Jongé and the Embodiment of Senegalese Femininity: Negotiating Gender and Sexuality at Home and Abroad

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Abstract

Across West Africa, Senegalese women enjoy the reputation of being good at the unique ways they take care of themselves, their households, and romantic partners through their enactment of *jongé*. This dissertation explores the cultural practices involved in *jongé*, including both discursive and embodied practices around womanhood, femininity, and sexuality. Practicing *jongé* includes, among other elements, cooking fancy meals, showcasing an idealized feminine identity, and performing eroticized sexuality through the consumption of various erotic paraphernalia. As a practice that permeates the daily lives of Senegalese women, the digital world, and popular culture, *jongé* has become a binding place to understand Senegalese women's identities.

Through close reading, feminist ethnography, and critical discourse analysis, this dissertation shows how Senegalese women negotiate agency, power, and pleasure as they engage with *jongé* in their daily lives to find ways through the gendered expectations of their society. To make sense of this cultural practice among contemporary Senegalese women, the dissertation aims to think through the language and theories that emanate from it.

Ultimately, the research explores the aesthetics of *jongé* and its significance in the Senegalese cultural imaginary as an agentive practice enabling women to gain power and pleasure and navigate their socio-economic marginalization through different bodily performances. Second, the dissertation brings forward diasporic women's narrative of *jongé* and demonstrates that the practice is an important place of construction and transmission of Senegalese notions about gender and sexuality and a discursive space where diasporic women negotiate its meaning while performing their transnational subjectivities.

Lastly, women's performance of *jongé* through the consumption of erotic paraphernalia exposes the cosmopolitanism of the practice. It reveals the liberatoriness, pleasurability, and intimacy of women's interactions and discussions about *jongé* as they navigate the various facets of their sexuality and explore erotic technologies while engaging in confidence with daily social issues that mark their lives as women.

Notes on Translation

All translations are mine except otherwise stated.

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Introducing *Jongé*

I first thought about *jongé* as a research topic during a phone conversation with a friend and former university classmate. In the middle of our usual chit-chat, *jongé* came up. Our exchange centered mainly on how the concept pervaded Senegalese popular culture, the digital world, and the daily lives of contemporary Senegalese in ways we both agreed were new. However, I can't help thinking about the feasibility of this research if I were pursuing a doctoral degree at a Senegalese university. There, the mundane practices of everyday life, including those involving women, are taken-for-granted. Moreover, at a structural level, the legacy of French colonization still shapes and dictates the architecture of knowledge, its production, and dissemination. My conversation with my friend incited a deep curiosity, for I started thinking about the concept and how it relates to the notion of the commodity. This initial question led to others and a journey into decoding this cultural practice and understanding its centrality in Senegalese women's identities.

The term *jongé* is a Wolof word that refers to a woman's performance of ideals of womanhood and femininity and the enactment of an eroticized sexuality to negotiate power and social relations. Practicing *jongé* includes knowing how to cater to one's partner with fancy meals, using aphrodisiacs, incense, and lingerie to seduce your partner and enhance your sexual life. Doing *jongé* means embodying and enacting spectacular Senegalese femininity. This dissertation explores this intersectional practice with several social components. My central inquiry in this project is to examine the relationship between *jongé* and women's agency.

Through feminist ethnographic methodology, a close reading of literary works, and critical discourse analysis, I investigate how Senegalese women engage with *jongé* in their daily lives to find ways through the gendered expectations of their societies. By making sense of this cultural practice among contemporary Senegalese women, I aim to think through the language and theories that emanate from it. I ask the following questions: What are the aesthetics of *jongé?* How, when, what, and where do women learn and talk about *jongé*? What role does social class play in the teaching of the practice? Do women in Senegal engage with the discourse of the "good woman" and, if so, to what end? What role does consumption play in performing sexuality? What resources (linguistic, symbolic, or material) do women use to perform *jongé*? How do women construct, enact and contest national(ist) narratives of female identity through *jongé*? How do women's discourse and practices contribute to or transform culture?

To understand *jongé,* we first need to understand the macro contexts in which it is practiced. Thus, I begin with a brief discussion of the research context and the theoretical framework that guide this dissertation. Then, I review the literature on performance, embodiment, and consumption to contextualize the themes I will explore in relation to *jongé*. Finally, I discuss the methods and structure of the remaining chapters.

Context

Senegal is a West African country with a population of fifteen million and a slight majority of women. The country's geographical location has made it a contact zone between various cultures, languages, and religions (Ngom 2012). The country has a long history of contact with the Arab world; hence more than 95% of the population is Muslim. The Islamization of the country is traced back to the 11th century (Abdullah 2008) and increased

between the 18th and 19th centuries (Samb 1971). Islam was introduced in Senegal through the Pulaar ethnic group, which represents today the second largest group in the country after the Wolof but extended to other ethnic groups. The Islamization process in Senegal mirrors Islam's progress and adoption in West Africa. From the adoption of Islamic dress, food, and ornamentation, West Africans grew to accept Muslim clerics as their spiritual leaders and advisors and incorporated Islamic rules at the personal and institutional level (Lapidus 2002). Today Islamic principles are used to regulate institutions such as marriage and family.

Islamic influence permeates many aspects of daily social life in Senegal, including gender relations. The Senegalese approach to gender and sexuality is mediated through Islam. The relationship between men and women within marriage is highly hierarchical. Most Senegalese strongly believe in the concept of *kilifë* (leader). When a child is still young, the parents are the *kilifë*. When a woman gets married, her husband takes over from her parents and becomes the *kilifë*. This belief is strongly tied to Islamic principles and reinforced by the Maraboutic—brotherhood—system (McLaughlin 1997; Diouf and Leichtman 2009). Indeed, Muslim brotherhoods occupy a central place in how religion is practiced in Senegal. The relationship between the *Seriñ* (the religious leader or marabout) and his *taalibe* (follower) mirrors the relationship between husband and wife. Within this dynamic, the *Seriñ* is the mediator between God and the *taalibé,* and his role is to lead, to guide his *taalibé* toward God. This power structure is reproduced in marriage. A famous Wolof axiom stipulates, "Jigeen jëkkëram mooy seriñam" (the husband is the leader of his wife). A woman must follow and obey her husband because marriage is a sacred institution to worship God. Worshiping God in this context means fulfilling your duties as husband and wife to have a blessed and prosperous marriage. On the one hand, the husband has the responsibility to *sang* (clothe), *dëkkal* (house),

and *dëkkoo* (satisfy and support) the wife (Sylla 1994; Hannaford and Foley 2015): that is, he should take care of the material needs of the wife, provide housing, and be an emotional support to her. On the other hand, the wife should look after her husband's wealth, educate the children, and take care of the house and her husband.

