of the village. Administrative reforms encouraged by the national government to improve democracy have not brought many changes in the ways in which power is structured in the village. The position of chief of village is inherited and stays within the traditional leading families of the village, passing from from father to son. At higher levels, such as rural community councils and offices, decentralization reforms have led to an increase in the number of women holding leadership positions in rural community
offices throughout Senegal. But, there was no known women in Thieudeme in the rural community office at the time this research was undertaken.

Though the official authority structure in the village is made up exclusively of men, there are women leaders. Women leaders emerge from women’s organizations but they are also demanding a say in village affairs—if not publicly, then in private sessions. Their demands are supported in sometimes subtle ways by outsiders—for instance, the attention they receive from state and non governmental organizations through credit and organizing.

The two most important women leaders (both in their 50s) reflect the current range of women’s leadership opportunities. One woman is affiliated with the leading political party. Through her party contacts, she founded the groupement in the village that received a loan to purchase the millet grinder. The second important leader emerged through a grassroots organization (one of the masses) and in recognition of her consistent commitment to working for the community. A third important woman in the village, though not a leader and often criticized, is a woman who became very wealthy through farming and marketing, is a member of a wealthy family, and who now has a fleet of trucks for use in wholesale marketing and which women pay for transportation to markets. There is only one visible younger woman leader—a fourth woman. This younger woman is the only one in our sample who has education through primary school. She is originally from another city and joined her husband in Thieudeme. She plays an important role in women’s organizing in terms of bookkeeping for the groupement and taking minutes at all their meetings.

Significant changes have taken place recently that were promoted by this research project. Both of the major women leaders participate in a new village-level organization that oversees a rotating medicine fund established in January 1997
with funds raised by the researcher and dissertation advisor. This organization guarantees medications for the village walk-in clinic constructed by villagers. The villagers decided on their own to create an organization that would include all leaders—perhaps in part because of the attention focused on women by the project, perhaps for other reasons. The organization’s main goals are to guarantee access to medicines by all, to collect small fees for medicines, and to replenish medicines as needed.

Other related changes are taking place in village leadership. There are also younger men who are emerging as leaders. They tend to be the better-educated and committed to an ideology of democratization and community solidarity. They reject the control of party politics.

**Concluding Comments**

Despite women’s rejection and scant use of the concept of power, from a sociological standpoint and based on the indicators of relative power cited above, it can be argued that women are not content to allow men to make major decisions that affect the well-being of the household. Such major decisions would include things like spending money on luxury items for personal use when there is not sufficient money for the man to fulfill obligations of *depense*. Nonetheless, women also have begun to use money to purchase nonessential goods like furniture and household decorations.

However, just as men do not intervene in women’s production decisions, women do not intervene in men’s. Both men and women farmers of Thieudeme have autonomy regarding decision making on production and income because of a combination of cultural reasons (women’s traditional rights to make decisions regarding their own farming); the economic crisis and increased poverty; broader social and cultural changes in norms, values and laws; and, especially, the
tremendous increase in women’s contributions. Younger women also are taking some incipient initiatives in birth control. Here and there are accounts of women in mixed-gender community organizing. This reflects possible attitudinal change and value change.

As indicated by men’s comments on women’s changing roles in the previous chapter, younger women’s status seems to be higher despite women’s greater burdens. The higher relative status of younger women today in Thieudeme seems to be associated with their access to cash, their vital contributions to household survival, their traditional rights to make decisions about production and income, and their exposure to competing values and options. In addition, younger women claimed to be less attached to patriarchal values in dealing with their husbands and their level of consciousness about the importance of their roles as women seem to be higher than those of older women.

The changes that are taking place in these women’s lives should be analyzed in connection with the economic crisis in their locality and at the more global level that are increasing women’s responsibilities towards their families and communities. Actually, this crisis makes men more conscious about the importance of women in contributing to survival strategies to their households and, therefore less reluctant to consult with women before engaging in important decisions that impact their own livelihood. Men appear to understand that without women’s contribution with their survival strategies, the household will not be viable.

Does this mean that Blumberg is correct in arguing that economic power is the most important power variable? Well, it seems that women in Thieudeme have gained not only because of their increased relative income, but also because of men’s decreased relative income and opportunities. It also seems clear that it is not a case of reduced economic dependence of women leading to greater decision
making power, but of stresses faced by both women and men—in particular, the added burdens taken on by younger women to support their households. Finally, it would appear that opportunities opened up to women culturally—possibility of adding a women’s occupation of marketing to their strategies—and politically—women targeted by public and private organizations—are critical to support women under pressure and excessively burdened by new responsibilities. So what do women want in Thieudeme? It is too early for women to articulate clearly. On the one hand, returning to a dependence on men and losing the opportunity to go to market and join women’s organizations is not an option women will consider. On the other hand, women would clearly like to see men’s situation improve so the financial responsibilities and workloads of women would be reduced. For the feminist sociologist, these two are intimately linked and somewhat contradictory. The women of Thieudeme, however, have not yet seen or at least have not yet publicly articulated those connections. Perhaps if and when men’s situation improves and new opportunities present themselves, women will find themselves faced with the decision of whether to wind back the clock or fight to maintain and build choices that clearly have become important to them—whether they acknowledge it as practical or strategic (that is, more personal).
CHAPTER 6

FACTORS INFLUENCING CHANGE

Multiple sources such as interviews with local authorities, researchers, institutions combined with document research, revealed that there are various factors causing the changes currently taking place in women farmers’ lives. Spatially, these factors can be classified as local, national and international. Some are economic. Some are social and cultural. Some have to do with consciousness raising and attitudes while others are related to more pragmatic and logistical issues. Some are selective to certain classes, age groups, or contexts, while others are more generalized.

Moreover, the study found that changes are perceived differently by women from different generations for different reasons—including their level of awareness of external factors, their contact with the outside world through their marketing activities, and others. In addition, interviews have shown that there is some disagreement on the ways in which older women and younger women interpret the impact of these changes in their lives. But they all agree on two change factors. First, that the drought has negatively impacted their lives and obliged role changes and, second, that men can no longer meet their obligations and local expectations as fathers and husbands (providers).

In order to analyze the factors that are associated with the ongoing changing roles and decision making power of women farmers in Thieudeme it is important to comprehend how roles were divided by gender in the precolonial era and how important events such as colonialism, imperialism, and independence impacted the previous
division of labor, transformed indigenous economies and consequently shaped the lives of women farmers.

However, as discussed by Harper (1989), we should not only link our analysis to these events but we should also extend it to the story of individuals since social change also encompasses the story of individuals. Both macro and micro level factors should be taken into account.

**Global Factors Linked to National Factors**

As shown earlier in precolonial Africa, in the “female farming system” that prevailed women participated in all aspects of production for all kinds of crops, and their roles were valued by their societies (Boserup, 1970). Moreover, the sexual division of labor and family structure seemed to be more stable in traditional societies since power and status were not determined by gender but rather by age and family position (Robertson, 1986).

Colonialism—the first global factor—has been described (Rogers, 1984; Van Allen, 1976) as disturbing precolonial economies and the sexual division of labor since the colonial economy and its imposition of a cash economy, privatization of land, a Western male-dominated model of society, the obligation of tax payments, the migration of men to the cities for wage work in colonial industries displaced women from their previous positions and deprived them of vital economic roles and rights. Colonizers assumed or deliberately imposed a stratified system of farming with men allocated to cash cropping and women to subsistence farming. This stratification was continued later by development agencies. Both colonizers and development agents believed that men should be professionalized as farmers and women as housewives.

