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**بعث أفريقيا الغد في سياق التحولات المعولمة :
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**Gender Inequality in the Process of Good Governance:
The Case of the Senegalese Parliament**

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Introduction

Since its independence from France in 1960, Senegal has strived to become a leading example in democratic governance in the western region and of Africa as a whole. Senegal has a reputation of being a pioneer among Africa's democracies, due to the fact that its political system that was led under a single-party system with Leopold Sedar Senghor, Senegal's first president in the aftermath of independence, changed to a multiparty system in the early 1970s to achieve peaceful political transition in the March 2000 and 2012 elections (Mbaye, 1991). This earned Senegal description as an "exception" in Africa as one of the most stable and democratic countries since the independence era. While Senegal's flattering record of political stability and democratic rule is applauded by many analysts, some also strongly argue that enhancing the participation of women within democracies is seen as central to improving governance. As Hillary Clinton once noted: "If half of the world's population remains vulnerable to economic, political, legal and social marginalization, our hope of advancing democracy and prosperity will remain in serious jeopardy" (Agbalajobi, 2010). Senegal is no exception to the essence of this quote as its female population represents more than 52% of its total population (Panapress, 2010).

In fact, today, all actors, from civil society advocates to government officials, understand and stress the basic notion that women have a stake in the political arena. Their full participation in this latter is one of the fundamental conditions for achieving harmonious, and gender equitable development as well as consolidating democracy. As stated by one of the United Nations' branches, namely the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW),

At INSTRAW, we believe that integrating a gender perspective into governance and the current decentralization processes are fundamental for obtaining equitable and inclusive human sustainable development. At the same time, it is necessary to have a greater and transformative presence of women in decision-making positions and a strong women's and feminist movement that favors the recognition of women's rights, their empowerment and the exercise of their full citizenship (UN Women, 2013).

Moreover, research has shown that countries that use the skills and talents of women in key decision-making posts in their government have a greater advantage in increasing their economic growth than those countries with low or no representation of women in the government (Revenge and Shetty, 2012). In the case of Senegal, when it comes to women's representation in Senegalese governance, this statement has yet to be applied fully, as women are still missing in high decision-making positions compared to their counterparts in South Africa, for instance





(Geisler, 2000). However, the Senegalese government has attempted to empower women politically through a parity law voted in 2010, whose application in the July 2012 legislative election brought an astonishing increase of 44.6% women in the parliament (UNWomen, 2013). This is the first time in Senegalese politics that the number of women in the parliament compared to men has risen to this level, marking a historic moment and milestone for the fight of the emancipation of Senegalese women.

This historic record of 64 women out of 150 in its parliament made Senegal rank seven out of 139 countries in the world with the largest number of women in parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2013). This astonishing number of women in the Senegalese parliament raises interesting issues linked, for instance, to the impact and challenges that this number of women parliamentarians will have and/or face in a male-dominated environment and highly patriarchal society such as Senegal. In addition, this increased number of women parliamentarians leads one to ponder the possibility of success of the Senegalese women parliamentarians in reducing gender disparities in some areas where Senegalese women have been discriminated against for a long time.

Indeed, for many decades, women in Senegal have been discriminated against and have not been able to fully enjoy their rights as citizens due to a number of hindrances. Their participation in the political process is impeded due to various social, economic, historical, political and cultural factors, thereby resulting in their minimal participation and even their exclusion. Illiteracy, patriarchal values, lack of access and control over income and other resources, restrictions to public spaces, and insensitive legal systems continue to impede women's effective political participation. In addition, language has also played a significant role in terms of the ability of women to participate fully in the decisions of government. Put differently, the obscure manner in which language is expressed in the parliament can have a significant impact on women's understanding of the documents or discussions about a particular bill and make them less able to participate in the decisions that affect women's lives. Furthermore, in the Senegalese parliament, both French and Wolof are used during sessions, leaving those who speak the other national languages out of the process. Moreover, even for those who only speak Wolof and have not been exposed to French via school for instance, there are challenges when given documents in the official language to read, understand and interpret. As a result, their debates may lack assertiveness and confidence to defend and/or pass bills because of their lack of complete understanding of the material and discussions that are engaged in another language that they do not comprehend.

In addition, the Senegalese government has tried to provide benefits to its citizens under its principles of equality that emanate from the constitution and through its signature of a wide array of international human rights conventions, including the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter. The constitutional





framework as well as the ratification of CEDAW and the African Charter set the scene for fundamental transformation of human rights, governance and economic development, as well as creating a positive and enabling institutional environment that supports women's empowerment and gender equality. Thus, according to the constitution, women and men in Senegal are to be given the same rights and expected to perform at the same levels. Yet, in practice, this is not applied, leaving Senegalese women to face the aforementioned impediments that have for long inhibited their ability to participate significantly in national politics.

In light of the preceding arguments, this paper examines the role of Senegalese women parliamentarians in reducing gender disparities in three policies areas: (1) citizenship, (2) family law, and (3) women's healthcare. The paper also investigates whether in the past legislatures (from 2001 to 2007 and from 2007 to 2012) as well as with the 2012 legislative election that witnessed an increased number of Senegalese women in the parliament, women parliamentarians have or will bring change and transform Senegalese women's lives in the aforementioned policies. In particular, this is a study about conveying to Senegalese women parliamentarians that their critical and large number in the parliament can have a significant impact in changing gender disparities in the Senegalese society. In fact, this paper argues that previous and existing women parliamentarians through their number had or will be able to reduce gender disparities in the aforementioned policies.

In addition, this research's purpose is to draw attention to the impact and effect, as well as the obstacles, Senegalese women in office are facing in regards to advocating for women's policies. Moreover, this study examines the conditions, strategies, or lack thereof, of newly elected Senegalese women parliamentarians in their promotion of women's welfare in these aforementioned policies. In addition, the study also explores past efforts made by previous parliaments to mitigate gender specific issues, as well as gauging newly elected women parliamentarians' agendas in an attempt to make a difference in terms of these issues. Furthermore, the research also argues that in order for the women parliamentarians to be effective on these issues, they need to have certain leadership competencies. This calls for women parliamentarians having the skills and training needed to impact the parliament's national agendas. Thus, the main postulate here is that once the space is created for more Senegalese women to participate in the management of their society through a push of more women's policies on their agendas, a set of common interests in key areas like education, health, and housing will benefit Senegalese women. In addition, effective representation of Senegalese women in the parliament is a great way to empower the youth to change gender biases, attitudes and stereotypes of being "un-African" or against "our" culture to a more open Senegalese society in which all women, men, boys and girls accept and act on the principle that all people are born "equal in dignity and rights."





Literature Review

A plethora of studies about the use of a quota system as a means to increase women's representation in parliament has been at the center stage of the bulk of the literature. Ali Mari Tripp (2004) discusses, for instance, pressure applied by women's movements in African countries as well as international women's movements and the resolutions from various women's conferences such as the Beijing Conference in regards to improving female representation in the political arena. As a result, many African countries have seen an increase of women in parliaments due to the various forms of quotas implemented in the legislations of countries such as Rwanda. Tripp also mentions that governments have sought quotas for symbolic reasons in order to appeal for women's votes as well as showing that they are advocates of women's rights. However, works that examine whether the increased representation has translated into policies that affect women's lives are relatively scarce. Recognizing the impact of women's representation, this paper seeks to fill the gap and contribute to a better understanding of the impact of a critical mass of women in the Senegalese parliament and its effects on reducing gender disparities in three policy areas: (1) citizenship, (2) family law, and (3) women's healthcare.

The review of the literature is divided into three synchronic/thematic sections. The first section discusses the impact and effects of "culture" and "tradition," viewed by many analysts as key hurdles in the quest for gender equality in the political sphere. The second section explores the arguments and challenges of Senegalese women's participation in decision-making posts in the government. The third section focuses on the parity law.

The first theme to be discussed here is the impact of "Culture" and "Tradition". The ensuing paragraphs look at various works that examine the impact and effects of "culture" and "tradition" as key hurdles in the quest for gender equality in the political sphere. Most West African cultures are male-dominated, or patriarchal. The origins for this social structure are debated. Some analysts believe that women held much more powerful roles in West African communities before the coming of colonization and that through colonization European nations imposed Western notions of women's inferiority on West African cultures. Fatou Sow Sarr (2007) as mentioned in Chapter one explains how Ndate Yalla Mbodj and Aline Siteo Diatta, symbols of resistance against French colonialism, maneuvered fiercely for the former against the appropriation of the Kingdom of Waalo by the French between 1840 and 1855, and for the latter, against colonialism in the Casamance region, south of Senegal. Similarly, George Brooks (1976) states that women in Senegal, prior to European influences, held positions of leadership and wealth. He also reveals that there were many wealthy traders with property called "signares" of Senegal (derived from the Portuguese word *senoras*). Moreover, Hadiza Djibo (2001), notes that there are several women who led their people during the colonial era and Arab conquests. Although few in





number, women leaders were not rare before the arrival of religion (variants of Islam and Christianity) and colonization, which were very hostile towards them. Women leaders have had the political will for years, but faced (and still do) social and cultural hurdles at many levels.

Ifi Amadiume (1987) argues that in pre-colonial society, roles were not rigidly masculinized nor feminized. She notes that economic changes in colonial times reduced women's political roles and undermined their status. Amadiume also maintains that the patriarchal tendencies that were prevalent during the colonial era still persist today, to the detriment of women. It is important to note however that in pre-colonial society, matrilineal rule and succession was widespread among many of the region's ethnic groups and among many Senegalese groups. Women, in the matriarchal system control both power and resources. They allowed sometimes their oldest son to manage the resources, but had the final say (Thiaw, 2007).

Aminata Sow Fall (1976) and Mariama Ba (1979) note, however, that women do also play a part in perpetuating the systems that marginalize them. They note, for instance, that Senegal is indeed a patriarchal society but women also play a role in reinforcing that. They emphasize the complexity of the issue of culture in Senegalese societies as well as that the role of women being more complex than simply living in a male-dominated society. They note, for instance, that there are many things that work against women and, sometimes, it is the women themselves who are the origin of this because they have been conditioned over time in this way, conditioned to submit and to obey.

Christopher Isike and Ufo Okeke Uzodike (2011) argue that positive values of womanhood in pre-colonial Africa were thwarted by the colonial interruption of Africa's socio-cultural existence, which ultimately led to the marginalization of women in politics in post-colonial Africa. They further note that even though women numbers in parliament have increased in countries like Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda, the de-feminization that arose from the colonial era makes their participation and representation ineffective in the public domain. Sylvia Tamale (1999) echoes this sentiment by noting that "Patriarchy as a force is so powerful that it permeates and dictates much of what goes on in Uganda's legislatures" (Tamale, 1999: 114). Ali Mazrui (1977), on the other hand, mentions that the roots of politicization of society comes from the militarization of the state rather than the primacy of economics. Mazrui adds that it was the military rather than the economic factors that initially gave men control over the political system. Mazrui further notes that demilitarization was the cause of women's subjection and not their role in economic production.