Even though men and women should abide by these rules, the pressure rests on women. They are constantly reminded to work hard and to "worship" their husband for their success here on earth and in the afterlife. These imperatives are articulated in Wolof sayings such as "Liggeeyu ndey añub doom" (A mother's work will benefit her children) or "Aljana mu ngi ci sa suufu tanku jëkker" (Heaven is underneath your husband's feet), suggesting that they should "worship" their husband. The verbs *work* here should be understood both literally and figuratively. It is widely believed that if a woman works hard in her marriage, she will have successful children, and heaven will be granted to her through her devotion to her husband. The value of a good wife is measured through her successful children. As we will see, these beliefs strongly influence the practice of *jongé*.

Senegal, like most African countries, is multiethnic and thus multilingual. Seereer, Joolaa, Manding, Pulaar, Soninké, and Wolof are the main ethnic groups, and their languages are officially recognized as national languages. The Wolof people are the largest ethnic group in Senegal (43.3%), and Wolof is today the lingua franca, spoken by nearly 80% of the population (Ngom 2003). The contact with colonial power affected the fate of the Wolof language. French assimilationist politics gave birth to two branches of Wolof: "pure" Wolof and "urban" Wolof. The latter is spoken by people mostly living in the interior of Senegal, in the rural areas, while the other primarily dominates urban areas such as St Louis and Dakar, the former capitals of the

French colonial power. Urban Wolof is characterized by its borrowings from French, English, and Arabic.

Consequently, urban areas are becoming increasingly "creolized" (Swigart 2000). Such creolization of cities has favored what is called today Wolofization or the expansion of "urban" Wolof (Ngom 2005). According to historian Mamadou Diouf (2001b), the politics of Wolofization find its roots in the flexibility and adaptability of Wolof people. Because most Wolof speakers are Muslims, the group projects a certain universalism which makes it attractive; it tends to "absorb" the others. Reflecting on this issue, other scholars have characterized Wolofization as a "tacit" and "shadow politics" of linguistic nationalism resulting in the promotion of Wolof culture and language as a national identity in Senegal (O'Brien 1998; Sarr 2014). However, this spreading of Wolof across the country is more linked to the growth of urban areas than to a politic of nationalism.

Indeed, the use of Wolof encourages the de-ethnicization of people (O'Brien 1998; Ngom 2005). Wolof has borrowed extensively both from Arabic and French. These borrowings are especially evident in urban Wolof, which includes a mixture of borrowings from French, Arabic, and even some English. The growth of urban areas has favored the spread of the language and its culture.

Theoretical Framework

My investigation of *jongé* builds from the work of feminists, sociolinguists, and cultural analysts who have engaged creatively and critically with gender performance and sexuality in various contexts. I am particularly in debt to the scholarship of third-world feminists who have challenged western feminist epistemology and called for the decolonization of feminist

methodologies (Mohanty 2003). But more importantly, this research was inspired by the scholarship of African feminists who have contextualized and complicated the study of gender and sexuality in Africa both in theory and praxis (Nnaemeka 2005; Oyewumi 2011; McFadden 2003; Amadiume 2006b; Tamale 2006; Gueye 2010; Balogun 2012; Gueye 2013; Coly 2019; Diabate 2020; Dosekun 2020). As feminist sociologist Oyeronke Oyewumi (2002, 8) argued, "Analysis and interpretations of Africa must start with Africa. Meanings and interpretation should derive from social organization and social relations paying close attention to specific cultural and local contexts." Thus, this dissertation responds to the urgent call to expand our lens on how we understand and explore gender and sexuality in African societies. These works have contributed to my understanding and approach to women's bodies as societal archives where cultural norms and discourses are inscribed. They have also fostered my understanding of the body as a site of knowledge production.

Contextualizing *Jongé*

Attention to *jongé* is mainly found in mainstream media, blogs, newspaper articles, and YouTube videos. Several researchers have studied aspects of *jongé* in isolation, either focusing on one moral value (such as *teranga*; Riley 2016) or the question of sexuality (*mokk pocc*; Gilbert 2019). Building on such work, in this dissertation, I aim to provide a holistic analysis of *jongé*, decoding the social components that constitute the practice and examining how these components interact. I approach women's performance of *jongé* not as simply an enactment of prescribed ideologies about womanhood, femininity, or sexuality but as *productive*. I see women's docility (performance of proper womanhood) as productive in the sense of biological

reproduction but most importantly as productive of discourses surrounding contemporary Senegalese femininity, gender norms, and sexuality.

To understand *jongé*, I build on research on similar practices from other contexts and pull from various theories. In this review, I explore some keys concept and their relevance to *jongé.* I focus first on the literature on performance, the role of language in gender socialization, embodiment, and gender and consumption and put *jongé* in conversation within the existing scholarship.

Performance

The concept of *jongé* is executed through words and actions. In my experience interacting with people, a person is called *jongé* when they execute a certain behavior associated with an idealized femininity. From how one walks, talks, dresses, or cooks, a *jongé* woman carefully crafts a persona that speaks to various ideals of womanhood and femininity. Hence**,** doing *jongé* means enacting discursive repertoires, and ways of being to (re)produce a particular feminine identity, making it a performative practice.