Colonialism has had other important, but less recognized, impacts. For instance, the introduction of new crops and demand for alternative foods under colonialism, food advertising, and continued exposure to European and North American culture have influenced shifts in the Senegalese diet. According to Seck (1989), Senegalese people,
particularly those living in urban areas and exposed to the eating habits and foodstuffs of colonial administrators, acquired new patterns of eating. Instead of eating traditional African foods, people began to eat more Europeanized dishes based more on vegetables and foodstuffs that were not included in traditional diets or even produced in Senegal. New foodstuffs that became popular quickly included French fries, vegetable salads, tiebou dien (rice, vegetables and fish) that has become the Senegalese national dish.

According to many researchers, peanuts were introduced in Senegal by the French colonizers since “as early as 1850, Colonial Governor Protet thought that peanuts would ‘save the country’” (Monteil, 1966: 189). It was believed that the slaves emancipated in 1848 would cultivate peanuts with the support of the marabouts (Muslim religious leaders). That was the beginning of a process that molded the economy of Senegal until the present (Bonnefond and Couty, 1991: 33).

But other researchers have shown that French colonial motivations were towards promoting their own economic interests instead of worrying about the welfare of the colonized. It has been argued that it was “France that made Senegal produce groundnuts since French households had a special preference for groundnut oil” (FAO, 1991: 99). Moreover, another colonial economic reason argued by Klein (1979) was that “British trade with West Africa was based heavily on palm oil, which was used to make soap. The French consumer refused to buy the unsightly yellow soap made from palm oil, but in the 1930s the Marseilles soap industry found in the peanut an oil that could be mixed with olive oil to produce a more attractive soap” (68). Klein (1979) argued that Senegalese peasants were forced to grow peanuts because in

“...1891, the imposition of a head tax forced those who did not have ready access to the market to seek ways of earning money. The usual answer was to grow enough peanuts to pay the tax and to either head-load or use donkeys to get them to the nearest escale (point of trade). In reality, cash cropping began in the
colonial period, drawing the peasantry away from subsistence and tying it to the supply mechanism of the French trading companies” (Qtd. in O’Brien, 1979: 20).

In summary, changes in dietary habits created new market demands whose impacts were initially in the form of imports of vegetables that coincided with the export of peanuts. Later, with structural adjustment, declining terms of trade, drought and desertification, new opportunities for new cash crops arose—highly perishable, but also more profitable—to be marketed locally. Vegetables have presented major opportunities for new cash income not only for the women and men of Thieudeme, but also for other villages (Seck, 1989; ISRA, 1996).

Nonetheless, the contemporary stratification of roles of women and men in agriculture has not improved much from colonial times. Women still perform the bulk of agricultural activities (70-80% of subsistence labor) (Blumberg, 1982), but are denied equal access to vital resources—though varying improvements are being made in both public and private sector development agencies as they show greater sensitivity to gender issues.

Crisis

Both internal and external factors contributed to the Senegalese changing economy and crisis. Global/external factors include international markets, trade negotiations and agreements, international debt and the imposition of structural adjustment policies by national governments—making it also a national factor—under pressure from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. More recently, the changing demand for exports and imports has combined with the restructuring of the Senegalese economy in 1994—backed up by donor agencies such as the World Bank—and particularly its agricultural sector. Food prices have been “liberated” in domestic markets and rise to their “true” value on international markets—making many inaccessible to Senegalese consumers. The production and processing of rice and peanuts—once the exclusive monopoly of the Senegalese state—have been privatized. This resulted in a
withdrawal of state subsidies to farmers and forced farmers to find their own outlets for products. Somerville describes some of the results:

"Prices for Senegal's exports fluctuated heavily, while the price for its imports rose steadily. In 1974 and 1979, Senegal was hit by the oil price hikes. In 1977, oil imports took up 6.5 percent of export revenues, and by 1981 they accounted for thirty one percent. Oil was not the only import to become more expensive. The taste transfer from locally grown to imported food stuffs including wheat and rice, continued throughout the 1970's despite the fact that prices for these imports also rose. In 1972, one ton of wheat cost 22,000 CFA, and two years later the same ton cost 33, 5 CFA, an increase of fifty percent" (Qtd in Party Socialist, 1985: 21).

The structural reforms adopted by the Senegalese government to face its crisis are important factors in the changes that are taking place in rural Senegal since they directly affect the ability of farmers to engage in agriculture and, consequently, affect production rates. As shown by the USAID 1997 Senegalese agricultural sector study:

"Devaluation, structural adjustment and decentralization have resulted in a major shift in paradigm. This shift is having a fundamental impact on the agricultural and natural resource sectors and the impact will likely accelerate over the next few years. As the government moves out of production, marketing and processing there have been short-term economic impacts on the agricultural system. For example devaluation has increased prices of imported agricultural inputs. The reduction in demand induced by price increases, in conjunction with reduced availability of credit has diminished the ability of farmers to purchase agricultural inputs. Finally the reduced use of inputs has had a negative impact on yields and production" (xii).

These macro level changes linked to the global capitalist system can be related to local level changes in values and aspirations. For instance, tastes in food have changed to create a demand for non traditional foodstuffs and younger women appear to be more
materialistic in their aspirations than older women. They are exposed to new ideas, new products, new services, and alternative standards and lifestyles when they go to urban markets. They are exposed to media messages that stress consumerism and introduce them to products and previously unknown behavior.

**Factors Operating at the National Level**

National factors such as the local impacts of structural adjustment--including devaluation, inflation, growing poverty--and political-administrative decentralization are related to role change and decision making.

**Structural Adjustment and Macroeconomic Factors**

Since the early 1980s, Senegal has undergone significant macro-economic policy changes and restructuring--many as a direct result of the implementation of structural adjustment reforms, but some as a result of having to cope with changing international demands for Senegalese exports. For example, peanuts have lost export market value though they remain the main export crop. The drought also has had a devastating impact on farmers. As a result, Senegal has been experiencing a dramatic economic crisis for several decades that has led the country to rampant inflation, growing poverty and a decrease in the buying power of Senegalese workers.

"Peanut production has played a prominent part in the economic and social history of Senegal. This activity that is faltering nowadays, has unfortunately not been replaced as the mainspring of the economy. Moreover, insufficient domestic production has made it difficult to reduce food exports. In sum Senegal has been experiencing a general lack of economic growth and development, complicated by problems of inadequate food supply and trade balance difficulties" (Bonnefond and Couty, 1991:31).

This has been combined with changing tastes of the growing urban population to greatly increase the demand for vegetables for local consumption and to export to Europe.
and for local consumption. Women state clearly that their decisions to shift from hardy staples to more perishable vegetables is due to the opportunities opened by the local demand for vegetables combined with a parallel decline in the importation of higher priced vegetables produced elsewhere. They also attribute the shift toward year-round farming and to direct marketing to the demand for vegetables and to the decline in men’s incomes and, in some cases, men’s periodic absences due to wage work opportunities in cities and to migration:

“Shifting to vegetable farming was a must. Because of the drought there is nothing we can grow but these vegetables that are different from millet or peanuts since they can survive with an intensive watering system. Moreover, the vegetables are in higher demand in markets and, as you may know, we have a growing demand in cash that need to be fulfilled. Because of the hardships in our economy men can no longer just rely on agriculture. They have sometimes to go to the cities to do other activities that can generate money. Then, women remain in the village and have to get involved in farming and selling vegetables to come up with the needed cash for family survival” (A# 127, 35 years, old).

These changes are not limited to Thieudeme. Since the mid-1980s vegetable production has been one of the most dynamic sectors in agriculture, since “it provides farmers with an economic activity during the dry season, improves nutrition and is a source of revenue for rural women” (USAID, 1997: xiii).