Angue Medoux et al. (2011), on the other hand, mention that in Africa, equality seems to be attained when there is an enforceable law that is attached to it. However, they also note that it is very difficult to apply the law because of the traditions that force women to be submissive to men. To resolve that issue, she further explains that African women can neutralize these traditions through a different form of parity. This new form of parity refers to women's ability to





judge like men because of the common language they share. Ali Mazrui (2003), on the other hand, explains that the three processes included in the betterment of the female condition involve: (1) liberation, (2) centring, and (3) the empowerment of women. Mazrui further talks about the need for African women to be in command and increased parity to be shared among men and women if the latter are to be a force for peace.

Lucy Duran (2000), on the contrary, states that it is apparent that women in West Africa are often seen as subordinate to men. Duran recounts how the Mande, for example, are patrilineal, patriarchal, and patrilocal. She further describes how, in the male-dominant discourse, women are regarded as subservient to men. Thomas Hale (1999) similarly describes how countless interviews with male griots in the Gambia, Mali, and Senegal confirm what seems to be the general tendency of men “especially in Gambia and Senegal to treat women as second-class participants” (Hale, 1994: 15). Therefore, no open space in the political arena has been allocated to women in those societies for many years. In the same vein, Amina Mama (2001) points out how the post-colonial state or its governance seeks to understand its link to the violent and destructive manifestations and the persistence of patriarchy in Africa, which ultimately confine women to household duties and chores. Mama further explains that women are relegated to the domestic arena because of the domination and persistence of patriarchy, which hampers women’s involvement in the world of governance in Africa.

Kathleen Fallon (2008) follows this last point by arguing that state-run women’s organizations, newly formed constitutions, and the decline of the authoritarian state are the forces behind recent political gains women made in Ghana and other emerging democracies. She further explores how gender roles affect and are affected by the state in Africa from its past history that was composed of male-dominated mechanisms by Western states to latter-day reforms that reflect the active resurgence of women’s politics within many African cultures.

This is also what Filomina Chioma Steady (2011) explores, notably the factors that give rise to different types of female leadership in West Africa by looking at countries such as Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. She explains how the emergence of a “mothering the nation” focus of many women leaders in West Africa can ultimately “humanize” the state and promote peace in nations that were torn once by conflict. On the other hand, Mazrui and White (1991) mention that gender roles in Africa have been affected by Western education, technological changes, and the internationalization of African economies. Mazrui and White further posit that the increasing role of African women in universal nuclear disarmament may be a vehicle for moderating or stopping warfare between nations and states.

Toyin Falola (2011) describes, through a variety of different authors’ works, the diversities and experiences in the lives of African women. Several analyses challenge the traditional frameworks that have been used to discuss issues of gender and women in Africa. In addition, the book contains results of practical research traditions that came from the provision of formal





education and advocacy, as well as prescriptions and recommendations to empower African women. One turning point in the latter's journey towards gender mainstreaming in the political arena has been when Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was sworn in as President of Liberia. It was an event that profoundly marked and made proud scholars and other individuals who are vested in gender and African politics.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (2009) retraces her journey to power through a narrative of her experiences in early childhood and her determination to succeed and fight for democracy and social justice and bring change to a country decimated by 14 years of a brutal civil conflict. By sharing her story, the first female African President encourages other women to pursue leadership roles at the highest levels of power and gives hope that, with perseverance, women can attain to higher decision-making positions and change the political sphere. Similarly, Ali Mazrui (1993) explains that the Africa of the future is awaited by two major revolutions among which is a gender revolution in roles. In addition, Mazrui states that the power of women in the 21st century needs to be unbound.

Major challenges, however, still pose problems in Senegal for the effective participation of women in politics. Although there has been an increase in the numbers of women in legislative bodies, generally Senegalese women continue to be under-represented in all structures of power and decision-making. They are subjected to cultural attitudes that do not recognize the right of women to lead. While policies that promote gender equality in appointments to decision-making positions are in place in some countries, implementation lags far behind, and Senegal is a prime example.

The next theme deals with the arguments and challenges of Senegalese women's participation in decision-making posts. Aminata Faye Kassé (2004) observes that Senegalese women's participation in decision-making is quite different and complex. She points out how women are hardly to be found in decision-making positions in general, even though progress has been made in regards to the number of women in the National Assembly over the past 20 years. She argues that there is still a lot of work to be done, especially in terms of having an institutional mechanism to promote more women politically. She further argues that in the absence of a legislative mechanism, Senegalese women worked with political parties and actors through initiatives to raise awareness, advocacy and training workshops.

Similarly, Linda Beck (2003) describes how women in Senegal confront many political obstacles that include exclusion from positions of influence within the government as well as a lack of resources for support. She further posits that these difficulties probably come from gendered conceptions of political leadership. In addition, she notes that democratic reforms pose structural constraints on the political participation of women. As a result, she adds, women have marginal access to the hidden patronage networks.





On the other hand, Anne Look (2009) recounts how hundreds of women and youth marched through the streets of a suburb of Dakar to support the commune's first female mayoral candidate. She mentions that "her candidacy alone provided a ray of hope for women trying to break into Senegal's political boys' club. The fact that she headed her party's roster was a noteworthy achievement for women in politics" (Look, 2009). She also argues that Senegalese women hold less than 20 percent of Senegal's elected posts and many of them say that it undermines the democratic and developmental health of the struggling country.

Other works show also the challenges that Senegalese women face in entering the political arena. Koffigan Adigbli (2008) notes that women are finding it difficult to integrate into the political arena due to low high school and university graduation rates for women. Another major challenge affecting effective participation of the women is the lack of confidence that make the women unable to effectively articulate the issues and make contributions. He also states that Penda Mbow, a history professor at Dakar's internationally known Cheikh Anta Diop University, stated that "There are still men who won't take orders from a woman. Senegal is one of the many countries where women are relegated to secondary roles in public administration, major institutions and political power" (Adigbli, 2008).

On the same note, Aissata De Diop (2002) reveals that there has been resistance to the consistent implementation of women's proper ranking in legislative electoral lists. This is due to, according to some analysts, either the lack of the required skills or the lack of women candidates. She also notes that very few parties have training programs to bolster women's political capacities. Ali Mazrui (1996) suggests that correcting the marginalization of African women involves language planning. Mazrui explains that language policy and language planning are essential to cultural adjustment, and are contributing to greater sexual equality in areas such as economics, diplomacy, society and history in Africa's experience and politics.

On the other hand, Ebbe Prag (2011) addresses the question of how Senegalese women act in politics, what they defend, and how they influence resource allocation. He argues that structural changes have led women to enter the political arena. However, he stresses the fact that women leaders often start their careers in party politics as a result of co-optation by male political leaders, but do not continue to stay passive. In this context, he posits that Senegalese female politicians demonstrate that they are capable of taking up political positions through local women organizations' support. He contends that the existing political culture had not changed radically before women entered the scene.

Amy Patterson (2003) explores how the preferences and authority of certain groups can shape local organizations. She also discusses the implication of this institutional bargaining on the decisions local organizations make when it comes to resource allocation and implementation of development projects. On the same issue, Sheldon Geller (2002) shows how centralized state structures and monopoly of political power stifle local initiative and perpetuate neo-patrimonial





modes of governance. Michelle Kuenzi (2011) takes a different look at Senegalese politics by examining the role of non-formal education in African languages in the promotion of democracy in Senegal. She tested rural Senegalese citizens in order to see the effects of non-formal education on political participation and attitudes and find that the latter stimulate community and political participation. She further argues that both non-formal education and formal education increase the likelihood that people will embrace democratic and tolerant attitudes. While Kuenzi's book is useful in discussing the impact of non-formal education, it does not recognize its potent force in pushing for more political participation among Senegalese women.

The third theme discusses the parity law. The push for a parity law in the political arena is increasingly becoming a topic of discussion on the African continent. Indeed, from advocating to getting more women into parliaments or to higher decision-making posts in the government, organizations of the civil society throughout the continent have voiced their favorable approval on this goal, but they are still struggling to make it a reality. Senegal succeeded, however, to make this distant dream for many African countries a reality with the voting and application of a parity law in May 2010 and July 2012, respectively, which led to an increase in the number of women's representation in the parliament. The application of the parity law was done through the electoral lists whereby men and women alternate on party lists. This ensures that women are not just represented equally in numbers, but also in their electoral strength. Indeed, the parity law took into account the "zebra stripping" method, which requires that all candidate lists for the legislative, regional, municipal and rural elections consist of an equal number of men and women candidates, with men's and women's names being alternated. The alternate placement of men and women in frontline and deputizing positions protected women from situations where they are grouped at the bottom of lists, and where candidates have fewer chances of being elected. The "zebra stripping" method was rigorously followed and non-compliance to that requirement of the parity law led to disqualifications from the legislative electoral process (Quota Project, 2013).

As mentioned earlier, the number of women parliamentarians has consistently increased from 1963 to 2012. From one woman parliamentarian in 1963, the number rose to 64 in 2012. The period from 1978 to 1983 recorded an increase of eight (or 10.83%) women parliamentarians. This was the period that witnessed in 1981 the resignation of Senegal's first president to his replacement by Abdou Diouf. The next period that registered a high number of women parliamentarians is from 2007 to 2012, with an increase of 37 (or 44.6%) women due to the application of the parity law. One female legislator, Ndèye Fatou Touré, in an interview with the Inter Press Service News Agency on June 7, 2010, mentioned that the law will give a considerable boost to women. She added that "Parity is a lifting of obstacles, an open door. This law will allow women equal access to decision-making" (International Press Service, 2010).

Toure's statement raises a poignant question regarding how this access through a large representation of women in the parliament will transform women's lives. It further calls attention



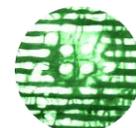


to the need to interrogate the type of decision-making to which Toure is referring, in the sense that in the African context, women are often excluded from decision-making, from the household up to the highest levels of policymaking (Brody, 2009). As a matter of fact, the situation offers an important opportunity to interrogate whether this large number will lead to additional gendered policies that will improve Senegalese women's welfare.

Through the parity law, the women in Senegal offer the best opportunity to learn about the impact of raising the participation of women in democratic institutions because of this remarkable attempt to improve the representation of women in government and in parliament. This aspect is highlighted in the bulk of the literature, which praises the recent advancement of African women in politics and parliaments through the quota system, with very little attention being given to the effects of this change on elected women officials' push on policies geared toward improving the welfare of women (Goetz and Hassim, 2003). Indeed, Senegalese women are no exception. Once women have broken through the barriers of being elected to office, the challenges remain in terms of their ability to push for women's issues and policies during their terms in office. These challenges include, among others, loyalty to their political party, a male-dominated environment, a lack of confidence and a lack of mastery of gender issues (Kilimoh, 2009). Sarah Longwe (1998) shares a similar view by mentioning that women's low participation in politics is due to a lack of confidence and skills on the part of most women. Longwe (1998) adds that women do show a reluctance to enter into the political arena and compete for political offices because of a perceived fear of opposition or rejection by men.