The discussion of performance within the context of gender studies cannot go without the works of anthropologist scholars who have further pushed the concept of performance beyond its traditional understanding by using theatrical performance as a metaphor to study human relations and the presentation of oneself in everyday life (Goffman 1959; Turner 1980; Turner and Schechner 1988). They have demonstrated that human beings are involved in daily performances and that human relations are negotiated through these well-managed social performances (Goffman 1959). From this point of view, performance becomes a relevant concept in considering social life and culture broadly.

The works of J.L. Austin (1962) mark the beginning of the consideration of speech in relation to performance with its contestation of a positivist attitude focused on the meaning of words and introducing speech act theory. For Austin, rather than simply ascribing meaning to words, we should focus on what words do. Austin draws a line between utterances that simply describe and those that accomplish something. He calls the latter performatives. A performative utterance makes something happen, such as the example of the famous "I now pronounce you husband and wife" uttered during weddings. Austin laid the foundation for many works in linguistic anthropology. Building on these insights, researchers have demonstrated the centrality of performance in folklore studies (Hymes 1975; Bauman and Briggs 1990; Bauman 2000). Their works show how our mode of speaking structures social life and human interactions.

Using Austin's concept of performative and Victor Turner's take on ritual, Judith Butler (1988) takes a provocative stand on the issue of gender so far conceived as natural and innate. Butler argues that "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self" (Butler 1988, 519).

This formulation sees gender as a performance, created and maintained through repetition. However, Butler does not limit themself to this mere argument which was already stated by previous scholars such as French writer Simone de Beauvoir (1974) with her famous axiom "One is not born but, rather one becomes a woman" and phenomenologist Merleau Ponty (1962) who explained the symbolic ways people use language and gestures to create social

reality. Instead, they further push the reflection by showing that, even though gender is a social construct constituted through the enactment of social norms, it is performative in the sense that there is the "possibility of contesting its reified status" (1988, 520), hence the idea of gender performativity.

Butler's work has inspired many researchers dealing with the role of language in constructing gendered subjectivities (Hall 1999; Pennycook 2004; Atanga et al. 2013). I use the concept of performativity to understand the role of language and performance in the daily enactment of *jongé* and in the socialization of Senegalese women and the notions of gender and sexuality that shape it.

Socialization to Gender and Sexuality

Sociolinguists, linguistic anthropologists, and critical discourse analysts have argued that language is central to identification. Indeed, "no principle is more fundamental to linguistic anthropology than the notion that a language is more than a formal code, more than a medium of communication, and more than a repository of meanings. Language is a powerful semiotic tool for evoking social and moral sentiments, collective and personal identities tied to place and situation, and bodies of knowledge and belief" (Ochs and Schieffelin 2017, 6). As human beings, our first contact and interaction with the material world are through language. Language is a channel through which we are socialized. It is a medium that conveys cultural beliefs, a location of social practice and an avenue for generating social and cultural identifications. Moreover, language mediates between power and agency. According to critical discourse analyst James Paul Gee (2014), language goes beyond its traditional role of providing information. It also influences our being and doing.

Attention to language can allow us to understand how identity, power, and agency are negotiated in different contexts. Scholars such as Marame Gueye (2010), Leigh Swigart (1992), and Lisa McNee (2000) have explored Senegalese women's use of language through verbal art and its socio-cultural relevance. For example, Gueye's work on Senegalese women's verbal art explores how they use verbal art to negotiate voice and power. By analyzing a variety of wedding songs, she demonstrates how they are a discursive site that allows women to convey ideas of good womanhood and challenge, at the same time, certain ideologies about them. Gueye's treatment of women's verbal art highlights how Senegalese women are socialized to society's gendered expectations through songs. Similarly, sociologist and feminist activist Silvia Tamale (2005) has examined the Ugandan practice called *Ssenga* to show how this institution constructs Kigandan sexuality and femininity. In both contexts, language constitutes an important avenue to convey messages about gender and sexuality.

The birth of language socialization evidences the significance of language in the study of socialization as a "theoretical and methodological paradigm concerned with the acquisition of what Pierre Bourdieu called habitus, or ways of being in the world" (Kulick and Schieffelin 2008). Since its development in the 1980s, language socialization research has appeared as a response to the omissions of children's discursive practices in various fields such as psychology, linguistics, and anthropology. Seminal contributions have been made to complicate and expand our comprehension of language acquisition and the formation of cultural subjectivities (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998). Through their scrutiny of different communities, scholars have shown the modalities and complexities of acquiring knowledge and practices. In the case of my research, exploring the role of language in the

construction and transmission of *jongé* is essential to understanding how gender and sexuality are constructed in Wolof society.

Scholars have built from this framework to investigate the interconnection between sexuality, gender, and language. These intersections contribute to the comprehension of the complexity of identity. Gender, sexuality, and language are socially and politically entangled. In this sense, several scholars have thought through the role of language in the socialization of girls and women into various socio-cultural practices. For instance, linguistic anthropologists Ayala Fader (2009) and Katrina Daly Thompson (2013) used this method to examine, respectively, the use of everyday talk by Hasidic women to teach girls to be responsible and devoted Hasidic women and Swahili women's use and teaching of an idealized language of love to secure a financial and marital future for themselves.

This dissertation builds on this scholarship to further advance language socialization research by investigating the body's roles in transmitting knowledge about gendered identities. In this investigation of *jongé*, I aim to comprehend how language and bodily practices construct and transmit discourses about womanhood. The study of *jongé* provides insight into the socialization of Senegalese women to gendered and sexual expectations. Using the language socialization framework and embodiment will help unravel women's socialization through and to *jongé.*

Embodiment

Throughout history, the body has been neglected and considered incapable of bearing scientific knowledge. The rigid binary separating body and mind has engendered the marginalization of the body deemed incapable of reason (J. E. H. Smith 2017). In stark

opposition to this approach to the body, scholars (Merleau-Ponty 1962; Beauvoir 1974; Foucault 1977) have demonstrated that it is through that body rather than through reason that human beings interact with the world and with one another. This argument sets the body to be the bearer of the agency. However, throughout history, not all bodies have been treated the same. Bodies have been an ideological site of gender. De Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1974) offers a critical understanding of male and female bodies as represented in the course of history in various fields. She demonstrates that biological differences between men and women have been used as an excuse to marginalize women and that the consideration of men as strong rational beings born to lead versus the passivity of women is socially constructed. Echoing this, Michel Foucault's (1977) seminal contribution to the targeting and policing of the body has shown that bodies are sites where power is exercised.