However,

“Devaluation did indeed have the anticipated consequence: import substitution. Exports, however, to both European and regional markets declined slightly. Domestic production, transportation, storage, and marketing techniques are rudimentary in nature. Yields are generally low due to the use of inappropriate seed varieties, low fertilizer and insecticide use and frequent problems with saline irrigation water (Ibid: xiii).
According to interviews with researchers from ISRA (Senegalese Institute for Research on Agriculture), beginning in 1994 the Senegalese government has undertaken major macro-economic restructuring of the economy, particularly its agricultural sector, with the support of the World Bank, IMF and other donor agencies. With respect to the agricultural sector, such reforms included a liberalization of the agricultural sector international trade regime; a privatization of production, processing and commercialization of crops—including peanuts (groundnuts) and rice; a devaluation of the Senegalese Franc; liberalization of domestic marketing and pricing of all agricultural products. These adjustment policies led to the Senegalese government’s parastatal organizations’ withdrawal from providing services such as extension. As a result, extension services are very fragmented in Senegal and do not reach the majority of farmers.

In the specific case of Thieudeme extension services are not available to farmers and there is no other public services available either. Responsibilities were left to the private sector and, consequently, a decreased use of fertilizers, and equipment by farmers was noticed. As well described by Elson (1992) in her study of structural adjustment and its effect on women, structural adjustment reforms have different effects on the household ranging from

“Changes in income through changes in wages and, the level of employment for employees, and through changes in product prices, and product demand for self-employed; changes in prices of important purchases, especially food; changes in the levels and composition of public expenditures, particularly those in the social sector, including possible introduction or increase of user charges for services” (44).

Moreover, under structural reform working conditions have dramatically changed for women farmers, including Thieudeme women farmers, since
"It is very likely that, for many women, adjustment programs mean longer hours of work, both paid and unpaid. Maintaining a household on reduced resources takes more time—hunting for bargains, setting up informal exchange networks with neighbors and kin, making and mending at home rather than buying, etc. Increasing agricultural outputs takes more time" (Ibid: 48).

However, these effects of structural adjustment policies have different impacts on different households and even on different members of a household. As a result, in the particular case of Thieudeme, women raise topics such as the lack of credit, sufficient seeds, tools, and fertilizers as being major constraints in increasing their productivity. Structural adjustment reforms with their ensuing cutbacks in public services, job crisis, and inflationary tendencies have contributed to the expansion of poverty in urban and rural areas. Women say they find it increasingly difficult to afford nutritional food (perhaps since the state favors exporting food). Inflation has been particularly hard on prices for basic food such as sugar, rice, milk, and oil. Worse, the most recent devaluation of the Senegalese Franc in January, 1994, added more hardships to the lives of women farmers since it increased the price of imports and therefore dramatically impacted food prices. Because of rising inflation and prices, combined with decreasing real and relative income of men and women, Thieudeme women farmers have a difficult time maintaining adequate nutritional levels and health for their children and other family members. In reality,

"The cost of foodstuffs has risen tremendously since the government began lifting subsidies on food items; wages have not kept up. Purchasing power continues to decline. Estimates indicate a drop in the average worker's purchasing power of more than thirty percent since 1985. Moreover, even social services, formerly provided by the government, must now be paid by users. For example, user fees have been instituted for health care services. Structural adjustment policies exacerbate the deteriorating health services and infrastructures. Per capita
spending on health fell by twenty percent between 1891 and 1988. But even the implementation of user’s fees has not stemmed the deterioration in health care. Public clinics and hospitals remain empty of basic medical supplies critical for the provision of decent basic health care” (Somerville, 1996:24).

In fact, these adjustment policies will have dramatic effects on the lives of farmers. The women interviewed and researchers share the opinion that the combined pressures of drought and adjustment policies are the major factors underlying changes in the sexual division of labor in farming and, as a result, in women’s claim to greater decision making power.

Even though, women farmers have a good understanding of the impact of the drought, they do not understand and few are aware of phenomenon like structural adjustment. This requires a certain level of education to comprehend and conceptualize. Nevertheless, in some interviews women refer to economic changes and hardships such as the dropping value of Senegalese money compared to what it was during the time their mothers and grandmothers were active in farming. Also, women farmers talk about the rising prices of food and expenses such as healthcare and education. Informant B#71, 43 years old, explained that:

“Our mothers and grandmothers were luckier than us because, even though they did not make us much money as we are making now, they used to be self-sufficient. With a little money they could purchase all items they needed to maintain adequate health for their households and themselves. Nowadays, we can no longer buy some of the good food such as meat or milk. They are expensive. This is too bad because we are not very healthy and strong and we have to work very hard to meet the challenges we are facing as mothers and wives.”
Poverty

Poverty has been expanding in Senegal with the decreased productivity of the agricultural sector.

“Three fourth of the active population, however, are employed in agriculture, where production has hardly been increasing for the last 20 years. In sum, during this period of 20 years, Senegal’s GDP remained nearly stable, and the population continued to increase. The GDP per capita, therefore, decreased at an annual average rate of 0.5 percent between 1965 and 1986” (Bonnefond and Couty, 1991: 32).

For the particular case of Thieudeme, there is a lack of basic infrastructure such as schools, health care facilities, and roads. For the whole village, there is only one elementary school in Thieudeme which they share with nearby villages and which has six “rotating” class levels—three function one year and three the next. This helps to explain the low level of education prevalent in Thieudeme though parents also do not see the value of an education in French.

Transportation and infrastructure deficiencies at the national level also affect Thieudeme. The village is not located on the main Niayes road, and is somewhat isolated. There is only a small production road that leads to the village. This creates transportation problems, which make the marketing of produce by the farmers in exterior markets difficult.

Even though Thieudeme is equipped with public running water facilities (two public faucets and three wells, one “forage”—a well with water pump), there is no electricity available in the village. Most buildings in Thieudeme are still of poor quality. In addition, Thieudeme has one health post with a birthing room. The building was built by the villagers and its sparse furnishing obtained through donations. But the hoped-for government assistance with salaries and medicines never arrived. Because of a lack of medicine and resources the health post never functioned. Only when this research was
pivotal in obtaining funds to purchase medicines and arrange outside collaboration were the villagers in a position to open it.

Religion is important in the life of the village. There is one main Mosque where inhabitants of Thieudeme and surrounding villages gather for prayers. In the preceding chapter, religious events were discussed because of their links to women's organizing.

FENU (United Nations Fund for Equipment) installed in the village one "moulin a mil" for grinding millet. This significantly alleviated domestic burdens for the women of the village and of other nearby villagers who use it and reduced women's vulnerability to assault from robbers who used to prey on them when they had to take millet elsewhere for grinding.

Decentralization and reforms

Another national factor that has repercussions at the local level is that in Senegal the basis for the state-managed organization of the rural sector was, and remains, the 1964 land law, which reserves all land to the state. Since allocation of land and transfer between generations are left to the rural communities, more power is given to rural communities than in the past. (Land tenure is discussed in greater detail in the following section.) In fact, in order to understand decentralization reforms and their impacts on Senegalese farmers, one needs to know that decentralization has been an ongoing process initiated by the government from independence to the present. According to the text on decentralization law written in 1996 and to sources such as (USAID, 1996; ISRA, 1996), the process started with the January 13, 1960, law that divided up the country into seven regions (though nowadays Senegal has 10 regions). Regions were, in turn, divided into "circles" and later on into "arrondissements". All these designations were governed by a Regional Governor. In April of 1964 the new decree changed the Regional Governor's mandate to the rank of delegate of the Senegalese President. This resulted in a great deal
of confusion in terms of power delegation that lead the government in 1972 to create a new law aimed at increasing decentralization. This resulted in 48 communes (communes are equivalent to small counties) and 320 rural communities (like a township)--for a total of 368 "collectivities locales." In 1996, a new decree added 10 new "collectivities locales" at the regional level, therefore bringing the total "collectivities locales" to 378. The rationale of the decentralization reform is to give to each region the opportunities to take care of its own economic, cultural and social development.

Thieudeme is part of the Diender rural community and is about 50 kilometers from Dakar, the capital city. The rural community of Diender reports to the Thies region that is in charge of promoting development in Thieudeme through a President of the rural community and a rural council, both elected by the local people. The President of the Diender rural community is in charge of managing all legal, political, economic and administrative matters of Thieudeme. He is supposed to be the local authority representing the interests and needs of the population of Thieudeme and other villages which are part of his rural community.