Continuing on the theme of the parity law, Sylvia Chant (2006) explains that a high representation in the parliament is usually perceived as progress in the gender approach. This progress happened in countries like Senegal as this study demonstrates. Fatou Sarr (2012) echoes the same observation by mentioning that the parity law is a political concept for "*un projet de société égalitaire*" ("equal society project" in English) between men and women. She further argues that the parity law can lead to an identity problem in the future. For instance, she notes that a population that represents 1% in Senegal can say, in the name of parity, "I need to have the same number of seats as any other category." She further states that even though parity is a means towards equality, it is a mechanical way for women to have seats. In that sense, she poses this question: Is it what people want? For instance, 40% of women were in the senate, but it did not really serve any purpose. She further mentions that on a scientific level, a sample has scientific value only if it is representative of the population. Thus, if women are 52% of the population, why do they have to be 50% at the National Assembly (Sarr, 2012).

According to Sarr (2012), President Wade was the first leader in the country's history to nominate a woman as Prime Minister on May 12, 2001, as well as two female Vice-Presidents in the National Assembly. This slight effort in the representation of Senegalese women in the government triggered organizations of the civil society to denounce the paucity of women in the



echelons of decision-making. Sarr argues that these meager numbers also ignited the Senegalese civil society's advocacy on equal representation of women in instances of decision-making. In 2002, President Abdoulaye Wade worked in collaboration with the leaders of an organization of the Senegalese civil society, Women of Africa and Solidarity (FAS, in its French acronym), led by Binta Diop, to support a parity project at the African Commission (Sarr, 2012). Since then, the question of parity has been prominent in the debate on Senegal's future political landscape.

The African Union's adoption of parity principles in its system has created an important innovative framework for women's participation in Africa's development (Gregoire et al., 2008). Moreover, the judicial arguments of the parity principles rest, respectively, on Articles 14 and 9 of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter that Senegal signed. Indeed, Article 4 of CEDAW mentions that the state needs to take affirmative action to realize gender equity (CEDAW, 2012).

The African Charter goes even further by noting that states need to assure parity between men and women at all instances of the electoral process (African Union, 2013). In that regard, Fatou Kine Camara (2012), a law professor at the University of Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar, points out that it is the protocol of the African Charter itself that utilizes the term of representative parity. Camara also notes that since Senegal ratified that protocol, it is legitimate for the Senegalese people to ask for a representative parity because it is the law. She further explains that the Senegalese constitution as well as the electoral code has also been modified recently to show that the law favors the equal access of men and women to high decision-making posts. Aminata Diaw further notes, "Women have continued to constitute the popular mass and in that sense, have continued in their huge majority to be in political parties to only represent an electoral mass" (Diaw 2004: 232). Thus, it is instrumental for the women's movements to demonstrate their political responsibility in the tasks of governance, in lieu of representation of an electoral mass. This is possible unless larger numbers of women are present in all these bodies to collectively engender politics.

Since 2005, COSEF, like other organizations, started its campaign for an equal representation of men and women in all instances of decision-making with a campaign slogan titled "*Avec la parite, consolidons la democratie*" (With parity, let us consolidate democracy). It was aimed at raising awareness about the necessity to have equal representation of men and women in all decision-making posts. Yacinthe Diene (1998) mentions that the advocacy campaign also targeted an increase and an improvement in the representation and inclusion of Senegalese women in party lists. Diene also explains that the campaign encouraged candidates to share their issues in the electorate and their programs. Diene further notes that the campaign's goal was to encourage electors to take into consideration women's candidacies so that their representation in the state's institutions such as the National Assembly will increase. In the same spirit, Moussa Diallo (2010) mentions that Fatou Kiné Diop, president of COSEF, said: "We must now support



and educate communities so they can take ownership of the new law. We also call on the head of state to promulgate it, but especially civil society which now has important work to do in terms of monitoring” (Diallo, 2010).

COSEF worked in partnership with 17 women’s political movements and five organizations from civil society. COSEF played a significant role in the adoption of the law. COSEF used petitions, visits to religious and political party leaders, campaign awareness through radio and television shows, as well as a celebrity Senegalese singer to have a song about parity, social mobilization, lobbying through sit-ins, and marches (COSEF, 2011). COSEF also made sure that Senegal ratified two laws of which women were a part: (1) the convention on the elimination of any form of discrimination on women (1979) and (2) the African protocol about women’s rights in Africa (COSEF, 2011).

The Women Caucus Leaders supported the parity law through a wide variety of activities. On April 16, 2010, women leaders from different political parties, organizations of the civil society, along with trade unions, met to talk about an advocacy campaign to support the parity law. Later that year, there was a national awareness campaign about the parity law (Senparite Caucus, 2013). The Caucus also met with President Wade, the Socialist Party leader, Ousmane Tanor Dieng and the Alliance of the Forces of Progress (AFP in its French acronym) leader, Moustapha Niasse. The Caucus also organized several regional fora to sensitize people about the parity law in: Dakar, Thies, Louga, Ziguinchor, Kedougou, to name a few (Senparite Caucus, 2013).

The Caucus also conducted several press conferences to bring awareness about the law, as well as participating in radio and television shows to explain what is at stake about the parity law. The caucus also created a Web site and several brochures about the parity law. From December 21, 2010 to May 7 2011, the caucus sensitized about 3000 leaders throughout the 24 regions of Senegal through talks with religious leaders (the Imam of Ziguinchor, for instance, on Friday, May 6, 2011 preached about the parity law). There were also songs and sketches about parity that were produced, as well as an effective use of the media, civil society and trade unions in their advocacy and awareness campaigns about the parity law (Senparite Caucus, 2013).

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

Drude Dahlerup's Critical Mass Theory provides the theoretical framework to help explain whether, how, and why Senegalese women have been denied benefits related to the three policies areas of this paper, as well as the impact for social change which is reflected in the parity law. Drude Dahlerup's Critical Mass Theory emerged from an analysis of the experiences of women who form small minorities in the political sphere. The concept of ‘critical actors’ and an African centered perspective are also utilized in this study in addition to the Critical Mass Theory.



Dahlerup notes that the theory was borrowed from nuclear physics, by making reference to the notion that once a chain reaction is set in motion, an irrevocable new situation or process comes out of it (Dahlerup, 1988: 275). Moreover, according to Sara Childs and Mona Krook (2009), the notion of critical mass is based on the assumptions that the policies and processes of an organization are shaped by the framework of a public body. Childs and Krook also explain that in the literature of political science scholars, critical mass is associated with the notion that the election of an acceptable number of female politicians will lead the government to be more responsive to women.

Also, Dahlerup (1988) mentions that once a critical mass of women is achieved in a political arena, there will be changes in the political, social and policy discourse. Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1982) further, expects that when the composition of a group is altered, changes in culture and behavior will occur, while Pippa Norris (1996) associates changes in political attitudes, policy priorities and legislative styles and roles with an increased number of women in politics. Judith Squires notes, in that vein, that “the key difference...is whether one looks at the composition of parliament to determine its representativeness, or whether one looks at the decisions made” (Squires, 1999: 203). Dahlerup ultimately is concerned with how women respond to situations when they are a minority or marginalized in a group.

Sheila Bunwaree (2010) notes that Dahlerup’s Critical Mass Theory generally assumes that 33% is the proportion at which a minority constitutes a critical mass and can have an influence in an assembly. This resulted from a study about the effects of women’s behavior as the proportion of female legislators increased. The Critical Mass Theory implies that as the number of women increase in legislatures, they will be able to effectively work together to promote policies and pass more bills on women’s issues than their female counterparts in low representation legislatures (Bratton, 2005; Thomas, 1991, 1994). In the same vein, J. Jacquette (1997) mentions that the more women win the required numbers in legislatures, the more likely they would be able to impact various agendas. Jacquette notes:

If the trend continues, quotas will soon produce a quantum leap in women’s political power. For the first time, women will form a “critical mass” of legislators in many countries, able to set new agendas and perhaps create new styles of leadership (Jacquette, 1997).

Other scholars also show that as the number of women increases, the number and rate of enactment of such bills also increases (Saint-Germain, 1989; Skard and Haavio-Mannila, 1985), including the proportion of the total legislations they introduce. These scholars explain these changes as a result of a supportive legislative environment brought by the presence of more women who champion more women issues in the process. In addition, the increased number of women leads to opportunities for women to form coalitions with one another, thereby anticipating that a critical mass of women is sufficient to promote more women policy outcomes.





Indeed, it is often claimed that women would only impact political decisions once they achieve a critical mass within legislative bodies (Saint-Germain, 1989). Moreover, the Critical Mass Theory proposes that the percentage of women in an institution is the key determinant of their behavior and that it can influence their male colleagues to accept legislations addressing women's concerns (Blum and Smith, 1988).

As a result, Dahlerup identifies six areas where women might have an impact in politics: (1) reactions to women politicians, with a decline in sexist treatment and sexual harassment; (2) the performance and efficiency of female politicians, with fewer women leaving politics; (3) the social climate of political life, with the arrival of more consensual styles and family-friendly working arrangements; (4) political discourse with a redefinition of 'political' concerns; (5) the policy-making agenda, with a feminization of the political agenda; and (6) the influence and power of women in general, with the broader social and economic empowerment of women (Dahlerup, 1988: 283-299).

Dahlerup also focuses on the opportunity for women to form supportive alliances when there is an increased number of them, overlooking the possibility that women as a group will grow more diverse as their numbers grow, as well as the chance for women to have an impact even when they constitute only a very small minority of all political representatives. Dahlerup argues that the mechanisms that lie in initiatives or critical acts can change the position of the minority and bring changes. The acts include the recruitment of other women, the introduction of quotas for women and new equality legislation and equality institutions, as well as the willingness and ability of the minority to mobilize the resources of the institution or organization to improve their situation and the whole minority group (Dahlerup, 1988: 296).

Opponents of the Critical Mass Theory argue that more policy outcomes for women do not occur even when the percentage of women in the legislature reaches a critical mass proportion ranging from 10 to 40 percent (Childs, 2004; Grey 2002; Towns, 2003). Some scholars note that a number of factors prevent women from pursuing reforms affecting other women's concerns. The factors include (1) opportunities and constraints that stem from political party affiliation (Childs, 2004); (2) legislative committee membership (Swers, 2004); (3) institutional reforms (Rosenthal, 1998); (4) external political environment, including the electoral system (Swers, 2004); potential backlash from male legislators as the number of women rises (Towns, 2003). Other scholars also argue that women can achieve gains for other women by mobilizing individually or through women's legislative caucuses without having to reach a critical mass (Crowley, 2004; Reingold, 2000).

J. Jacquette (1997) notes that the existing literature about critical mass fails to explain the effects of the increased number on the power relations between men and women in the political arena. Anne Phillips (1995) and Iris Marion Young (1990) denounce the failure of the Critical Mass Theory literature to link identities and ideas: more specifically, the impact of identity on





decision-making. Hence, both Phillips and Young advocate for the need of a “politics of presence” in decision-making. Phillips endorses the concept of “politics of presence” by noting that “it is in the relationship between ideas and presence that we can best hope to find a fairer system of representation, not in a false opposition between one or the other” (Phillips, 1995: 25). Moreover, Phillips claimed that the focus on “politics of presence” has to be put in a wider context of participatory democracy.