These works have inspired research discussing the impact of cultural norms on the body, including how the cultural conceptions of femininity regulate women's bodies. Using the Foucauldian notion of "docile bodies," which underlines how modern society generates obedient bodies that will do everything to conform to cultural norms, Barkty (1988) argues that women create and recreate themselves to meet standards of beauty that are based on men's desire and have internalized and naturalized the norms of femininity.

On the other hand, some feminists have rejected Barkty's position, arguing that seeing women as "docile bodies" would undermine their "pockets of resistance" to challenge societal norms about femininity (McNay 1991). Bodies can be sites of contestation and negotiation of gender norms and sexuality (Langman 2003). However, we should not forget that a critical component of Foucault's (1977) notion of "docile bodies" is that their docility also makes them

more *productive* hence my interest in understanding how women's performance of proper womanhood can be productive of new discourses on sexuality and femininity.

The body is essential in the performance of *jongé*. According to some interpretations, in Wolof, *jong* means to "charm," seduce, and please. The emphasis on charming is represented through the noun *jongoma*, which has the same grammatical root (*jong)* as *jongé*. A *jongoma*, also known as the *diriyanké* (a beautiful woman), embodies Senegalese beauty ideals. The *jongoma* refers to a class of "Senegalese women perceived as beautiful because of their appealing physical features such as 1) the size of their buttocks, 2) the space between their front teeth (a divinely [sic] mark), 3) an impressive slow walk style" (Ngom 2012). This figure is so emblematic in Senegal that in 1992 a beauty contest named *Miss Jongoma* was created in response to the *Miss Senegal* contest, which was criticized for not considering the "real image of the Senegalese woman" (Nyamnjoh 2005).

Jongé is embodied through actions and behavior hence the centrality of appearance in the practice. Self-care is essential in Wolof culture. It is transmitted through the Wolof mantra, *"Jigeen dafa wara bëgg boppam"* (A woman should love herself). Loving yourself in this context means taking care of yourself through the process of beautification. Cultural anthropologist Hudita Nura Mustafa (2006) notes that despite the abundance of distressed African women's bodies in Western media, there is a culture of "attractive bodily appearance on the continent" (23). Echoing Mustafa, literary scholar Ayo Coly (2019) explores how colonial representations of the African female body continue to "haunt" postcolonial scholarship and silence discussion of women's sexuality. The close attention to the *jongé* body throughout this dissertation challenges colonialist assumptions of African women and their sexuality.

Women in Senegal use the erotic power of their body, beauty, and sexuality to negotiate patriarchal restrictions and establish agency. The figure of the eroticized Senegalese woman is pervasive in Senegalese literature and cinema. *Karmen Gei* (Ramaka 2002), *Faat Kiné* (Sembène 2000), *The Beggars' Strike* (Fall 1986), *The Belly of the Atlantic* (Diome 2008), and *Scarlet Song* (Ba 1995) are some examples of this representation. Some female characters in these works exercises power over men and women by manipulating her eroticized body.

The potential role of eroticism in women's liberation from patriarchal subjugation has aroused a significant debate among feminist scholars. Audre Lorde's *The Uses of Erotics* (Lorde 2016) advocates for recognizing the erotic as a source of power. Women's (re)appropriation of the erotic is an acceptance of their sexuality and recognition of its potential. The importance of eroticism in the practice of *jongé* can be found in the abundance of *jongé* paraphernalia, products such as lingerie, incense, and other elements women use in their bedrooms to spice up their sexual lives. The focus on the various technologies Senegalese women deploy in their enactment of *jongé* constructs the erotic as a powerful resource from which women negotiate power and agency in their asymmetrical relationships.

Throughout the world, the concept of *jongé* is usually advertised as the Senegalese art of seduction. The idea of *jongé* is intrinsically linked to Senegalese womanhood. Indeed, performing *jongé* is an enactment of Senegalese women's identity. Feminist scholarship has shown that women have been the locus of nationalist discourses and practices (Yuval-Davis 1997; McClintock 1997; Balogun 2012). Historian Jacqueline Mougoué (2019), for instance, studied the sartorial practice called *Nyanga* among Cameroonian women to show how they navigate global and local perceptions of natural black beauty and how such practices intersect with Cameroonian nationalism. In this regard, I am interested in understanding how Senegalese

women, particularly those in the diaspora, embody and contest nationalist narratives of femininity and sexuality through performances of *jongé*.

Gender and Consumption

The recent development of consumption studies with the influence of anthropological perspectives on consumption practices has led to a body of work that has extensively theorized the relationship between consumption and the mundane, everyday life (Bourdieu 1984; Certeau 1984; Appadurai 1988). Shifting from the earlier focus on the production of consumption or the hedonistic nature of consumption to the everyday experiences of consumers, scholars have examined the symbolic role of consumption in the struggle for status and power. Social scientist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) has shown how people acquire social status and power through a meticulous presentation and displaying of consumer goods. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1988) complicated the Marxian concept of commodity fetishism to examine the social life of things and how material goods are invested with meanings. Their works have inspired a larger body of research investigating the symbolism of consumption and its relations to social identities. For example, focusing on the links between bodies and things, historian Timothy Burke (1996) explores the role of toiletries consumption in producing subjectivities in Zimbabwe. Recent feminist scholars have shed light on the intersection of gender and consumption, showing how throughout history, consumption has been constructed across gender lines but, most importantly, by bringing domestic consumption and its significance in the everyday life of women (Martens and Casey 2016).