A main objective of this decentralization reform is to remove constraints such as tardiness, lack of accountability, inefficiency, and unwieldy bureaucracy related to the centralized structures of the Senegalese government.

"It is believed that democracy rather than authoritarianism will help promote bourgeois hegemony by compelling competing elements of the bourgeoisie to enlist popular support in intra- rather than anti-bourgeois conflicts. In other words, capitalism and capitalist elite can gain more legitimacy and systemic stability by being to some degree accountable to the masses" (Gordon, 1996: 4)

In reality, corruption and influence trafficking abound.

Another important objective of the government was to transfer more responsibilities and power to local level authorities and to local people. As Guellar (1997) put it:
“The 1996 decentralization reforms are likely to continue the decline of administrative authority as state officials withdraw from direct intervention in managing the affairs of local government and restrict their activities to controlling the legality of local government decisions” (78).

Whether or not there is progress towards these objectives remains a big question since a study by Sow (1995) showed that this transfer of power is not benefiting rural people, but instead is profitable to local authorities who take advantage of their positions to speculate on land and other natural resources. In the same line of thought, Guellar (1997) added that at the

“...rural council level, nobles and other notables generally win most of the offices although women and younger people in the November 24, 1996, elections won more seats than ever before. The paucity of rural council resources, and up to now, the absence of jobs available to offer to one’s followers usually mean that clientelist relationships are based on traditional criteria related to one’s social status” (78).

Out of the 320 rural communities only three have women as their president. In the case of Thieudeme, at the time this study was conducted there was no woman at the rural council level.

Since women are not usually notables or in leadership positions in rural councils, they will be affected by decentralization in many contradictory ways. For instance, in the specific case of women farmers, women’s rights to land use might not be explicit at the national level, but they are explicit in local custom. At the same time, national law does not prohibit women’s control over and inheritance of land rights, but local customs do. Women have more well established political and individual rights at the national level, but local level authority is firmly in the hands of men at both the community and the household (keur) levels. As political and administrative decentralization is implemented in Senegal, the transfer of even greater powers to the local level might jeopardize
women's relative gains unless they are able, individually or through their organizations, to insert themselves into the local power structure. For instance, the ability for women to negotiate land through renting or buying with their male counterparts can be affected since local officials want to have more control over land distributions and require that all transactions go through their offices. Which is at the disadvantage of women farmers who are taken into account when it is up to distributing resources such as land or agricultural inputs. Women farmers through organizing have created alternatives that provide them with income to meet their basic needs and the ones of their families in addition to giving them more power, self esteem, and autonomy to control their lives.

**Land Tenure**

The following discussion focuses on those factors that seem the most obviously important—both to the farmers interviewed and in documents and other studies—and mentions those that appear to operate in a more subtle and potentially cumulative fashion.

Three land tenure systems have predominated at different points of time and influence current land access and control in Thieudeme. They are customs and inheritance systems (customary laws that favor a communal system of landholding), particularly the matrilineal inheritance system historically associated with Thieudeme; changes introduced by colonial authorities and which reflect efforts to privatize land and support a system of production for the market; and the 1964 land law which is currently in effect and which states that land can be owned by the State only. In fact, passage of the 1964 land law was intended to end the increasing number of land disputes, some violent, that took place with independence. Each is discussed in turn.

**Customary Land Laws and Practices**

Before colonization, a type of customary land law prevailed in Thieudeme and most of Senegal. Customs varied somewhat by ethnic group and region. According to customary law in Thieudeme, women did not have the right to own land, but neither did
individual men. There was no system of private property. Land was communally held and communal authorities allocated land to men heads of households (the borom keur).

They, in turn, were in charge of managing and distributing land to other men in the household and to wives, sisters, daughters and subordinates for farming. Each man had to allocate land to his wife after getting his share of land from the “borom keur”. Though under customary law land could not be inherited, use rights could. The population in Thieudeme is dominated by the Lebou, a matrilineal ethnic group under which inheritance of land use passes through the mother’s family. But customary law did not allow women to inherit land; land was passed from father to son and from older brothers to younger brothers or from maternal uncles to nephews. According to matrilineal customs, women were excluded from decisions regarding use rights. Those decisions were made by male family members, though women might voice their opinions and men might defend family land interests by allocating land for use by sisters and daughters. Once married, women had use rights to land from husbands and sons because of their responsibilities to provide their family with subsistence crops. Therefore, even though women could not inherit land, they had usufruct rights to land. Women also could own or inherit trees under customary law. Not only did this function as a means for controlling the land on which trees were located, but trees—particularly fruit trees such as mango—were a source of considerable income for women farmers. Customary land law still prevails in determining practices of inheritance and allocation of land by communal authorities in Thieudeme and is an important determinant for decision making with respect to land use rights—even though the new land law is in effect. This is a major source of confusion and conflicting practices with questionable legality.

Colonialism

Senegal was colonized by the French after it defeated its English and Portuguese competitors. In fact, the Portuguese “were the first Europeans to visit the coast of Senegal arriving during the second half of the 15th century beginning the process by which the
Trans-Saharan trade routes progressively lost ground to those of the Atlantic seaboard (Barry, 1979:46). France "built and established the fortified trading post of Saint Louis in 1659 in order to insure its commercial monopoly on the Senegal River" (Barry, 1979:47). French colonisation lasted three hundred years ending in 1959.

Colonisation and the introduction of a cash economy greatly disrupted Senegalese customary laws by introducing the concept of private property, and confiscation of communal holdings. Women's access to land was eroded under colonialism, though communities, families, and women looked for ways to circumvent new restrictions. Erosion was due to a combination of the introduction of the concept and practice of private ownership of land by individual men or companies and the loss of value associated with subsistence crops in the market-oriented colonial (and even post colonial) economy. That is, parallel to the introduction of private property and cash production was the notion of men as owners and cash crop producers—a concept that coincided well with the customary practices that preceded colonialism. These were reinforced by the expansion of cash cropping to feed not only an export market but also a growing local population not involved in producing their own crops (service workers, construction workers, plantation workers and their families).

To the extent that the changes introduced by colonizers increased demand for and pressures on land, women were significantly affected as subsistence producers. Historical documents and anecdotal accounts of farmers suggest women's plots became smaller and their use rights became less secure as cash cropping increased in importance relative to subsistence production and as colonial land practices displaced customary land laws. One major alteration was women's usufruct rights to land. Data from Lewis' study of African women farmers (1984) and Sow's analysis of Senegalese women farmers' situation (1995) suggested that over time women were getting progressively smaller pieces and poorer quality land. Women's life stories recounted by other researchers revealed that women were aware that their subsistence farming was becoming undervalued compared
to men's farming which was shifting to cash cropping as a result of new policies/programs/laws implemented by the colonial administrations (Njoku, 1984; Rogers, 1980; Guyer, 1984). Nonetheless, colonialism's introduction of the concept of private property also created new practices at the local level which may or may not have had the approval of colonial administrators and which mirrored some changes at the national level. For instance, some families and individuals embraced the concept of private land holdings and the notion that land rights could be purchased or rented. Sharecropping and rental of land cropped up as incipient practices that brought new opportunities for those limited by or excluded from land rights under the old system. But these practices also introduced new vulnerabilities such as debt and servitude.