Scholars like Childs and Krook (2009) propose an alternative approach to Critical Mass Theory by introducing the concept of ‘critical actors,’ who they refer to as individuals that act collectively or individually to bring about women-friendly policy change. Similarly, Chaney (2012) notes that recent theories such as the substantive representation of women (SRW) in parliaments emphasize that in addition to the traditional concern about achieving a critical mass of women in an assembly, scholars need also to investigate who the ‘critical actors’ are. Chaney gives the example of the Scottish parliament by noting that a key role in the SRW resides in how the critical actors interact with the critical mass. As a result, future studies need to integrate factors that shape the critical mass/critical actor interaction, including the type of parliamentary proceedings, institutional mechanisms, party allegiances and whether women parliamentarians belong to the party forming the executive (Chaney, 2012).

Stella Rouse (2009) on the same note explores whether legislators respond to a particular race or ethnicity when making decisions about policies that are placed on the agendas. Rouse finds that the race and ethnicity of the legislator, as well as constituency and institutional factors, do matter for the sponsorship of legislations that are important to minorities. This means, for instance, that both African Americans and Latinos are more than likely than non-Blacks and non-Latinos to sponsor a legislation that is related to Black and Latino interests. As a result, Rouse concludes that Blacks and Latinos do provide substantive representation during the agenda setting phase and that when they serve with few members of their own group, they take on an even larger role in this type of representation.

Sylvia Erzeel and Karen Celis (2009) echo the same sentiment by noting that in general, research that deals with substantive representation emphasize that women, feminists and leftists are more fervent in representing women and their interests as compared to men and non-feminist. Erzeel and Celis concentrate their research on legislators’ attitudes and behavior in Belgium, Hungary, and Germany. Their findings validate recent arguments about substantive representation stating that (1) gender ideology is an important factor in addition to the sex of the representatives; for instance, they discover that ‘preferable representatives’ fit far better into the group of critical actors than women parliamentarians; and (2) women and leftwing parties are not the sole actors in the representation of women’s interests in parliament. It is the male parliamentarians (regardless of a bond with the women’s movement) and rightwing parties that play the role of critical actors in the three selected countries. Consequently, their findings



confirm the importance of incorporating previously ‘invisible’ actors in future research of the substantive representation of women.

Sue Regan (2012) on the one hand looks at the critical actors’ concept not from the perspective of a political institution such as the parliament but at the micro-level of neighborhood governance in Newcastle, England. She discovers that when women hold positions of power at the community level, they achieve greater influence through women’s networking and collaboration. The networks comprise of non-state actors and other women who are present in state roles. This result validates the need to have critical actors in order for women representatives at the neighborhood level to make an impact in their positions.

Pamela Oliver and Gerald Marwell (1988), nonetheless, note that empirical research has often found that the size of a group is the best predictor of its level of collective action. They also mention that many sociologists make a mistake by believing that larger groups are less likely to support collective action than smaller ones. Oliver and Marwell explain that the effect of group size depends on costs. They mention that once the costs of collective goods rise with the number of people sharing them, larger groups act less frequently than smaller ones. Contrastingly, when the costs vary little with the group size, larger groups exhibit more collective action than smaller ones because they have more resources and are more likely to have a critical mass of highly resourceful and interested actors. They also emphasize that the positive effects of group size increase with group heterogeneity and non-random social ties.

In sum, proponents of the ‘critical actors’ concept argue that a simple rise in numbers does not necessarily add up to a more effective female presence in parliament. For example, the increased number of women parliamentarians can lead to more bills on women’s issues, but it does not necessarily strengthen the political alliances that are necessary to get the bills passed. One important condition that contributes to the ability of women to effectively promote gender equality is the presence of individual women who act as critical actors that play key roles in the political process (Chaney, 2012).

Moreover, some studies have shown that the ability of women elected to parliament to act as catalysts of change, both among their peers and within their parties, depends on personal characteristics such as their political career paths through party and grassroots activism and family ties, or through their personal ideological, degree of attachment, and loyalty to the party or constituencies they represent. They bring with them many important resources such as their positions of influence within their party, their personal prestige or family reputation, or strong connection to the local women’s movement (Regan, 2012). The current study explores who the critical actors among the women parliamentarians are and whether they are able to make an impact on the legislations of the policy areas covered.

It is important to point out in this study that Eurocentric theories have been challenged by African-centered thinkers. Indeed, Africanist scholars such as Oyeronke Oyewumi, who



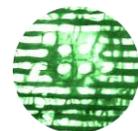


advocates for the Africancentric and Third World theories, argues that European-centered theories such as the Critical Mass Theory may not be appropriate for the type of research being conducted here. Indeed, Onyewumi argues that “Any serious scholarship on the place of ‘gender’ in African realities must of necessity raise questions about prevailing concepts and theoretical approaches” (2004: 2). This argument stems from the fact that most research on gender issues have been done, according to Onyewumi, on the premises of European and American experiences, leaving out the African realities. Onyewumi also argues that when African realities are interpreted based on Western claims, there are ultimately distortions, confusions in language, and a lack of comprehension due to the discordance of the institutions and social categories evoked.

Oyewumi defines gender as a “foundational category upon which social categories have been erected” (1997:7). She further states that “gender is both socially constructed and biologically determined” (1997:9). Oyewumi makes the case that the narrative of gender that is prevalent in the Western interpretation of the social world is referred to as a cultural discourse and cannot be assumed for other cultures without a critique. In addition, she criticizes the fundamental principles of Western feminist thought, which are based on woman and sex/gender. She argues that these concepts come from the idea of the nuclear family, which is a Western based conception that does not take into account the role of gender in different settings other than the Western world.

Oyewumi further argues that gender roles are by definition socially and culturally constructed, putting a strong emphasis on the fact that roles vary from culture to culture, community to community, and household to household. As a matter of fact, the term “womanism” was created to emphasize the study of women in Third World societies, especially in Africa and for women of color in the United States. Africanist scholars saw the need and necessity to have women’s studies grounded in African culture, which focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African women. Consequently, “womanism” refers to an African-centered approach, as it places Africa at the center of its analysis in order to distinguish itself from feminism, which is often viewed from a Western perspective and not from the lens of the woman in African society. Hence, Oyewumi’s Africancentric and Third World approach may probably refute the Eurocentric Critical Mass Theory of Dahlerup as not being appropriate for this research on Senegalese women parliamentarians because the latter is not conducive to the experience and history of gender discourse in Senegalese studies.

Before explaining in the ensuing paragraphs why Dahlerup’s Critical Mass Theory is appropriate for this study, this upcoming section first discusses about another prominent Africanist scholar, Ali Al’amin Mazrui, whose insights about gender issues through his Humanity Gender Theory have been very significant in African Gender studies. Mazrui (1995) mentions that the problems of gender equity are among the six major issues facing Africa in the





21st Century. Mazrui also explains that the empowerment of African women in the 21st Century will lead to more women's positions in state power. He further notes that empowering women is the political therapy that will help solve the problems of Africa. For that, his Humanity Gender Theory postulates that the dynamics of human equality is reflected in a social context environment where interactions exist between men and women from different nationalities, race and religion (*Etin Antwar, 2005*).

Moreover, Etin Antwar (2005) posits that Mazrui's theory on gender is based on a paradigm that reflects an outsider versus insider criterion centered on the question of whether one understands women's culture and their lives. Antwar also notes that the essence of human equality is associated with equal status and the interaction and role of men and women in every aspect of life. Besides, Antwar argues the way Mazrui formulates the human condition in Africa is also seen in other Third World regions, where men dominate women, and the latter are subordinate. As a result, even in the political arena, one sees this unequal relationship. Furthermore, Antwar affirms that Mazrui believes that solving or integrating women's issues will lead to a "complete" humanity, as he takes women's conditions very seriously and places them as in integral part of the human condition. Antwar (2005) further points out that Mazrui views any sexism that is detrimental to women, namely malignant sexism, as the drive that widens the gap between men and women socially, economically, and politically. As Mazrui asserts, "the most fundamental aspects of malignant sexism concern differences in power between men and women, both politically and economically" (1991: 231).

Even though Mazrui's Complete Humanity Gender Theory and Oyewumi's Africancentric and Third World theories have merit because they highlight important aspects of gender studies from the African woman's lens, the Critical Mass Theory is appropriate for this study, as it guides the analysis in regards to whether or not the historic number of women in the new Senegalese parliament of July 2012 truly makes a difference for women through the enactment of bills in the aforementioned policy areas. The theory also helps to determine whether the increased number represents a symbol for other Senegalese women that it is possible for them to join the political arena and the National Assembly, as well as an opportunity for the new parliamentarian women to be role models for female youths. The Critical Mass Theory also helps to explore whether Senegalese women parliamentarians form alliances with one another or whether differences among them prevent coalitions among them when they are present in larger numbers.

This study uses a triangulative methodological approach by combining qualitative, descriptive and explanatory case study research methods, and descriptive and correlational statistical techniques. This study seeks to understand the elements that contribute, or act as barriers, to the enactment of gender-based policies by Senegalese women parliamentarians. It attempts to gain an understanding of the factors that facilitate or hinder women parliamentarians' role in making a difference in the three policy areas this dissertation covers. In addition, the findings of this study





may be of interest to the participants, the Senegalese government and other Francophone parliaments. Furthermore, qualitative research allows one to understand people and the contexts in which they live. In this research context, it is necessary to look at whether or not the increased number of women parliamentarians leads to gendered policies in the areas of citizenship, family law, and women's healthcare. It is also important to look at the factors that shaped the increase or lack thereof of Senegalese women's policies in the abovementioned areas.

The selection of a qualitative approach is also determined by the type of subject matter selected for the study. This latter seeks to examine the mechanisms, strategies and barriers that women parliamentarians identify as being significant in their ability to successfully enact bills in reducing gender disparities in citizenship, family law and women's healthcare. It would be complicated, however, to identify all the possible variables that might be identified by the women parliamentarians as impacting their role in reducing gender disparities, due to the vast array of possibilities. Factors such as a male-dominated environment, lack of confidence, lack of effective communication skills, and lack of knowledge about gender issues and parliamentary legislations are just some factors that could have been recognized by the women parliamentarians.

The case study approach was chosen due to the purpose and goals of the research to evaluate the role of Senegalese women parliamentarians in reducing gender disparities in the areas of citizenship, family law, and women's healthcare. The case study approach is also appropriate because the main interviewees of this study share an experience that is unique to them. This is the first time that their number has been this high in the parliament since its inception in 1963. An attempt is made in this study to comprehend what transpired or will be put in place to enable the women parliamentarians' influence, ability and commitment to reduce gender disparities.

Descriptive statistics provide an account of the characteristics of individuals, groups, or situations (Jack and Clarke, 1998). The overall aim is to "discover new meaning, describe what exists, determine the frequency with which something occurs and categorize information" (Burns and Grove, 1999: 24). A descriptive statistics address the question "what?" They provide an accurate description of observations of phenomena. In this case, it is important to look at whether Senegalese women parliamentarians would be able to reduce gender disparities in the policy areas investigated.

The study also follows an explanatory case study approach method, which attempts to find out more about the possible causes of a situation and deals with the questions "how?" and "why?" It is important for this study to analyze how and why the parity law is the answer or not to transform Senegalese women's lives. The strength of the explanatory case study technique lies in its utility to look for explanations of the nature of certain relationships. This approach, for instance, allows for the unfamiliar readers who want to learn more about the impact of the parity law in gendered policies to be familiar with the effects of the increased number of Senegalese



women in the parliament. However, the primary limitation to this type of study is that initial findings may be convincing and can be prematurely released as conclusions (Yin, 2009).