My interest in what I call here *the economy of jongé* stems from a desire to understand how consumption and gender intersect in *jongé*. Senegalese and diasporic women consume an

abundance of paraphernalia associated with *jongé*, such as lingerie, incense, beads, and other imported products. My research on the symbolism of these products and their meanings will show their social significance and allow us to understand the "making of consumption and material culture" (Burke 1996, 3) as well as women's role in the process. Such an undertaking deviates from the narrative of women as consumers par excellence. It puts forward their cultural agency and creativity while showing at the same time how they construct and perform their different identities through their consumption of these products and the interactions derived from them.

Methods

Whether exploring narrative works, analyzing films, or interpreting the ethnographic data in this research, I have tried to center women's narratives of their own experiences with *jongé*. My approach to investigating this topic relies on feminist methodologies, which entail paying particular attention to "the issues of power, authority, reflexivity, ethics, and difference in the practice, writing, and reading of feminist research" (Hesse-Biber 2012, 16). This approach has a particular meaning in the context of ethnographic research in communities that have been historically marginalized, underrepresented, or exploited. This means acknowledging and being reflexive about my positionality and ensuring that I treat my co-producers of knowledge with care and respect and that I abide by the feminist ethics of "reciprocity, honesty, accountability, responsibility" from the data collection to the analysis (Skeggs 2001, 434). For example, throughout my interactions with the women involved in this research, I also talked with them about my life, including my marriage. In some instances, women shared very private and sensitive information about their past or sex lives that I choose not to disclose here.

I tried to ground my theorizing within the data rather than forcing my interpretation (Morse et al. 2016). My position as a Senegalese woman within this research is best captured by the words of Nwanda Achebe, who posits that "my relationship with Africa and Nigeria and the fact that I am Igbo shapes in a profound way what I am willing to do or not do when it comes to research. It shapes, rightly or wrongly, how I identify with my research collaborators—a fact that has a direct effect on what I choose to write about and my interpretation of data—as well as my notions of accountability" (Achebe and Toboh 2007, 64).

The data I present in this research was collected over three years in the US and Senegal. My contacts, interactions, and observations of market transactions around *jongé* paraphernalia started in 2018 when I returned to Senegal for preliminary work on *jongé*. While I had planned to conduct more ethnographic fieldwork in Senegal, the onset of Covid-19 required me to redirect my project because the research I had hoped to do required me to travel. Traveling would have put me and my research participants at risk of contracting the coronavirus. Although Covid-19 challenged my original research plans, it allowed me to explore this topic in multiple locations. The digital space became a prominent site for the different questions about *jongé*.

I shifted to online fieldwork, including participant observation in a Facebook group and individual interviews with consenting group members. I collected the data I discuss in chapters two and three during the summer of 2020 over Zoom. I met the diasporic women I introduced in this research via *Jigeen*, a Facebook group created in 2017 and reserved only for Senegalese women living in the US, with more than three thousand members across the US. The research plan I presented to its admins and members was facilitated by my involvement as a group member long before my research interests arose. My intersecting identities as a Senegalese immigrant in the US and a graduate student researching aspects of our shared culture helped me

integrate into this online community. They also enabled me to gain the trust of participants who consented to talk with me about *jongé*. I interviewed twelve women who live across the US. I gave interviewees a choice to speak in Wolof, French, or English. On average, the interviews lasted an hour.

My discussion with diasporic Senegalese women revealed the consumption of *jongé* commodities to be central in how they relate to the concept. Once it was safe to resume travel, I went to Dakar in December 2021 and spent three months conducting participant observation of the sale of *jongé* paraphernalia at local markets. From my first days at the markets, I immediately tried to earn the trust of the saleswomen by explaining concretely in the best way I could my project to the women I encountered. My years teaching Wolof came in handy when translating and articulating what I was trying to do and what their participation would entail. Researching sexuality is not an easy project, given the taboo and privacy surrounding it. Still, my status as a married Senegalese woman gave me a certain legitimacy and facilitated my interactions and access to their knowledge. Being born and raised in Rufisque, where the market I spent most of my time is located, also helped my integration.

Although I was seen and usually saw myself as an insider, I sometimes felt like an outsider. My situation as a student living and studying in the US and conducting research accentuated that feeling. I was constantly reminded of my "outsiderness" because of my way of dressing (I always went to the market in jeans, a top, sneakers, eyeglasses, and a notebook). The inquisitive looks of people I passed by on my way to the markets or from the other traders and clients when they found me sitting at the stalls added to this feeling. My wearing a facemask to prevent Covid-19 and losing the right Wolof word in the middle of the conversation did not help. Reflecting on the "outsider phenomenon," sociologist Nancy Naples (2004) notes that

"insiderness and outsiderness are not fixed or static positions; instead, they are ever-shifting and permeable social locations that are differently experienced and expressed by community members" (2004, 373). Thus, throughout my journey in the field, I had to navigate these positions constantly.

Saleswomen adopted me as their daughter or young sister with pride and excitement and were eager to lead me into their business. I was both a researcher and an assistant to saleswomen at the stalls, answering questions about prices or searching for and handing packages to clients. Sometimes, I would even be asked by a client about my opinions on their color choices when they picked lingerie. I visited three markets in Dakar, but most of the data presented in chapter four come from the saleswomen in the market in Rufisque. On the days saleswomen had time, I conducted and recorded individual interviews with them in Wolof. I spent time observing and taking notes on the various interactions between saleswomen and their clients at the stalls. I also accompanied saleswomen to retail stores in Dakar, where they get some of their merchandise.

I transcribed my conversations and analyzed the original transcripts using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a framework to interpret them, though I include translations here. CDA offers a critical approach to understanding the co-constitutiveness of language and society (Van Dijk 1993). It allows us to explore how language reproduces or challenges the social structure of knowing, being, and unequal power relations. My use of CDA in this research is inspired by feminist discourse studies, which focus on "complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities" (Lazar 2007, 142). Discourse reflects power structures; hence paying attention to it helps us understand the (re)production of dominance or resistance.