**Independence**

New changes came with independence. On the one hand, new national authorities inherited the fragmented and contradictory system that developed under colonialism. On the other, they saw a rapid growth in land conflicts and violence over conflicting practices. They also wished to develop a system that both supported traditional customs and practices and subsistence production and agricultural self-sufficiency, as well as one that would carry on market production for export. In 1964, four years after independence, the government of Senegal, hoping to end land-related violence and introduce a new rationality for coordinating production and land tenure, enacted a new land law on the national domain that was still in effect in 1996-1997 at the time this research took place. The major provisions of the 1964 law stipulate a) that all land is owned by the state (excluding private ownership) and b) that allocation of land and transfer between generations is to be administered at the local level by the rural communities, specifically by the President of each rural community and by the Rural Councils. Though the Senegalese state encourages participation of women, traditionally women have not been members of Rural Councils and there are no women on the Council in Thieudeme. The chief—member of the Sarr family—heads the Council.
More recently, since 1995, new reforms implemented as part of structural adjustment policies and political/administrative decentralization are introducing further changes. For instance, theoretically, men and women have equal rights to land in national law. In reality, practices are likely to defer to customary law. Decentralization law promotes women’s participation in rural community councils, and offices, which might place them in a position to reform local customs in favor of women’s rights to land. Therefore, at the time of the study, the situation of women and land tenure rights had not noticeably changed from that described under customary law with some modifications in practices introduced as a result of colonialism. Land in contemporary Senegalese culture is still associated with rights and authorities of the head of the household who should always be a man.

To summarize: The land tenure system in Thieudeme is based on the 1964 national law that stipulates that all land is reserved to the state. Prior to this law Thieudeme had a traditional customary land tenure system under which land was allocated to the head of household who was a man. Women could not inherit land, but they had usufruct rights to land through their brothers, uncles and sons, particularly in the matrilineal Lebou society. Under the current law, the allocation of land in Thieudeme is therefore left to the rural community officials that represent the state in Thieudeme.

**Other Local Factors**

Local factors are factors that are specific to the case of Thieudeme, but also factors such as the drought and the poor infrastructure that, even though they are generalizable throughout Senegal, impact Thieudeme differently for many reasons such its location and isolation, its lack of alternatives in terms of education and employment opportunities. The ways in which the drought is affecting Thieudeme can be different from the ways in which it is impacting other regions of the country because of its different farming system (all year around), the type of crops they grow and the fact that they rely almost exclusively on agriculture for their livelihood. Moreover, the lack of basic infrastructure
in Thieudeme is a real ordeal for these people who feel--and are--abandoned by their
government for reasons that apply to the whole Senegalese population, but also for
additional reasons related to a supposed “curse” (discussed below).

Drought

All Thieudeme women farmers interviewed, regardless of the generation they belong
to, emphasized that the drought is the main factor that has dramatically changed their
lives. The major shift in crops, tools and farming practices that started in the early fifties
and accelerated in the 1970s were directly related to the drought according to the
interviews. Actually,

“Two thirds of Senegal’s land mass lies within the Sahel, and due to drought and
population pressure, even this marginal land is deteriorating. From 1960-1987,
average rainfall has five times gone below the minimum for successful peanut, cotton,
sorghum and maize crops. Since 1970, seven droughts have occurred in Senegal and
average rainfall since 1969 has fallen to half of what was previously considered
normal. Satellite pictures show that since 1977, the northern extent of vegetation has
been pushed south by 200 kilometers” (Golan, 1990:2).

In addition, Somerville made the following assessment:

“During the first drought (1968-1974), crop yields declined from 904 kilograms per
hectare to 620 kilograms per hectare, resulting in the fall of export receipts to about
35 billions CFA in 1971. As the economy went into a decline, peanuts [the main cash
crop]--as a percentage of total exports--dropped from eighty to forty percent”

The drought, according to all the women interviewed, led to the deterioration of farm
land. This was confirmed by the analysis of the Senegalese agricultural sector done by
USAID in 1997:

“It is estimated that only 19% of surface area of Senegal has soils that are suitable to
agriculture. These limited soils are confronted by permanent deterioration because of
erosion and overuse. The situation with water supply is equally bad. Rainfall has been decreasing since the 1960s” (xiv).

Drought and soil deterioration, combined with the shift to vegetables, also play important roles in the adoption of new techniques and attitudes towards farming. When they were young, the women farmers who are today in their 60s-70s did not need to water their field themselves and did not perceive a need to use chemical fertilizers or pesticides to increase production. In only a few cases did women report using natural fertilizers, such as cow manure. With the drought, and impoverishment of the quality of the soil, women farmers of 1997 practice intensive watering manually with buckets twice a day as well as extensive use of chemical inputs. This physically exhausting watering and chemical system creates pressures for women to farm smaller size fields and creates a need for cash to purchase inputs. More negatively, since the drought resulted in deterioration of land quality and erosion, there has been a decrease in the amount of land available to women farmers.

This situation is made worse by a lack of extension services, credit, and also inflationary prices of agricultural inputs:

“Short-term credit for cash crops was historically provided by parastatal organizations. As these organizations move out of providing credit, the lack of credits has become an increasingly important constraint. The slack in providing credit has not been taken up by suppliers of inputs or purchasers of outputs. The consequences of this lack of credit pointed out by 100% of the women interviewed is a reduction in the purchase of other inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides. In summary, the lack of credit causes a decline in the purchase of inputs which in turn results in a reduction of agricultural output” (USAID, 1997: xv).

Thus, most women farmers are under greater stress—a situation reflected in their interviews. But the prolonged drought and desertification have also intensified the local
impacts of the national economic crisis stimulated by structural adjustment reform, particularly in the agricultural sector.

The "Curse"

Villagers believe that many of the problems faced by Thieudeme can be attributed to its curse (something not discussed openly and that was difficult to identify until villagers' confidence increased in the researcher). Unlike nearby villages, Thieudeme has been neglected by authorities. Its only public service is a primary school where grades 1, 3, and 5 and grades 2, 4, and 6 function in alternating years. Thieudeme receives no extension assistance. The clinic built by villagers has never been staffed or supplied with medicines (though villagers sent a resident for medical training and made many requests to local authorities). The two midwives that the village counts have been trained traditionally by their mothers and grandmothers.

Apparently, in the not so distant past (exact date and details unknown) some government agents died while trying to collect taxes or impose official regulations in the villagers. As a result, a myth of danger arose that led many government employees to refuse to visit the village. This explains in part the lack of basic infrastructure such as a complete primary school and government sponsored health care facilities. Not only has this created a situation of persistent health problems (in an area of malaria, parasites, and chronic skin infections), but it has impacted villagers' self esteem and initiative. This cycle was broken at least in the short term with the recent donation of medicines through this research project. Villagers were motivated by the donation to form two committees to oversee distribution and replacement of medicines.

Weakening of Patriarchal Power

Since the economic crisis, shifting market demands, and structural adjustment emphasis on cash production forced many husbands to accept women's demands to move into new levels and types of production and marketing, patriarchal power has been weakened. Men have lost a great deal of economic power and the breadwinner role—a
role linked ideologically to their privilege and domination. Men, unable to meet their responsibilities as providers (depense givers), arrived at their own conclusions that women’s roles had to change if the household were to have any hope of maintaining a desired level of living. Subsequently, women’s increased relative contributions combined with cultural ideology regarding rights and responsibilities in ways that encouraged some degree of “consciousness raising” and contributed to the reexamination of gender relations within the context of men’s declining responsibilities for household survival. Women’s needs for financial and other types of support in fulfilling their “practical”--everyday, socially assigned--needs led them to create women’s self help organizations. In filling these practical needs to meet their responsibilities as wives and farmers, women were empowered through an all women environment in which several women leaders emerged to offer alternate models for women. This has important implications such as women having more access to cash through their organizations and therefore having the opportunity to enhance farming, raise productivity, income and participation in household maintenance.

At a theoretical level the study has shown the need to question the stand about the limitations on women’s empowerment through the satisfaction of their practical needs. What brings empowerment is personal. It depends on a woman’s specific situation. It is not appropriate to generalize about strategic gender needs, what is practical for one can be strategic for the other. In the case of poor women such as these women farmers facing the challenges of feeding their families, it is through their ability to provide for their families, which is a man’s responsibility, that these Muslim women farmers enter a domain so far controlled by men. This places them in the position of challenging the roots of their subordination and dependence to their husbands.