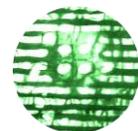
In addition, in an explanatory research, key variables and relationships are defined in the problem definition stage. Moreover, explanatory research also involves the use of hypothesis testing, which provides an understanding of the relationships that exist between variables. Furthermore, explanatory research is also known as casual research, which is focused on finding causal relationships between variables, aiming to describe sources of relationship between cause and effect, and relationships expressing the cause and effect of particular incidents (Yin, 2003).

The following hypotheses are therefore suggested for testing:

- H₁: The women parliamentarians believe that the more women that enter parliament, then they would be more likely and effective in tackling issues related to citizenship, family law, and women's healthcare.
- H₂: If Senegalese women parliamentarians perceive issues that are of interest to women in these three areas, then they would be more likely to champion the policy enactment processes pertaining to them.
- H₃: If the newly elected Senegalese women parliamentarians have the necessary legislative skills and experience, then they would have more impact in the legislature.
- H₄: If the parity law is effective, then it would transform Senegalese women's lives.
- H₅: If gender discrimination exists in committee assignments, then Senegalese women parliamentarians would be systematically excluded from the committees.
- H₆: If women parliamentarians are effective in impacting public policies, then problems related to gender inequality would be resolved.

The data collection technique consists of document analysis of secondary sources of books, academic journals, and the Internet. The data collection also includes primary source interviews with twelve women parliamentarians and five non-state actors. Before engaging in the analysis of the data collected, it makes sense to first provide definitions of the major concepts—i.e. *citizenship*, *family law* and *women's healthcare*—and brief discussions of their nature in the Senegalese context.

The term citizenship, according to the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, has two definitions: (1) the legal right to belong to a particular country and (2) the state of being a citizen and accepting its responsibilities. For the purpose of this study, the first definition of citizenship is used, which, in the Senegalese context, encompasses deep issues and discrimination towards women when it comes to the question of 'belonging.' Indeed, for decades, as stated earlier, a Senegalese woman cannot give her nationality to her child if married to a non-Senegalese man. The reverse, however, with a Senegalese man married to a non-Senegalese woman automatically grants citizenship to the child.



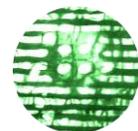


The issue of citizenship has long loomed over Senegal and Senegalese women parliamentarians, who have been fighting to reverse this law so that a Senegalese mother, regardless of the nationality of the father of her child, can also grant citizenship to her child (AfriMap, 2012). It is important to note that for this study, the legal rights are the basis of citizenship, but there also is a broader notion of citizenship. Indeed, just because some individuals may not have legal rights does not necessarily mean that they do not consider themselves Senegalese. What does it mean to be a Senegalese? According to law No. 61-70, four principles are recognized for the acquisition of Senegalese citizenship: (1) descent, (2) a woman's marriage, (3) residence, and (4) presidential decree (Gerdes, 2010). In addition, the answer to this question may be larger than the legal rights of citizenship because the attribution of citizenship also deals with property rights, inheritance and widowship, which are aspects that affect all women.

Family law, in the context of this study, deals with the situation that Senegalese women have faced for many years regarding paternal rights. For instance, when a woman gets pregnant by a man who does not recognize the baby, the woman cannot register the child. Furthermore, Senegalese women who get raped or get undesirable pregnancies usually commit infanticide. One of the reasons for that deals with the fact that most of the time men do not recognize the children nor register them. This is a social phenomenon that is increasingly spreading, with large numbers of new borns killed as a result of women being deprived of the right to register their children and not wanting to bear the stigma of having a 'bastard' child. This situation is made worse by the provision under Article 152 of the Family Code which recognizes only Senegalese men as "Family Heads." Article 277 also underlines the paternal authority of men, while Article 153 gives men the responsibility to choose the marital home (*Code de la Famille Senegalaise*, 2013).

The issue of women's healthcare in this research deals with prenatal care. Women parliamentarians have long denounced the high, albeit recently slightly reduced, maternal mortality rates that Senegal faced in the recent years due to many factors that include a lack of prenatal care that many women experienced. Women parliamentarians and their allies have fought in the past years to enact a bill that will allow free prenatal care for pregnant women. This is yet to happen, as many Senegalese women in the rural areas, for instance, are still giving birth at home or are being transported on a cartwheel from their home to the nearest health post to give birth. But many times, the women do not make it and die on the way or in the process of giving birth as a result of complications due to a lack of prenatal care, and other reasons related to a lack of infrastructures and suitable hospitals and doctors (Voice of America, 2009).

In order to address these abovementioned issues, current female members of the parliament and their allies have to take a more aggressive stance to mitigate these problems. This study examined the legislative records of past women parliamentarians from 2001 to 2007 and from





2007 to 2012 to determine the extent to which women's issues have been addressed, as well as discuss the current women parliamentarians' agenda in regards to policies geared towards citizenship, family law, and women's healthcare. It is not clear at this point whether the elected women parliamentarians have the ability, resources and adequate allies to make a difference in these three issues, particularly if they have been in office a very few months, if they are not familiar with the legislative process, as well as their lack of experience and training about Senegalese gender issues. These impediments, if not mitigated, can be damaging to women parliamentarians' role in reducing gender disparities in Senegal.

Data Analysis

This analysis combines the literary research and expert interviews on the aforementioned policy areas this paper addressed. The analysis is divided first into five subsections, each covering the findings of each of the major theme provided by the data interviews. The five themes are: 1) the role of Senegalese women parliamentarians, 2) the environment, 3) the impact of the parity law, 4) the policy areas, and 5) the non-state actors. Then, an assessment of the hypotheses is discussed, followed by a discussion of the findings and a conclusion.

The role of Senegalese women parliamentarians

This section covers the experience of Senegalese women parliamentarians in addressing issues related to citizenship, family law, and women's healthcare, the skills and experience of the newly elected Senegalese women parliamentarians, the factors that led to the success of Senegalese women parliamentarians in their role, and the factors that led to the failures of Senegalese women parliamentarians in their role.

In reference to the experience of Senegalese women parliamentarians in addressing issues dealing with citizenship, family law and women's healthcare, the study found that the factors that emerged most often for them as catalysts for their parliamentary experience came from their previous professional experience, their affiliation to key NGOs such as COSEF and the Association of Senegalese Lawyers (AJS in its French acronym), and their membership in a parliamentary committee. They believed that the experience, strategies, best practices and take-aways they received from their previous jobs helped them in their role as women parliamentarians. Several of them spoke of the fact that they accumulated their experience based on their jobs as coordinators, educators, campaigning for NGOs, as well as from the training they received on particular subjects as members of parliamentary committees.

Interviewees also mentioned the fact that they are dealing with these subjects within the parliamentary committees, which in turn increased their awareness and knowledge about these issues. Respondents additionally said that they acquired more knowledge about key conventions



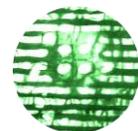


like CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol through their seminars or affiliation with key NGOs. This is confirmed by Kasse (2004) who indicated that Senegalese women parliamentarians worked with actors to raise their awareness about different issues as well as participating in training workshops. Furthermore, it was also expected that because this legislature was the first one for most of the newly-elected women parliamentarians, some of them will not have had any experience dealing with these issues. However, for some of these women, the training they received from NGOs like AJS and Réseau Siggil Jigeen helped them to better understand how to read a budget, what to look for to see whether a budget is balanced or not, and how to argue effectively and make demands. This validates the “Critical Actors” postulate proffered by Childs and Krook (2009) that individuals who act collectively can bring about women-friendly policy changes. The training provided by the major NGOs as described in this chapter support the thesis of the “critical actor” paradigm.

It is important to note that when it came to family law, especially paternal rights as are posed in this paper, women parliamentarians have not mentioned it much as an area from which their experience emanated. Respondents further commented however that they were also equipped with the necessary information and tools to tackle these particular issues, especially those dealings with healthcare, with their constituents. It is interesting to note that of the three issues, healthcare was the one that stood out in terms of the area in which they gained the most experience. They also raised the citizenship issue, through their voting of the law on nationality, which all of them applauded for its revision to include women, as stated the previous chapter.

According to the World Bank, Senegalese women received 93.3% in prenatal care in 2011, which ranks them 97 in the world. This percentage refers to the pregnant women who were attended at least once during pregnancy. Although about 93% of the women receive prenatal care, skilled providers attend just over half of all births (52%) (Calverton, 2005). Prenatal care is a major issue because it can mean the difference between life and death, especially for rural women. Socio-cultural beliefs also impede prenatal care, as unmarried women hide their pregnancies. It is when they cannot hide it anymore that they make the prenatal visits. This poses short and long-term medical problems for these women.

All interviewees also expressed the fact that they have been pleased that the law on citizenship has been changed. Indeed, Senegalese women can now enjoy this revolutionary and historic law that allows them to provide citizenship to their children regardless of the dad’s nationality. Through this adoption of a new nationality law, women parliamentarians have been exposed to what the law was before, to the changes that took place, and that whole experience enhanced their knowledge and insights about issues dealing with citizenship. As a result of that, it is fair to say that women parliamentarians did have an influence in the parliament through the voting of this nationality law.



This validates Danlerhup's theory of critical mass which mentions that having a minimum of 33% of women is necessary to have an influence at an assembly (Bunwaree, 2010). With 44.6%, Senegalese women parliamentarians have been able to influence the voting of the nationality law and reduce gender disparity in one of the subject areas of this paper, namely citizenship. In ranking the effectiveness of Senegalese women parliamentarians in addressing issues related to citizenship, family law, and women's healthcare, the study revealed that most of the respondents also believed that Senegalese women parliamentarians also believed that Senegalese women parliamentarians have been effective in addressing these issues.

In terms of whether or not newly-elected women parliamentarians have the skills and experience necessary to have an impact on the legislature, most of them said that they did not. They all agreed, though, that more training on leadership and their strengthening skills in areas such as the rules and regulations of the parliament, the role of the parliamentarian, and the interpretation of the budget need to take place. De Diop (2002) referenced in her research that the lack of the required skills is due to most political parties not having training programs to bolster women's capacities. Moreover, respondents also mentioned that most of the newly-elected parliamentarians do have a lot of political experience on the ground, with some of that experience coming from their grassroots' experience and localities.

Most of the interviewees also explained how the lack of skills and experience is also due to the fact that the newly-elected parliamentarians cannot argue their points effectively, express themselves freely, and lack confidence in themselves. This was pointed out by Sylvia Tamale (1999), as noted in the literature review, who notes that it is a popular belief deeply embodied in African patriarchal values that women cannot express their thoughts in public nor speak up. Most women parliamentarians further lamented the fact that their skills and experience are plagued by their loyalty to their political parties. These challenges validate the argument by Kilimoh (2009) and Sarah Longwe (1998) who argue that the lack of confidence and loyalty to their political party are some of the impediments that women parliamentarians face in regards to pushing for women's issues and policies during their terms in office. Furthermore, the study revealed that the skills and experience of women parliamentarians are also hindered by the French language, which is pointed out by many as being a major handicap for the illiterate women parliamentarians. This is further explored in the environment theme.