Structure of the Work

Each chapter offers a different perspective on *jongé* and sheds light on its complexity. Chapter one reflects on the fictional representation of *jongé* in the novel *Scarlet Song* and the film *Mossane* to examine how the characters in the two texts use *jongé* to reclaim ownership of their bodies and negotiate their socio-economic marginalization. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrates that characters in these works blur the line between victimhood and agency and deconstruct the narratives of African women's sexuality as controlled, passive, and mutilated. The aim here is not to assign the novel an anthropological dimension but rather to examine what *jongé* aesthetics looks like in a literary setting and how it can help us understand its place in the Senegalese social imaginary.

Departing from the world of imagination, chapter two turns to contemporary, real-life situations and ponders on the question of socialization in *jongé*. This chapter presents Senegalese immigrants who reflect on their childhood experiences of the practice. Through their narratives, the chapter demonstrates the role of language and performance in the socialization of *jongé*. It also shows that the practice is a discursive space constructing and transmitting gendered ideologies.

Building from this, chapter three centers on women's perspectives on *jongé* to examine how language, gender, and transnationalism intersect in diasporic conceptions of *jongé*. It reveals that, in the diaspora, *jongé* becomes an ideological site where women continue to negotiate its meanings. It highlights the women's transnational subjectivity as they deconstruct or reproduce hegemonic interpretations of *jongé* to underscore their understandings when defining the concept while showing that (re)definitions of the concept are a site of negotiation of gender and sexuality.

The last chapter of this dissertation is based on the ethnographic work in Senegal. Moving from women's understanding of the concept, this chapter focuses on its performance by scrutinizing the paraphernalia they use in their enactment. It examines the relationship between consumption, gender, and sexuality in the context of *jongé* through women's interactions at local markets to demonstrate that women in Senegal use local and global erotics to perform their sexuality. Moreover, despite being at the market, a public place, the *jongé* stall is a feminine intimate, liberated, and pleasurable space where women explore the different facets of sexuality, eroticism, and daily social life under the guidance of saleswomen and their multiple roles as sex educators and confidante. Women's consumption practices and interactions reveal that *jongé* is a place of empowerment and cultural métissage that highlights Senegalese women's cosmopolitan and Afropolitan identities.

Finally, in the conclusion, I lay out the various contributions this research brings in terms of methodologies, how it contributes to the study of gender and sexuality in the African context, and, more broadly, and some potential research questions to explore further in the future.

Chapter One

Theorizing *Jongé* Aesthetics in *Scarlet Song* and *Mossane*

> "For people of color have always theorized but in forms quite different from the Western form of abstract logic. I am inclined to say that our theorizing (and I intentionally use the verb rather than the noun) is often in narrative forms, in the stories we create, in the riddles and proverbs, in the play with language, since dynamic rather than fixed ideas seem more to our liking. How else have we managed to survive with such spiritedness the assault on our bodies, social institutions, countries, our very humanity?"
>
> — Barbara Christian, "The Race to Theory"

Male writers and directors within Africa and the West have predominantly controlled African women's representation in literature and cinema. Consequently, the dominant image of African women comes from men's imaginations. Many male directors have crafted an imaginary that romanticizes women's traditional roles in society and has, in tandem, denied African women the opportunity to articulate their subjectivities(Ukadike 1994) . Reflecting on the culture of victimhood of women in Africa, feminist sociologist Oyeronke Oweyumi remarks: "The overrepresentations of African women in much of the literature as desperate victims robs them of agency, which in turn often leads to a devaluation of African experiences of resistance and nullifies African females as a resource for developing feminist ideas and theories"(2011, 2).

Through their narrative voices, African women writers, including Senegalese women writers, have tried to deconstruct the dominant image of African women. While criticizing the ill-treatment heaped on women, they also capture their resilience. The depiction of *jongé*, the Senegalese enactment of an erotized female sexuality and ideals of womanhood, in *Scarlet Song* and *Mossane* offer a counter narrative of women's bodies and agency.

Indeed, early representations of the African female character emphasized her subordinate status and essentialized her role as mother and wife. As literary critic Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi puts

it, African women "are portrayed as passive, as always prepared to do the bidding of their husbands and family, as having no status of their own and therefore completely dependent on their husbands" (1997, 4). This pervasive trope in literature and cinema has amplified the mother-wife cliché, which reduced African women's value and social relevance to their ability to reproduce and nurture. In addition to this conflation of African womanhood with motherhood and wifehood, the African female character was the ideal victim of African traditions and colonial legacy. Her lack of voice and her inability to change were major features of her characterization.

Nevertheless, African female writers paint a more vigorous female character through their narrative voices. While there is little research about *jongé* in the scholarship about Senegalese literature and cinema, it is interesting to note its strong presence of in both of these works. Thus, this chapter analyzes how filmmaker Safi Faye and novelist Mariama Ba challenge these previous representations of women in literature and cinema through their depiction of *jongé*. The vivid portrayal of *jongé* in these texts allows us to understand better the practice, its social relevance, and its place in the Senegalese cultural and sexual imaginary. Moreover, examining *jongé* in these texts helps us understand how women can negotiate their gendered identities and gain agency by manipulating cultural imperatives about womanhood, femininity, and sexuality. Using visual analysis and close reading, I show that women perform *jongé* to reclaim ownership of their bodies and negotiate their socio-economic marginalization. I also argue that through their embodiment of *jongé,* the characters in the novel and the film challenge preconceived ideas about African women's sexuality and binary views of them as either victims or agents. Paying attention to how *jongé* aesthetics translate in these works allows us to understand its significance

in the Senegalese social imaginary and its relevance in Senegalese women's identities and daily lives.

Background

Mossane and *Scarlet Song* represent feminine voices in Senegalese literature and cinema and also the possibilities of African feminist texts. They raise several issues that speak to the female condition in postcolonial African societies. The authors' life trajectories, the plots and themes of their work allow us to contextualize the feminist and decolonial projects embedded in these works.