**Conclusions**

In conclusion, factors such as shifting diets, prolonged drought, the expansion of poverty related to the implementation of structural adjustment and decentralization
reforms, and complementary shifts in government economic policies and market demands have created pressures and opened opportunities for important social change. However, the particularities of how change takes place and what aspects of women's roles change are also determined by the cultural, political, ecological, and economic context at the local level. Thieudeme's women have opportunities in vegetable production not just because of market shifts locally or internationally, but also because Thieudeme is located in an area with a shallow water table. Despite its relative isolation, there are transport routes to local markets and transportation services have responded to use of these routes. Furthermore, Thieudeme's women have opportunities to demand greater access to land for production not just because men's contribution has declined, but also because of the gender division of rights and responsibilities that support their roles as farmers and their rights to control their own income--allowing them to rent land. Nonetheless, these rights present a double bladed sword because men's inability to control women's income acts as a deterrent to share more household land with women.
CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This research makes contributions to empirical knowledge of changing roles of
women under conditions of crisis and restructuring, to debates surrounding the dilemmas
faced by feminist sociologists in their quest to document and analyze women’s experiences
as women perceive them, to the concepts of “power” and “empowerment” and their
measurement, and to theories of the negative or positive impacts of capitalist development
and macro-level policies on women’s relative autonomy and status and to gender relations
at the micro-level.

Many Africanist analysts point to a link between colonialism, the development of
capitalism, and the introduction of a cash economy on the one hand, and a decline in
women’s status, new forms of patriarchy, and women’s displacement from agriculture on
the other to explain the current status of women farmers (Van Allen, 1976; Roger, 1984).
Although this may have been true for Senegalese women through the 1960s and early
1970s, it does not describe the general situation of women of the 1980s and 1990s.
According to the interviews, women’s status (respect accorded them, improvements in
personal freedoms, control over production and income, decision making) has improved--
ironically as a result of an economic crisis that represents a strong incentive to take things into their own hands. Today's women farmers—that is, women from the two younger generations—decide on all processes of production from planting, harvesting, marketing what they produce, and controlling their income. In addition they participate in household decisions such as income expenditures and management, children's education, and some are taking greater initiatives in important issues such as family planning that directly impact their health, and making the wishes known-strongly-regarding polygamy.

Nonetheless, despite women's greater involvement today in self-help organizations and government encouragement of a more visible leadership role for women, the burdens of daily production and reproduction and the structure of community politics have kept most women from any kind of leadership in mixed gender organizations and community and government.

Case studies of the impact of structural adjustment programs and neo-liberal reforms emphasize their negative impacts on women (Bakker, 1994; Elson, 1991, 1992). These studies do not, however, consider how, in the longer term, the very hardships brought on by reform may also open opportunities for women's empowerment. With few exceptions, studies of women in African agriculture fail to consider multiple sources of change, both negative and positive, through comparisons of women of different generations in a same setting or by comparing standard sociological concepts with women's perceptions of their reality.
This study of three generations of women farmers in Thieudeme sought to overcome these gaps in empirical knowledge. Findings support other research on the gendered impacts of structural adjustment in the sense that women in Thieudeme, like women elsewhere, suffer from expanding poverty, declining public services, and a greatly increased work burden. However, the comparisons of different generations of women farmers revealed that, in parallel fashion, women's status improved in important respects on indicators of empowerment such as access to and control over productive resources and money (Blumberg 1984), greater participation in organizations, and greater decision making power in non-traditional arenas. Whether or not women aspire to greater power in order to meet the demands of their social roles or in order to improve their personal status and control varies greatly, however.

At the same time, although older women believe younger women have lost privileges and the family has been harmed as a result of role change, younger women can articulate claims to greater decision making power in production than the oldest generation of women. Men and women's comments about improved status for women relate status to women's income, households' dependence on women's contributions, and women's independent involvement in self help organizations. Men persistently express "appreciation" for women's contribution. Women often include in their interviews references to men's declining contribution and how this justifies women's increased power and control on the farm and in the household--which could be a type of "excuse" for patterns of behavior that do not correspond to traditional norms.
These changes brought by a particular form of capitalism at a particular confluence of economic, political and ecological conditions have been discussed by other researchers, particularly Gordon (1996) who states:

"The hardships and inequities capitalism engenders can be a force for undermining pre-capitalist patriarchal productive and social arrangements by compelling people to adopt new survival strategies that alter gender roles and perceptions (e.g., women start businesses to add to family income, thus promoting their status as providers; this in turn improves their self-esteem and authority in the family)" (24).

That was not the case during colonization when women were not involved in cash cropping or in the pre-crisis period where men’s income was more than adequate to maintain the household and women were more likely to be part time subsistence farmers. Less clear is whether or not women’s new productive power and household power might transfer at some point into greater power and participation in community affairs. Few women—and these are primarily older women-- have achieved important roles as community leaders and even then they are limited primarily to women’s organizations. Among the strongest evidence for the link between income and status/power—what Gordon refers to as the opportunities presented by a capitalist market—is the fact that younger women reveal non traditional behaviors and attitudes that include being more autonomous, more materialistic, and less attached to certain patriarchal cultural values such as polygyny.
If the system of patriarchal values is breaking down in Thieudeme, it is because, as women themselves report, women and men have had to find alternative survival strategies to fulfill their responsibilities and, in some cases, have had to shift responsibilities. In this sense, Amartya Sen’s notion of “cooperative conflict” applies. Interviews presented often conflicting statements that showed a certain ambivalence or ambiguity in the “rules of the gender game” and real behaviors. It also is true that more responsibilities have shifted from men to women than vice versa. It is women’s perception that this shift takes place more because women demand it rather than because of men’s abandonment or desire to evade responsibilities. In fact, this fits well the argument made by Gordon:

“Despite the hardships they impose on women, current economic reforms imposed under structural adjustment are in some cases undermining the economic base of patriarchy in Africa, because many men are no longer to be to breadwinners supporting their dependent wives and children. In many households the labor power of women has become primary, as Vuorela (1992:118-121) demonstrates in Tanzania. Women are assuming even greater responsibility for economic survival” (Gordon, 1996:67).

The important changes in women’s lives are associated with a greater, but selective, consciousness of women about their condition as farmers and wives and of the importance of their work for their family and community. There is less consciousness of strategic needs—-for instance, legal reforms that might give women rights of inheritance or political power. Women’s perceptions that role changes are explained by the economic crisis, drought, and change in market demand is upheld by document research and by the timing of the introduction of such change (for instance, they coincide with certain key
economic and political events). Nonetheless, women are less likely than men to be aware of non-local factors and their causes.

Women do not conceptualize power in the way feminist sociologists do nor do they talk about it much. It hardly seems relevant in the context of poverty and stress in which women find themselves. Furthermore, women found questions about decision making in production to border on the absurd—they state that they have always had control over decision making in production. Therefore, it was left to the sociologist to draw on discipline-based concepts to arrive at conclusions regarding the relationship between productive resources and relative power in diverse spheres. So, does this mean that the discussion of power in this research, the indicators used to measure power, and the conclusion of greater relative power are methodological fictions? And, if they are, is the discussion of power invalidated?
The answer can be found in the work of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator who
developed the concept of “consciousness raising” and the work of Maxine Molyneux and Caroline
Moser who developed and refined, respectively, the concepts of women’s perceptions of practical
vs. strategic interests. People may not fully understand or identify macroeconomic policies as a
source of their problems. Women in particular focus on “the drought.” Nonetheless, the
sociologist can make the connections and expose people to alternative ideas and ways of
understanding and organizing reality. Women may not conceptualize a difference between their
traditional rights to control their production and income from farming and the new,
unprecedented rights they have constructed around marketing. As Amartya Sen argues through
his discussion of collaboration and competition in households, women may not articulate their
own interests or personal gains through marketing and organizing (for instance, enjoying the
company and support of other women, increased self esteem) as different from their
responsibilities as wives and mothers to defend the interests of their families. But in subtle ways,
the interviews and observations revealed that women do value certain aspects of their new
responsibilities and burdens.