A small number of the parliamentarians interviewed did agree that the newly-elected women have the skills and experience necessary to have an impact in the legislature. They emphasized the impact of their grassroots' experience and their political experience from their locality as major contributing factors in their skills and experience. Others mentioned that the skills and experience will come with time, as "any beginning is difficult," and that they will learn throughout their tenure. In ranking how the skills and experience impact women



parliamentarians in this legislature, most responded that it would have some impact, while others mentioned that it will be a strong impact.

When it came to contributing factors they consider to be successful in their role, the main ones that emerge dealt with women parliamentarians knowing and claiming their constituents issues. They also found that working on bills beneficial to the Senegalese people is synonym of being successful. Regarding their failures, most said they do not even think about failure while others associated failure with a bill not passing or not being accessible to people.

The environment

The section discusses the committee assignments within the parliament, the barriers faced by Senegalese women parliamentarians., the strategies used to overcome the barriers, and whether or not the French language is a barrier in regards to effective participation in the parliament.

When asked whether Senegalese women parliamentarians have been systematically excluded from committee assignments, all of the interviewees stated that women parliamentarians have not been excluded. They praised instead how women parliamentarians were consistently more present in the committees than men, how they are members of many different committees, as well as their leadership role in the committees. These findings reveal that by attending in great numbers the plenary sessions and showing that the absenteeism that took place in recent legislatures is no longer happening, newly elected women parliamentarian are sending a strong message to men that they are coming to work and are actually taking upon the tasks they have been voted on as parliamentarian.

Furthermore, their presence and full participation in proposing bills in the different committees, such as education, taxation, family law and health, are crucial in bringing improvements and positive changes to women's conditions in these sectors. By having women in the healthcare committee, for instance, they latter can push and work on legislative bills and a budget that can be presented to the Minister of Women to improve the devastating conditions that women encounter when giving birth. As a result, it is fair to say that they did have an influence in the parliament to push for these laws. This finding validates Dahlerhup's theory of Critical Mass which mentions that having a minimum of 33% of women is necessary to have an influence at an assembly (Bunwaree, 2010).

In reference to the key barriers women parliamentarians encounter, various responses, ranging from none to the (1) the lack of training on the rules and regulations of the parliament, (2) privilege given to some versus others, (3) being a minority, (4) the number of women versus men, (5) the lack of communication regarding the formation of the parliament bureau, (6) lack of finances, and (7) lack of confidence, were pointed out as the main reasons. This last aspect was also found by Koffigan Adigbli (2008) when he explained that a major challenge affecting





effective participation of women in parliament is the lack of confidence that make them unable to effectively articulate the issues and make contributions. The lack of finances was pointed out by Beck (2003) who shared in her research that one of the obstacles Senegalese women face include lack of resources for support of their activities. The number of women versus men has also been voiced out in the literature by Towns (2003) as a potential backlash.

In response to whether they consider the French language to be a barrier, most interviewees mentioned that it was an obstacle. The barriers of the French language include lack of literacy in French, lack of parliamentary assistants, and lack of translation of texts in other national languages. It is important to note that in Senegal, it is French that has the status of an official language. This means that it is the language in which laws must be developed and justice administered. However, French is a language that the majority of the population does not understand; the number of “real francophone” is very low in Senegal, as the majority of the population expresses itself in the national languages. To this last point, Mazrui (1996) pointed out that correcting the marginalization of African women needs to include language policy, which is essential to cultural adjustment and a contributing factor in politics.

In regards to the strategies women parliamentarians have utilized or will utilize to overcome barriers, the most effective ones dealt with communication skills and collaborating with the experienced parliamentarians and women’s organizations, followed by a strong recommendation for partnership with men. Other strategies that emerged included a training on the rules and regulations of the parliament, talking to key decision-makers, hiring parliamentary assistants, and cultivating solidarity among them. The collaboration strategy validates the claim made by Dahlerhup (1988) cited in the literature review, as one mechanism that can bring changes, especially through the recruitment of other women. Crowley (2004) and Reingold (2000) pointed out the same strategy in the literature review and indicated that women can achieve gains by mobilizing individually or through women’s caucuses. This finding is also supported in the literature by Reagan (2012) who advocated in her research the need for women’s networking and collaboration in order to make an impact.

In regards to the training aspect, the finding revealed that one of the respondents mentioned that the rules and regulations of the parliament are stemming from the French system. She indicated in her response that they need to be revised and reflect the realities of the Senegalese parliament and people. This point has been validated in the literature by Oyewumi (2004) who indicated through her Africancentric theory that there is a need to use African realities instead of Western ones because these latter can bring lack of comprehension.





The impact of the parity law

This section looked whether the parity law is a panacea to transform Senegalese women's lives and whether the increase in the number of women enables or not for legislations that will reduce gender inequality.

When it came to whether the parity law is the panacea or not to transform Senegalese women's lives, a significant majority of the interviewees indicated that the parity law was a panacea to transform Senegalese women's lives because it allowed for more women to enter parliament and take part in the decision-making process regarding bills. This is supported by Prag (2011) who asserted that structural changes have led Senegalese women to enter the political arena. The parity law is indeed a major step forward in Senegalese women's social progress with new opportunities and visibility offered to women. Some respondents also mentioned that the impact and effectiveness of the parity law will depend on how the newly-elected women parliamentarians will use the visibility and exposure to position the debate of social transformations and advocate for the betterment of women, instead of reinforcing their political party position. This last point has been validated in the literature by Kilimoh (2009), Sarah Longwe (1998) and Childs (2004).

Furthermore, interviewees mentioned that the parity law gives Senegalese women the opportunity to participate in the process of decision-making. The parity law is indeed one of the aspects that can improve Senegalese women's conditions in the sense that it gives to the woman parliamentarian a strategic position that she can use through her voice and vote to change and/or improve women's conditions. This finding confirmed Sylvia Chant's research (2006) who emphasized that a high representation in the parliament is usually perceived as progress in the gender approach.

It is interesting to note, however, that these results about whether the parity law is a panacea also show that, it is up to the newly-elected women parliamentarian to take up the challenge and show through their massive presence that they are at the parliament to work on improving the numerous gender issues the Senegalese society is still facing, with a particular emphasis on women because they have been discriminated against for a long time. Additionally, the parity law seeks to fix an injustice that Senegalese women faced for a while when it came to nominations on electoral lists for the parliament. Indeed, many Senegalese women in the past have invested their time in the political arena by successfully mobilizing large groups of people to join their political parties but never get the opportunity to be nominated. This was pointed out by Diaw (2004) who indicated that women have been in political parties only to generate an electoral mass. Men were getting officially nominated in large numbers on the electoral lists for parliamentary positions. Now, with the parity law, women have an equal chance of being officially nominated on the electoral lists and become parliamentarians. This finding validated



the claim by Fatou Sarr (2012), who echoed the same observation by mentioning that the parity law is a political concept for “*un projet de société égalitaire*” (“equal society project” in English) between men and women.

When all interviewees were asked to share their impressions in regards to whether the increase in the number of women in the parliament enable them to push for legislations that will reduce gender inequality in the society, all, but one of them answered positively. This is validated by Saint-Germain (1989), Skard and havavio-Mannila (1985)’s research which indicated that as long as the number of women increases, the number and rate of bills’ enactment should also increase. The findings further revealed that in order for the number to have an impact in the legislature, the women parliamentarians need (1) to be united, (2) to be in solidarity with one another, and (3) to partner with men parliamentarians. This validated Bratton (2005), Thomas (1991, 1994)’s research on the Critical Mass Theory which indicated that as the number of women increases in the legislature, they will be able to work together and pass more bills on women’s issues. Dahlerup (1988) also pointed out the need for women to form supportive alliances in order to have an impact in politics. The respondents did mention however their loyalty to their political party and the weight of one’s political party as the biggest obstacles in regards to their number making an impact. This last aspect has been pointed out as a hindrance in the political arena by Kilimoh (2009), Longwe (1998) and Childs (2004).

Women parliamentarians further noted that they need to make use of their historic number in the parliament by being united and by showing that they represent a strong group of people ready to bring bills that will enhance the livelihoods of many Senegalese people. In regards to this last aspect, it is interesting to note that in Senegal, in 2007, under Mireille N’Diaye’s leadership in the Constitutional Council, the parity law was rejected due to its discriminatory lines in its text. This raised many questions about N’Diaye’s high decision making post and her inability to advocate on women’s behalf for the adoption of the law (Fall, 2012). This last aspect has been pointed out in the literature by Fall (1976) and Ba (1979) who mentioned that women play a role in the system that marginalized them. Moreover, both authors pointed out that the women themselves are the origins of their own problems.

The findings revealed as well that the increase in number will lead to more legislative bills as long as they partner with men parliamentarians. This is validated in the literature by Blum and Smith (1998)’s research which revealed that the percentage of women in an institution can influence their male counterparts to accept legislations that deal with women’s concerns. Their collaboration with their male counterparts indeed will lead to gender policies, as long as both parties find common interests in the policy. In addition, their collaboration can lead to gendered policies once women master gender from the angle of development and not equality. In fact, when both men and women parliamentarians have a common interest that will benefit both, there is a greater chance that their collaboration will lead to gendered policies.





The policy Areas

Findings dealt with issues impacting policy enactment in these three areas, agendas that have impacted public policies, and issues that are most important for gender equity.

When it came to the issues that are impacting policy enactments in these three areas, almost all interviewees were unanimous that it has to do with the inability of the government to promulgate laws. Some believed that it was related to the implementation and enforcement of the laws. There was also an overwhelming belief that the government should promulgate laws that are beneficial to the Senegalese people. The respondents further argued that if the law is in favor of the welfare of the Senegalese citizens, there should not be any delay from the government in enacting them. Most parliamentarians also voiced the opinion that the role of parliamentarians in this process is to ensure that the law is implemented, as well as the projects emanating from it being given adequate finances and resources for their completion. Furthermore, most interviewees denounced the fact that previous members of the laws committee did not do their duty in ensuring that the laws voted were enforced. This point supports the contention of Angue Medoux et al. (2011), mentioned in the literature review, that equality seems to be attained when there is an enforceable law that is attached to it. This is exactly what women parliamentarians said is missing from the laws. Furthermore, it was evident when one of the respondents pointed out that during one of the plenary sessions, the number of questions raised regarding the implementation and enforcement of laws reached 60.

Women parliamentarians were also concerned about the fact that many of the laws are neither being publicized nor translated into local languages. On this point, Mazrui (1996) indicated in the literature review that language planning is an essential contributor in politics. Moreover, some respondents were also concerned about budgetary constraints from the government, as well as the parliament being too dependent on the President, meaning that the laws the President wants to push are the ones voted. This shows that there is no separation of powers between the legislative and the executive branches. This is a problem regarding the primary role of the parliament which is to ensure that the controlling of the government takes place as well as the enforcement of the laws. Furthermore, in assessing the impact of the government's inability to promulgate laws and implement laws, most women parliamentarians mentioned that these two issues had a strong impact on policy enactment in these three areas, while the rest of them said that they only have some impact.