The Authors

Mariama Ba and Safi Faye are pioneer novelists and directors who have reimagined the feminine subject. Born in 1929 into an influential Senegalese family, Mariama Ba was one of the first women who received a Western education in Senegal. Ba attended the French School in Dakar and went on to study at the École Normale in Rufisque, where she graduated as a teacher in 1947. She experienced life under colonialism and witnessed firsthand the events surrounding Senegal's independence from France. Ba died prematurely of cancer in 1981, leaving to posterity two novels, *So Long a Letter* (1979) and *Scarlet Song* (1981).

Safi Faye was born in 1943 in Serer land, Senegal. Like Ba, Faye earned her teacher's certificate at École Normale in Rufisque. In 1966, Faye met with French filmmaker Jean Rouch while attending Dakar's World Negro Arts Festival. This meeting became her entry point to the cinematography world as Rouch invited her to act in his short film *Petit à Petit* (1968). She later traveled to Paris to pursue a Ph.D. in ethnography and made her first film, *La Passante* (1972), in

which she documents her life as an immigrant woman in Paris. In 1975, Faye made *Kaddu Beykat,* her first feature film. The movie exposes the hardship of rural life in Senegal while emphasizing rural women's resilience and contribution to the economy. Her interest in rural life continued with her third film, *Fad Jal* (1979), which retraces her native village's history. Finally, *Mossane,* for which she is best known, was released in 1998.

Plots and Themes

Scarlet Song takes place in post-independence Senegal. It tells the story of Ousmane, a man from a modest background, and Mireille, the daughter of a French diplomat serving in Senegal. The two fall in love while studying at the University of Dakar. They secretly marry without parental approval in Paris and move back to Dakar. Mireille struggles to be accepted by her new family and faces her parents' disapproval. On the other side, Ousmane faces the criticism of his people for not marrying a local woman. Unfortunately, their love story cannot not stand the power of their cultural difference. Ousmane takes Ouleymatou, a Senegalese woman, as a second wife. Unhappy in the marriage, Mireille falls into depression and kills her baby. The novel criticizes the alienation of the elite and the economic deprivation of the masses, among other issues. Mireille's depression and failed marriage are metaphors for the (im)possibility of cultural hybridity.

Meanwhile, *Mossane* tells the story of a teenage girl with exceptional beauty in a Sereer village. She falls in love with Fara, a poor college student, but her parents have already promised her to Diogoye, a wealthy Senegalese man who resides in France. She struggles between her intense feelings for Fara and her parents' will. Despite explicitly voicing her disagreement with her parents' plan, Mossane is to be forced into an arranged marriage. She defies her parents and

decides to follow her heart, but while trying to catch Fara on his way back to the university, Mossane tragically drowns. While the film presents the tragic love story, it also offers a poignant social commentary on life in rural Senegal. Throughout the film, Faye unveils the hardships faced by farming communities and the tension between modernity and tradition in rural Senegal.

Theoretical Framework

Both Ba and Faye refused the label *feminist* during many interactions with critics. Nevertheless, their works offer a feminist perspective on the female condition in Africa. By representing female characters in the novel and the film, they articulate women's resilience and negotiation of everyday life in Senegal. Indeed, the artists' choice to represent *jongé* underscores its social relevance and importance in understanding Senegalese women's lives and identities.

While *Scarlet Song* and *Mossane* have received much scholarly attention, only a few scholars have explored the feminist perspectives of these texts (but see (Ellerson 2004; Dima 2011; Ellerson 2019). Moreover, much of the scholarship about these texts has undermined the complexities of feminist theorizing in African contexts and its challenge to established binaries such as modern vs. traditional or agency vs. victimhood. For instance, when analyzing the three female characters (Yaye Khady, Ouleymatou, and Mireille) in *Scarlet Song*, literary scholar Jeanette Treiber states: "What is significant is all three women are in a dependency situation because of their sex, even though their dependencies have different causes. Moreover, they lack an awareness of their situation(s); they definitely have no 'feminist' consciousness. In this respect, the women follow prescribed ideologies" (1996, 121). Treiber's comment reflects a colonial reading that imposes a Western paradigm on African societies and an imperialistic feminist posture that undermines the politics of context. Indeed, Western feminist theorizing and

praxis have often overlooked the difference in context (social, political, economic, spatial) and the global political and economic processes that inform the realities and struggles of women outside of the West. Postcolonial feminist scholars have argued against the western "discursive colonization of Third World women's lives and struggles" (Mohanty 2003, 501). Following this trend, African feminists have localized feminist discourse in Africa to show how Africa's colonial legacy and geographical and historical position with its cultural specificities complicate the analysis of gender and its various social ramifications (Ogundipe-Leslie 1994; Acholonu 1995; Oyewumi 1997; Nnaemeka 2005; Amadiume 2006b). I build on this scholarship with my focus on the Senegalese concept of *jongé* to offer a decolonial and contextualized feminist reading of *Mossane* and *Scarlet Song*. While it can be argued that the characters in these works follow "prescribed ideologies," my focus on *jongé* contextualizes and complicates the binary of victims and agents. Through their embodiment of *jongé,* the characters unearth agentive strategies to negotiate their social status and reclaim the erotic power of their bodies.

The Symbolism of Women's Work

As a gendered practice articulated through discourse and action, the idea of good womanhood is central in *jongé*. *Jigeen ju baax* (a good woman), as theorized in *jongé*, must meet certain societal expectations of womanhood. A fundamental principle in good Senegalese womanhood is the mastery of *liggeeyu kër* (housework). Indeed, contemporary gender differentiation in the Senegalese context is also articulated in labor divisions (Creevey 1996; Hannaford and Foley 2015). Men are seen as breadwinners, while women are caretakers. This division is represented in the dichotomous and gendered understanding of work transmitted

through the Wolof concept of *liggeeyu jigeen* (woman's work) versus *liggeeyu goór* (man's work).