In the final analysis, it can be concluded that:

- women have created new ways to access productive resources and income,

- they see their actions as defending their practical interests,

- these actions and increased income have led to major increases in decision making power
  in all that has to do with production and, on a more limited scale, with household level decisions,
-they have more opportunities--and needs--to organize which brings both benefits--
support, self esteem, credit, attention from government and non governmental organizations--and
burdens (in time and energy invested),

-their relative status has improved but little has changed in their participation in mixed
gender organizations or community leadership (beyond women’s organizations),

-their actions have contributed to the greater well-being of urban residents who consume
their products and have allowed the government to reduce imports, but they have not significantly
impacted the causes of problems (economic crisis, drought, political decisions),

-women are mixed on whether changes across generations represent improvements or a
loss of values and privileges.

In sum, Feminist sociologists can learn from this research that “respecting” and
incorporating women’s perceptions into the construction of sociological indicators and measures
may not be realistic. And, in the final analysis, the issue of relative power is far more complex and
“relative” than some other research would lead us to believe.

The research generates recommendations for further research and for policy. Research
findings can be used to generate recommendations for policy and programs. They also point to
areas that require further research by feminist sociologists.

Among the specific policy recommendations that would be supported by this research, the
following stand out:

-Women’s direct access to land must be increased thereby reducing their dependence on
men and reducing household-level conflicts over land. This can be achieved through several
interrelated policies. First, revise legal guidelines for land management to give women legal rights to acquire, hold and pass on land independently of their male family members and to inherit land use rights from male family members. Second, legalize market-based practices such as rental or “purchase” of land that leave both women and men who engage in these practices vulnerable to exploitation and fraud.

- Women’s direct access to agricultural equipment and inputs must be improved. Given the inadequacy of the extension service and women’s marginalization in male farmer unions that facilitate acquisition for male members, this can be achieved through private and publicly-sponsored programs targeting women’s organizations. That is, just as organizations receive incentives and support for generating credit and for the purchase and maintenance of a millet grinder, so they can provide means for women to purchase individually or collectively and share labor-saving devices.

- Provide training and technical assistance programs for women to improve farming and conservation. Although there is one NGO in the area working on conservation, the isolation of villages like Thieudeme and inadequacy of support services make difficult the inclusion of many villages. However, because women farmers also market their produce—especially the case for vegetables—both NGOs and the extension service could locate and work with women at markets.

- Study transportation and marketing systems—including the operations of intermediaries—to determine whether or not these disadvantage women relative to men and to develop means to make them more efficient and advantageous to both women and men farmers.

- Conduct agricultural research that is more gender sensitive and does a better job of
representing the contributions made by women farmers. Since agricultural studies are used as a basis for extension, trade, and training policies, the “invisibility” of women reinforces their exclusion from programs that are not designed with their gender-specific responsibilities and constraints in mind.

- Conduct consciousness raising sessions with women and men at the village level in order to help them understand constraints, come up with alternatives that better fit new roles and responsibilities, and that support women’s rights to a greater voice in community decisions that affect them. These sessions can include information about women’s legal rights and macro-level policies that support greater relative power for women, for instance, as members of local councils.

Among the specific research recommendations that emerge from this research, the following are important to advance theories of social change and empowerment:

- More research is needed on the selectivity of social and cultural change. This includes questions of why certain cultural values and attitudes have changed while others have not (women can travel to markets and earn cash incomes, but have no final say over access to land or the practice of polygamy), on why an increase in women’s status in the community has not led to a parallel increase in decision making power or participation in mixed gender organizations, etc.

- More research is needed into the relationship between value and attitude change and actual practices that support or contradict contemporary attitudes.

- More research is needed on the links between change at the macro level and that at the micro level. In particular, although this research has outlined connections between macro and
micro level change, it has focused on the better studied macro factors that are known/assumed to introduce pressures, opportunities, and constraints on individuals and groups at the local level. But what about the pressures, opportunities, and constraints that changes in human behavior present for the construction and implementation of macro level policies and programs? For instance, we know vegetable farmers respond to changes in markets. But how does government regulation of and support for certain markets respond to opportunities presented by production changes?

-More research is needed on the concept of relative power and empowerment. In particular, sociological concepts of power tend to emphasize control and influence while feminist concepts of power tend to emphasize capacity building and solidarity (organizing). Factors such as type of economic system (capitalist at the macro level, small-scale agriculture at the micro level), type of culture/social organization (patriarchal, Islamic, Lebou-Wolof), type of infrastructure and services (poor transportation, education, health care, extension, etc.) all provide more than a context within which to analyze role change and relative status. They provide different vantage points from which to conceptualize the content—not just the form—of change. Is it “positive” or “negative”? For whom? In what ways? Are there contradictions? Complexities that need to be “teased out” rather than generalized?

-Finally, how can contradictory case studies in the literature be used to make sense of the direction and variability of social change in ways that can inform development policies and theories which tend to be overly generalized, unilinear and positivistic? This, in turn, can have a profound impact on policy makers who turn to academic research and consultants for ideas on
how to achieve positive social and economic change. For instance, how to reconcile demands for cultural change to support economic goals (e.g., a work ethic that supports productivity) as it builds on and reinforces “positive” aspects of traditional values and forms of social organization (social capital, women in marketing) and introduces supports for reducing or revising notions of “negative” traditions and beliefs (women’s dependence on men for land)?

This dissertation documents important aspects of social change and points to probable relations between practices and change factors. It also reveals women’s perceptions of change and their experiences and problems. But, as is the case of all research, it was focused—not exhaustive. And, given the rapid pace of change detected across the three generations of women, it is bound to a particular place and time. Nonetheless, this place and time and these people are of interest both for their inherent value as an empirical case study and for the possibility of comparing them to other places and other times in an effort to better understand women’s changing roles, issues of relative decision making power, and the relationship between macro level factors and local patterns of change.
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APPENDIX A: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW INSTRUMENTS
HOUSEHOLD SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Nom de l’enquêteur (trice) --------------

Date----------------

Village

Communaute Rurale

Information Generale

1-Numero D’identification de la concession----------

2-Age

4-Groupe ethnique:  1-Wolof

2-Lebou

3-Peulh

4-Fulani
5-Serer
6-Autre/Precisez

5-Religion: 1-Musulman
2-Catholique
3-Autre/Preciser

6-Caste 1-Guer
2-Teug
3-Gewel
4-Laobe
5-Autre/Preciser

7-Etes vous chef de menage?
1-Oui 2-Non

8-Quelle est votre occupation principale?
1-Fermier
2-Travailleur salarie
3-Eleveur
4-Autre/Precisez

9-Statut matrimonial
1-Marie(e)
2-Celibataire
3-Divorve (e)
4-Veuf (ve)
5-Autre /Preciser

Indicateurs Socio Economics

10-Est ce que cette maison ou vous habitez vous appartient?
1-Oui 2-Non

11-Combien de constructions y’a t’il dans votre concession?
1-une
2-Deux
3-Trois
4- Plus de trois

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12-Quel est votre type de construction

1-Maison en dur/toit en tuile
2-Maison en argile/toit en paille
3-Baraque/toit en zinc
4-Maison en dur/toit en zinc
5-Autre /Precisez

Quel est le nombre de pièces dans la maison? 1-une pièce a deux pieces

2-Trois pieces a quatre 3-Cinq pieces et plus

-Quel est votre source d’approvisionnement en eau?

1-Puit public
2-Puit prive
3-Robinet a la maison
4-Robinet Public
5-Autre/Precisez

15-Est ce que vous avez de l'électricité

| Oui | 2- Non |

16-Est ce qu'il y'a une latrine ou WC utilise uniquement par votre famille?