The findings further revealed two laws that emerged out of the conversations on the government's inability to enforce and promulgate laws. The law on female circumcision was given as an example of a law that was voted and enacted but lacked enforcement. Indeed, the law on female circumcision (Law number 99 of January 29, 1999) states that any person engaging in this practice will face a jail sentence from six months to five years (N'Doye, 2011). The law



further states that if a doctor or person in the medical field engages in this practice, the maximum jail sentence of five years will be applied (N'Doye, 2011). In the case that a person dies from female circumcision, the penalty for life imprisonment will always be pronounced (N'Doye, 2011). Despite all of the rigorousness of the law, women parliamentarians denounced the fact that female circumcision is still plaguing Senegal and its law is not being enforced. The law on tobacco was also used as an example to show how its promulgation has been neglected by the government. Women parliamentarians argued that tobacco is consumed by many Senegalese people, critics of the law made the government to postpone its promulgation.

In regards to the agendas that had impacted public policies, women parliamentarians revealed different bills they believed had make an impact: the bill on nationality (which now allows a Senegalese child citizenship regardless of the dad's nationality), the creation of new institutions such as the Social Protection and National Solidarity Agency (DGPSN in its French acronym) and some of their initiatives like the allowances provided to Senegalese families, female circumcision, young girls' education, the parity law as well as universal health coverage noted as one bill on the agenda that will be impacting public policy once in place. Regarding the parity law, Mazrui (2003) mentioned in the literature that one of the processes in regards to the betterment of the female condition include increased parity to be shared between men and women. That will ultimately impact society through women as agents and a force for peace.

Concerning the issues that are most important for gender equity, the findings revealed that the factors that emerged the most dealt with socio-cultural and religious impediments. These results validate the research Pascaline Gaborit (2009) which addressed gender stereotypes as plaguing most societies today. This is also supported by Duran (2000) which indicated that women in West Africa are mostly seen as subordinate of men. The socio-cultural aspect is also validated by Hale (1999), who echoed in the literature that there is a tendency of men in Senegal to treat women as "second class participants". Amina Mama (2011) confirmed that women face stumbling blocks related to patriarchy, which confine them mostly at home. The findings further revealed that other factors related to socio-cultural prejudices, forced marriages, girls' education, land access, lack of translation of international conventions in local languages, and finances are also plaguing gender equity in Senegal.

These gender issues still pose problems in Senegal due to the social and cultural conditions that accompany them. Indeed, women leaders have had the political will for years but faced (and still do) social and cultural hurdles at many levels. Senegalese women, for instance, face patriarchal attitudes rooted in the misinterpretation of Islam that women should not challenge the ideas of male authorities.





Non-State Actors

The findings of the study revealed that non-state actors believed that women parliamentarians' experience came from their previous jobs, the training they received from major NGOs, their seminar participation as committee members, and their involvement in women's organizations. They also believed that some of the women parliamentarians' jobs as jurists help them to tackle family code laws and women's rights. In the areas of governance and gender, non-state actors believed that previous women parliamentarians from the 10th legislature have had experience in these areas and were, therefore, better equipped to deal with issues related to them. They did insist, however, that more needed to be done on gender issues.

Non-state actors mentioned in regards to the question about the skills and experience of women parliamentarians that these latter will acquire them and do their job effectively through the training they have received from certain civil society organizations, their willingness to learn and be trained, their involvement with other women organizations, and the network of women parliamentarians. One non-state actor did mention that it was too early to assess this aspect because they have been trained properly to meet their objectives. Another non-state actor indicated that in regards to the parliamentary experience, the newly elected women parliamentarians will face some difficulty due to the lack of familiarity with the institution of the parliament. She also indicated that women parliamentarians did not know how to dress, how to argue and understanding that they are high level officials.

Regarding women parliamentarians' involvement with other women organizations, Dahlerhup (1988) supported the argument in the literature review for the involvement of other women in order to bring change. Saint-Germain (1989) also validated in the literature review the need to form coalitions with one another so that they can promote more policy outcomes. Reagan (2012) further agreed that there is a need to have critical actors in order for women to make an impact. This was also echoed by the non-state actors applauding the creation of the network of women parliamentarians as one tool that will allow them to bring forth changes and women's policies within the parliament. Furthermore, non-state actors mentioned that the success of women parliamentarians is linked mainly on their ability to defend women's issues based on a gender lens. Non-state actors further mentioned that the failures of the women parliamentarians dealt mostly with the fact that this is a new environment for many of them.

Concerning the barriers women parliamentarians experienced, non-state actors mentioned that the obstacles were due to cultural factors, their lack of understanding of the materials, and their inability for some to effectively argue their viewpoints. This finding validates what Amadiume (1987) stressed in regards to the effect of cultural values in inhibiting women from participating in public life and political activities. Non-state actors also mentioned that the strategies women parliamentarians need to utilize the most are unity, solidarity, and communicating more among





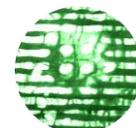
themselves. This finding validates the claim by Sue Regan (2012), cited in the literature review, that women can achieve greater influence through their collaboration and networking. The networks comprise of non-state actors and other women who are present in state roles. Non-state actors also mentioned that the French language is an obstacle for women parliamentarians because of illiteracy problems and a lack of translation of the texts into the national languages.

In regards to whether non-state actors believe that the parity law is the panacea or not to transform Senegalese women's lives, the findings revealed that the ones who responded positively centered their response around (1) the parity law as an important step towards gender equality, and (2) as an instrument for women to be fully able to participate in the process of decision-making. The two non-state actors who responded negatively indicated that the parity law was not a panacea but a step toward gender equality which will first require a transformation of the Senegalese society.

The findings further revealed that non-state actors also believed that the number will bring about legislations that will reduce gender inequality, but they also talked about the quality as being a big barrier in regards to their effectiveness. They did believe, however, that if women parliamentarians are able to form a bloc, then the percentage they represent will be able to make a difference. This contradicts the position of one hand Anne-Marie Goetz and Shireen Hassim (2003), who explained in their research that when 30% representation has been attained, participation does not necessarily translate into effective policy for women's interests. On the other hand, the concept of forming a bloc and the percentage factor have been validated in the literature respectively by Dahlerhup (1988) and Oliver and Marwell (1988). Indeed, most of the respondents believed that through the parity law, women parliamentarians can advocate for women's issues through committee work.

Non-state actors indicated that the issues that impact Senegalese women parliamentarians' policy enactment deal with socio-cultural factors, religion, lack of understanding of the texts, as well as political will. Some also pointed out the lack of knowledge and information about what is at stake and the nature of the Senegalese society being patriarchal as other issues hindering policy enactment in these areas. This supports the argument made by Amina Mama (2001) that women are relegated to the domestic arena because of the domination and persistence of patriarchy, which hampers women's involvement in the world of governance in Africa. Furthermore, non-state actors indicated that the agendas that impacted public policies included the ones dealing with leadership training in terms of debate and strengthening of abilities as well as women's healthcare.

When asked what issues they consider the most important for gender equity, non-state actors gave a range of factors that included respect of the constitution, lack of education, the ignorance of laws and texts, and language. The findings also revealed that non-state actors voiced out that more needed to be done regarding the awareness of women parliamentarians on gender issues.



Assessment of the hypotheses

The next paragraphs discuss the assessment of the hypotheses. As discussed earlier, the first hypothesis the study sought to test is the following:

H₁: The women parliamentarians believe that the more women that enter parliament, then they would be more likely and effective in tackling issues related to citizenship, family law, and women's healthcare.

As discussed earlier, there is a strong relationship between respondents' perception that the more women enter parliament, the more their effectiveness in tackling issues related to citizenship, family law, and women's healthcare. Consequently, Hypothesis 1 is accepted. This result also validates the claim by J. Jacquette (1997) noted in the literature review, that the more women win the required numbers in legislatures, the more likely they would be able to impact various agendas.

The second hypothesis tested was as follows:

H₂: If Senegalese women parliamentarians perceive issues that are of interest to women in these three areas, then they would be more likely to champion the policy enactment processes pertaining to them.

The results showed no correlation between the issues that affect policy enactment in these three areas and their impact. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

The third hypothesis tested was this:

H₃: If the newly elected Senegalese women parliamentarians have the necessary legislative skills and experience, then they would have more impact in the legislature.

The results revealed that there is no correlation between the skills and experience of the newly-elected women parliamentarians and their impact in the legislature. Hypothesis 3 is therefore also rejected.

The fourth hypothesis this chapter seek to test is:

H₄: If the parity law is effective, then it would transform Senegalese women's lives.

There is no statistically significant correlation between the effectiveness of the parity law and its likelihood of transforming Senegalese women's lives; consequently, hypothesis 4 is rejected.

The fifth hypothesis is as follows:

H₅: If gender discrimination exists in committee assignments, then Senegalese women parliamentarians would be systematically excluded from the committees.

As the preceding results revealed, all women parliamentarians mentioned that Senegalese women parliamentarians have not been systematically excluded from committee assignments; therefore Hypothesis 5 is also rejected.

The sixth hypothesis is the following:



H₆: If women parliamentarians are effective in impacting public policies, then problems related to gender inequality would be resolved.

The results showed that there is a statistically positive and significant correlation between the agendas that have impacted public policies and their extent. However, there is a negative correlation between the issues that are the most important for gender equity and the ranking of those issues. Hence, H₆ is partially accepted.

Discussion of findings

From the findings of this study, it is important to note that Dahlerhup's Critical Mass Theory is not sufficient by itself to describe all of the aspects and intricacies of the role of Senegalese women parliamentarians in reducing gender disparities in the three areas this dissertation covered. The other two theories, namely the critical actors concept and Oyewumi's African-centered perspective added to the understanding of how and what the Senegalese women parliamentarians have been doing to reduce gender disparities in the three policy areas of this dissertation. Therefore, Dahlerhup's Critical Mass Theory cannot be used as the sole underlying theoretical base of such a study, but a mixture of all three theories are useful for an endeavor.

Indeed, Dahlerhup's theory is concerned with how women respond to situations when they are a minority and assert that the increase in number, or 33%, will bring changes in the policy discourse. From the findings, it was seen that women responded well when they were a minority (from 2001-2007, they were 23 out of 120 or 19.16% and from 2007 to 2012, they were 27 or 18% out of 140) through the number of policies that were brought forward during 2001-2007 (8) versus 2007-2012 (7). These results show that the increase in the number of women parliamentarians did not necessarily bring more policies. These results also show that a "critical mass" was not necessary to bring changes in policy outputs that reflect the interests of women.

Nonetheless, a comparison of the results to Dahlerhup's theory demonstrated an overlap between the findings of this study and his theory. For instance, Dahlerhup's 33% critical mass, the need for alliances and collaborations, is an important factor that a group needs in order to make an impact within an assembly. This is evident in the interviewees' views on the increased number and through the creation of the network of women parliamentarians (*reseau des femmes parlementaires*). While respondents did describe their views in terms of the components identified by Dahlerhup (i.e. critical mass, alliances, collaboration), they also added other elements, which are present in the findings of the study. Respondents added the need for unity, solidarity, and partnership with men as recurrent components that kept coming back throughout their answers.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Dahlerhup's theory provided insights in regards to the findings of whether the parity law is the panacea to transform Senegalese women's lives, to the





agendas that have impacted public policies, specifically whether the number helped to bring more agendas and bills that reduce gender inequality, and to some of the strategies needed to overcome barriers. However, Dahlerhup's theory was not sufficient to explain, among other things, the lack of skills and experience noted in the findings, the components of the successes and failures of women parliamentarians, the committee assignment, the barriers encountered within the parliament, the handicap of the French language, the issues impacting policy enactment, and the issues that are impacting gender equity.

The other two theories helped to explain some of the findings related to these issues. The concept for critical actors of Childs and Krook (2009), for instance, gave lots of insights in regards to the components of the successes and failures of women parliamentarians by specifically stressing the need of other women and organizations's in addition to the women parliamentarians, as critical actors that can bring changes in an assembly. Moreover, Oyewumi's (2004) African-centered concept helped to explain the roots of some of these issues, which is related to the fact that the rules and regulations of the parliament are mainly based on the French system instead of Senegalese realities.

Oyewumi's perspective calls attention to the French language as a handicap and advocates for a pressing need to go back to African realities by ensuring, for example, that the texts and conventions are translated into national languages. It is worth applauding the simultaneous translation of national languages that is set to take place within the parliament towards the end of December 2013. Other scholars named in the literature and in the previous chapter, such as Amadiume (1987), Tamale (1999), Fall (1976), Ba (1979), Mazrui (1996), Mama (2001), De Diop (2002), Sarr (2012), Longwe (2000), Saint Germain (1989), Haavio-Mannila (1985), Jacqueline (1997) and Reagan (2012), also helped the understanding of some of these findings as well.

It is important to note also that out of the three policy areas, citizenship was the one that witnessed a major change with the modification on the nationality law. The other two policy areas that focused on paternal rights and prenatal care, are still awaiting changes, respectively on paternal authority to also include women as well as a free prenatal care policy for pregnant women. It is the hope that this number of newly elected women parliamentarians will push forth these two bills to reduce gender inequality in those two areas.

Furthermore, based on these findings, one can conclude that there is a need to do an assessment with the 64 women parliamentarians in regards to their skills in different areas such as communication, writing, rules and regulations of the parliament, lecture of a budget, and knowledge of Senegalese gender issues. From the results of the assessment, seminars can be organized according to the major skills that were identified as weak to ensure that the women parliamentarians are trained in those particular areas. It is important to note regarding the rules and regulations of the parliament as echoed in the findings and proposed by one of the





respondents, that these latter aspect need to reflect Senegalese realities. This argument supports the insistence by Oyewumi (2004) to use African realities as a foundation instead of Western claims when referring to issues in the gender discourse. Furthermore, the results from the respondents regarding their skills also show that women parliamentarians are willing and eager to learn because they want to make a difference in the parliament. Therefore, one can conclude that with time and prior to the end of their first mandate, their skill levels in the areas above mentioned will increase as a result of the training and seminars.

In regards to the factors that lead to their success and failures in their role as women parliamentarian, one can conclude from the findings that there is a need to strengthen the advocacy by the promotion of feminine leadership. For that, the accompaniment and the encouragement of women to their sisters who are already in the elective bodies will help to make new conquests, especially in instances of the management of the country's resources.

In regards to the extent to which Senegalese women parliamentarians have been excluded from the committees, it is important to stress the fact that being in a committee itself is a good thing because women can truly make a difference on behalf of their fellow sisters through their work in the committees. Actually, the whole purpose of a woman parliamentarian at the National Assembly is to join and participate fully in the committees because it is through them that one will be able to make a difference by working on legislative bills aimed at improving the lives of Senegalese women. Thus, it is for the women parliamentarians to demonstrate their political responsibility in their work in the committees. And this is not possible unless larger numbers of women are present in all of these bodies to collectively engender politics.

It is commendable to see from the findings women's attitude in regards their committee work. Indeed, their timely and consistent presence, membership and leadership within the committees are major catalysts in their success. However, when it comes to parental law for instance, women in the law commission can make a difference by working on a bill that will reverse the current situation that Senegalese women face about paternal rights. Indeed, when a woman gets pregnated by a man who does not recognize the baby, the woman cannot register the child. Senegalese women should be able to register the child. It is up to the women in the law committee to bring up a legislation that will allow them to do so.

Therefore, the work starts within the committees and needs to end with the law committees. More work needs to be done within the committees by women to ensure that bills about women's welfare are presented and pushed to the next level. Thus, there is also a need to have more women in the law committees to make sure that the laws that are passed are implemented. They need to ensure the application and work in close connection with the ministry or agency that needs to ensure of its implementation.

Concerning the barriers they face within the parliament, the conclusion from the findings is that women parliamentarians' main strategies in alleviating those include a partnership with men,





unity and solidarity among themselves, and collaboration with experienced parliamentarians. In regards to the French language, it was no surprise that it was a handicap due to illiteracy of most of the women parliamentarians. As mentioned earlier, it is important to salute the simultaneous translation of French and national languages.

From the findings, one can conclude that the parity law needs to be utilized to the fullest and it needs to be strengthened as well. In regards to the increase in the number of women parliamentarians due to the parity law, as the findings revealed, more bills will come out as a result to reduce gender inequality in Senegalese society. This is indeed the hope after three years that act No. 2010-11 of the May 28, 2010, establishing the parity, was passed. Moreover, with 64 women out of 150, this number allows Senegal to be among the pioneers of parity in Africa. More than that, this number shows that Senegal despite its struggles to ensure gender equality is a country of law, a republican state. But this is not the time to lower the arms and to rest on their laurels, because there is still a lot to be done in terms of training, strengthening women parliamentarians' abilities and ensuring that the next group will be equipped with the resources and skills to make a stronger impact.

Indeed, since its adoption by the National Assembly, this bill, as requested by the women, has given rise to many debates, and up until today polemics about it continue in the socio-professional organizations, religious and political. Indeed, the parity law has now been applied and one major question that emerges is whether women parliamentarians will continue to work together in the spirit of parity to ensure that the progress of reducing of disparities and inequalities still continues. One way to influence that is to improve the profile of the parliamentarians.

From the findings, it is important to add that today parity should be equality between women and women, mainly between the urban women and women in rural areas. There is a huge gap in the conditions of life, of evolution, and development between these two sectors. There is another form of parity with their responsibility, and that is the one which was to extend a hand to their congeners of the rural areas to face a deficit they all share: infrastructure in all genres, access to safe drinking water, and access to electrification to cite only a few.

Concerning the issues regarding policy enactment, the findings revealed that the government needs to fully work and cooperate with the parliamentarians in ensuring that the laws they vote are promulgated. The issues affecting gender equity in the Senegalese society show that the country is still struggling to reach equality because of socio-cultural factors, prejudice, and religious misinterpretations that are still plaguing Senegalese society. From the findings regarding the agendas that have impacted public policies, one can conclude that the bill on nationality is a success story for the advancement of women's rights in Senegal, and that the new institutions initiatives will lead to more programs that will reduce gender inequality.





Conclusion

The link between democracy and development is increasingly being emphasized by influential scholars and development institutions. In particular, enhancing the participation of women within democracies is seen as central to improving governance. The women in Senegal offer the best opportunity to learn about the impact of raising the participation of women in democratic institutions because of a remarkable attempt to improve the representation of women in parliament through the parity law. Senegalese women indeed were rightfully proud of this landmark achievement in the voting and application of the parity law. Indeed, there is a general expectation that women will do well once they are in massive number in parliaments. However, once they have broken through the barriers of being elected in office, the challenges and questions remain in their ability to push for the betterment of women's issues and policies during their term in office. With a historic record of 64 women in the parliament, the question still remains in the center of the debate of Senegalese politics whether their increased number in the parliament will bring change and transform women's lives positively.

The increased number of women in the Senegalese parliament represents more so a symbol to show to other Senegalese women that it is possible for them to join the political arena and the National Assembly. Furthermore, the increased number represents as well an opportunity for the newly women parliamentarians to be role models and change the image that the previous ones left in the parliament. As the findings of the study revealed, the parity law is viewed as a panacea as well as an important step, "a cure" towards reducing gender inequality in Senegalese society. The parity law needs indeed to be reinforced and expanded not only to electoral posts but nominative ones as well. Moreover, the end goal of the parity law is equal representation of men and women in politics. To achieve this, legislation is essential but, more is needed than legislation alone; social customs and political reforms and empowerment need to back up these mechanisms so that, in the end, they will no longer be needed. The parity law is no quick fix for the underrepresentation of women in politics. Although it may be a promising first step towards gender equality, the design and implementation of this law need constant and careful follow-up if it is to be successful.

It is important to note however that it is rather premature to give a definite answer about the newly elected women parliamentarian increased number impact or difference it will bring on women's conditions on the ground level. It seems however that this historic number and participation will make a difference even though women parliamentarians still face an environment that is still dominated by men, and that is still embedded in patriarchal values. The parity law in that sense is a mean that allows women access to the parliament as well as being one of the answers that can improve women's conditions on the ground level through the future enactment of gendered legislative bills and policies. On the other hand, it is up to the women





parliamentarians through this great visibility to transform Senegalese society and help build a more gender just society. Their collaboration and negotiation techniques with their male counterparts are decisive factors that play an important role in their success or lack thereof in enacting and passing legislative bills. As a matter of fact, these aforementioned factors are “game breakers” that will help women parliamentarians in passing laws that can improve their fellow Senegalese women’ conditions and lives.

While it is important to have a high number in the assembly to ensure a plurality of voices and inclusiveness, chances of promoting gender sensitive legislation by these latter is less likely to happen. Women parliamentarian can help to bring this desired transformation by engendering development through an inclusion of a gender lens in all of their policies. To successfully achieve a politics of recognition to a politics of transformation, Sheila Bunwaree (2012) argues that there is a need for the emergence and consolidation of gender inclusive democratic developmental states. This latter need to be infused by African feminist ideology, which should focus on insisting on eliminating illiteracy among poor women. This is an important first step towards women accessing better entitlement, so they can implement their rights and enhance their capabilities. It is important to note as well that the African centered perspective added into the understanding of the intricacies and experience of Senegalese women parliamentarians. It allowed me as a researcher to have a greater appreciation of the barriers and roadblocks that have been put into the way for Senegalese women to access equality, to fulfill their dream of equality and a better life.

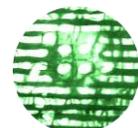
As Obioma Nnaemeka (2005) says “Like women everywhere. African women have problems. More important, they have provided solutions to these problems. We are the only ones who can set our priorities and agenda. Anyone who wishes to participate in our struggles must do so in the context of our agenda” (Nnaemeka, 2005: 57). Thus, the newly elected women parliamentarians need to take up the challenge and create their own agenda without any cooptation from their political parties’ leaders and address and fix the gender issues that have plagued the Senegalese society for many years. The struggle for equality in economic, social and political spheres will continue until they are achieved. Only then can women charter their political agenda to build a gender just society.





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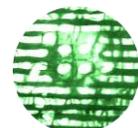
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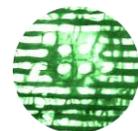
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