Personnes vivant dans la maison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nom</th>
<th>Lien/chef</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sit/matri</th>
<th>Niv/edu</th>
<th>Rev/an</th>
<th>Source/rev</th>
<th>Occup</th>
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</tbody>
</table>
Nombre total de personne vivant dans la maison?

19- Nombre total de femmes vivant dans la maison?

20- Nombre total d’epouses du chef de famille?

21- Nombre total d’hommes adultes vivant dans la maison?

22- Nombre total d’enfants vivant dans la maison?

23- Qui contribue au budget de la maison?

24- Combien il/elle contribue au budget de la maison?

25- Qui mange a la maison?

26- Qui dort dans la maison?

27- Y, a t’il des membre de votre famille en exode?
   1- Oui  2- Non

28- Si oui qui est en exode?

29- Lieu de l’exode?
30-Duree de l'exode?

31-Est ce qu’elles/ils ont envoyé de l’argent ces 12 dernières mois?
   1-oui  2-Non

32-Si oui combien ont elles ou ils envoyé
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INDEPTH INTERVIEWS

ID#: 
Respondent's name .........................................................
Household code .............................................................
Interviewer's name ..........................................................
Neiborghood code ...........................................................

Demographic Characteristics

What is your place of birth? ..............................................
1- Thiedem 
2- Rufisque 
3- Dakar 
4- Other (Please Specify)

What is your ethnic group? ..............................................
1- Wolof 
2- Lebou 
3- Fulani 
4- Diola 
5- Other (Please Specify)

What is your religion? ....................................................
1- Islam 
2- Catholic 
3- Other

What is your age group? ..................................................... years
1- 20 or under 
2- 20-30 
3- 30-40
4-40-50
5-50-60
6-60-70
7-70-80
How many years did you go to school?..........................years

What is the highest level of education you have completed?........

What is your major source of income? (Please circle one)
1- Farming
2- Marketing
3- Self-Help Organization
4- Other (Please specify)...........................................

How much is your annual income from vegetable marketing?........
1-25,000-50,000 CFA
2-50,000-100,000 CFA
3-100,000-150,000 CFA
4-150,000-200,000 CFA
5- Other (Please Specify)

What is your marital status? (Please circle one)
1- Married
2- Divorced
3- Widowed
4- Single

Are You in a polygamous relationship? (Please circle one)
1- Yes 2- No

If Yes what is your rank? (Please circle one)
1- First wife
2- Second Wife
3- Third wife
4- Other (Please Specify)...............................................

Do you have children? (Please circle one)
1- Yes 2- No
If Yes how many children do you have? .............................
1-Under five children-
2- 5-7
3-7-9
4-9-11
5-Other (Please Specify)

Measuring Social change Through Agriculture and Trade

Sexual Division of Labor

What tasks do you perform in farming? (please circle)
(01) Planting
(02) Weeding
(03) Watering
(04) Spraying
(05) Land Clearing
(06) Digging
(07) Storage
(08) Transporting to market
(09) Transporting crops to home
(10) Marketing

What tasks do you husband perform in farming? (please circle)
(01) Planting
(02) Weeding
(03) Watering
(04) Spraying
(05) Land Clearing
(06) Digging
(07) Storage
(08) Transporting to market
(09) Transporting crops to home
10) Marketing

How were roles distributed?
How do you think it got that way?

How are roles distributed now?

**Crops**

What types of crops do you plant? (Please circle)
1- Millet
2- Peanuts
3- Maize
4- Beans
5- Vegetables for sale
6- Vegetables for consumption
7- Vegetables for consumption and sale
8- Other (Please specify)

**Marketing**
For what reasons do you plant these crops (Please Circle one number for each crop)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home Consumption</th>
<th>Marketing</th>
<th>Home Consum. &amp; Marketing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Millet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Potatoes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you sale any of your agricultural produce?
1- Yes
2- No

What do you sale?
Where is marketing done for you?
1-Your village market
2- Surrounding villages
3- City
4- Village Cooperative
5- Other (Please Specify)

Do you get help for marketing?
1- Yes 2- No

If Yes what type of help do you get?

Tools

What type of tools do you use in farming? (Please circle all that apply)
(01) Hoe
(02) Pitchfork
(03) Sprayers
(04) Spade
(05) Shovel
(06) Sprinklin Can
(07) Rake
(08) Buckets
(09) Cutlass
(10) None
(11) Other (Please specify)

Who own the tools you use in your farm?
1-Self
2-Husband
3- Jointly Husband & Wife
4- Community
5-Other (Please Specify)
Access and Control over Land

How big is the farm you cultivate? (Please circle one)
1- 0-4 acres
2- 5-9 acres
3- 10-14 acres
4- 15 acres or more

How do you acquire land for agricultural purposes? (Please circle one)
1- Buying
2- Borrowing
3- Renting
4- Owning
5- Other (Please specify)

Do you own land?
1- Yes
2- No
If no why don't you own land?

Who own the family land in your household
1- Wife
2- Husband
3- Jointly by Husband and Wife
4- Adult brother
5- Adult Sister
6- Other (Please specify)

Are there any landless people in your household?
1- Yes
2- No
3- Do not know

Access to Extension Services and Technology
Do you have access to extension services?
1- Yes what type?
2- No why not
Do you consider extension activities as an important factor in increasing your vegetable production? (Please circle one)
1- yes Why?
2- No Why not?
3- Do not know

What are the major sources of informations on new farming technics in your area? (Please circle all that apply)
(01)- Cooperatives
(02)- Store
(03)- Extension agents
(04)- Radio
(05)- Television
(06)- None
(07)- Male farmers organizations
(08)- Women farmers organizations
(09)- Male and female farmers organizations
(10)- Other (Please specify)

Which sources of information gives you access to new farming techniques? (please circle all that apply)
(01)- Cooperatives
(02)- Store
(03)- Extension agents
(04)- Radio
(05)- Television
(06)- None
(07)- Male farmers organizations
(08)- Women farmers organizations
(09)- Male and female farmers organizations
(10)- Other (Please specify)

Who is your major supply of agricultural inputs?
1- Cooperatives
2- Store
3- Extension office
4- Neighboors
5- Other (Please specify)
Access to Credit

Have you ever received a loan from a bank (Please circle one)
1- Yes how did you get a loan?
2- No why not?

Which of the following credit sources are you aware of in your area (Please circle wth that apply)
1- None
2- Caisse National de Credit Agricole Senegalais (CNCAS)
3- Caisse d'epargne et de credit (CEP)
4- Other (Please Specify)

How common is it for women farmers to borrow money from the bank? (Please circle one)
1- Never. Why?
2- Seldom. Why?
3- Often Why?

Do you share savings account with your husband?
1- Yes Why?
2- No Why not?

Do you have savings account?
1- Yes Why?
2- No why not?

Does your husband have a savings account?
1- Yes Why?
2- No Why not?

Measuring Decision Making

Who makes decision about the following activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wife only</th>
<th>Wife</th>
<th>Wife &amp; Husband</th>
<th>Wife and Children</th>
<th>Husband</th>
<th>Husband only</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tr>
<td>What to plant</td>
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<td>When to plant</td>
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<td>How much to plant</td>
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<td>Trying new seeds &amp; Technology</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Getting Credit</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

How is your income made out of your marketing used? 
Do you and your husband put your income together?

**Organizations**

Do you belong to any organization?

1- Yes
2- No

What type of organization do you belong to? (Please Circle one)

1- Self-help (tontines)
2- Only women's organization?
3- Women and men's organization?
4- Other

How does your organization work?
What is the purpose of your organization?

What type of support do you get from your organization? (Please Circle one)
1- Monetary
2- Psychological
3- Training
4- Self-esteem
5- Credit
6- Autonomy
7- Other (Please Specify)