Moreover, work is also spatially differentiated. For example, *Jigeen ca waañ wa, goór ca waar wa* (women in the kitchen, men in the field) is a famous proverb about labor's spatial division. In this context, a woman's kitchen work is a metonym for housework more generally. Meanwhile, men work outside the house, at the *waar* or field, implying that a man's work is more physically demanding. In *Scarlet Song*, Ouleymatou Ngom is aware of this social construct about women's work, and she uses it to enact her good womanhood to win over her in-laws and Ousmane.

Ouleymatou Ngom is a secondary character whose presence is symbolic. As a young woman, she grows up with Ousmane and is forced into a marriage with an older man. After her divorce, she goes back to live with her parents and reconnects with Ousmane, her childhood love. Ouleymatou realizes that Ousmane has "now become a real man" and is economically independent. Meanwhile, she has "stagnated, badly nourished, badly housed, having to be satisfied when she needed clothes with her mother's rare hand-outs." (105). Ousmane's economic and social mobility contrasts with Ouleymatou's economic marginalization and social subordination. This difference finds its roots in the gender division within Senegalese society. While Ousmane has to higher education in and outside of the country to prepare for his future, Ouleymatou does not have the privilege of higher education nor the power to choose her husband. Through her story, Ba castigates gender discrimination within Senegalese culture. Ouleymatou's marginalization, emphasized by the passive voice, strips her of agency. This narrative technique also portrays her as a burden to her parents. She also experiences the social

stigma associated with divorced women. Nevertheless, she is conscious of her situation and sets the goal of getting herself out of it.

Ouleymatou understands the importance of extended family and in-laws' approval for the success and durability of a marriage. To be accepted by Ousmane, she must win the love and respect of his parents, especially his mother. Ouleymatou's choice to act to change her situation challenges her earlier victimhood. As feminist scholar Obioma Nnameka notes when discussing the issue of agency and victimhood in feminist analyses of African literature: "What is important is not whether [the] agents survive their insurrections or are crushed by it; what is crucial is that they *choose* to act" (2005, 4).

Thus, Ouleymatou embodies *jongé* and embarks on the journey of pleasing Yaye Khady, who still does all the housework despite having a daughter-in-law (Mireille). When Ouleymatou asks Yaye Khady about her daughter-in-law, we read: "She burst out laughing. 'My daughter-in-law! Hasn't your mother told you? She's white. And for a white woman, the only person who counts is her husband. So I do the ironing" (116). Mireille's lack of support for Yaye Khady categorizes her as a selfish person and, therefore, a bad woman. Upon hearing this and seeing Yaye Khady doing the ironing, Ouleymatou is shocked and immediately offers to help her. The narrator describes her endeavors in these words:

> Ouleymatou took off her own boubou and hung it in one of the wires in the courtyard. She tucked her pagne up around her waist and, without another word, took the iron out of Yaye Khady's hands. She sang as she ironed: the garments slipped sparkling from her hands. She folded them and placed them in a pile on a chair in the sun. By noon, the basin of washing was empty. Yaye Khady could not

believe her eyes: she ironed so quickly and so well. Better than she did herself. (106)

The narrator exaggerates the ironing scene, presenting it as a spectacle. Indeed, there is a meticulous *mise en scene* conveyed through active verbs like "took off," "tucked," "hung," and "ironed"). Additionally, the sequencing of these actions, Yaye Khady's surprised reaction, and the reference to the duration of her work ("By noon, the basin of washing was empty") connote the rapidity with which she did the job. The courtyard where the scene is set renders it theatrical. It is a stage on which Ouleymatou performs her play while Yaye Khady watches with bewilderment: "Yaye Khady could not believe her eyes." The combination of Ouleymatou's manners with Yaye Khady's reaction reinforces the scene's drama. The way she takes off her boubou and her tucking of the pagne imply a change of costume and a new character's appearance. The evocation of Yaye Khady's eyes is reminiscent of an audience's reaction when watching a magic trick.

Ouleymatou deliberately goes to the extreme to show off her skills to Yaye Khady. By taking over the task from Yaye Khady, Ouleymatou demonstrates respect for an older person and enacts the expectations of a good daughter-in-law. In the eyes of her audience (Yaye Khady), her hard work and willingness to "sweat" are symbols of proper womanhood. Ouleymatou is aware of the importance of in-laws and uses that knowledge to her advantage: "She wanted Ousmane, and through Yaye Khady she would find means of getting him back (107). Passing through Yaye Khady also means that Ouleymatou has to demonstrate that she is well-versed in the Senegalese culture of *teranga,* the Senegalese ethics of hospitality. Indeed, her relationship with Yaye khady is mediated through acts of *teranga*. After gaining the sympathy of Yaye Khady through her performance of women's work, Ouleymatou knew that to secure her marital future with

Ousmane, she needed to continue pleasing Yaye Khady through gifts and delicious meals. As stated by the narrator, "Yaye Khady protected her home. She [Ouleymatou] showed her gratitude by extravagant gifts, from a boubou for best wear to a woven pagne. Bowls of food found their way to Gibraltar [Yaye Khady's neighborhood], bowls of chicken, bowls of fruit, bowls of couscous, bowls of barbecued lamb. She seized every opportunity of pleasing Yaye Khady. Yaye Khady proudly invited her women friends to witness how well Ouleymatou treated her" (154). While Ouleymatou's *teranga* exchange may seem materialistic, it goes beyond the simple act of exchanging objects and food. It "encapsulates a historical, cultural genealogy, both of an idealized past as well as a demonstration of cultural knowledge of the Senegalese imagined community" (Riley 2016, 47).

The comparison between Mireille and Ouleymatou reinforces the significance of *teranga* acts in the social imaginary. The narrator depicts Mireille as a cultural outsider. Mireille's failed marriage and integration stem partly from her unwillingness to participate in the social acts expected of a Senegalese wife. In contrast, Ouleymatou's energetic performance of *teranga* demonstrates her cultural awareness and knowledge. Ouleymatou's enactment of Senegalese womanhood pervades the novel through her culinary skills, her choice of meals, and the way she cooks when she decides to host Ousmane's friends.

> At a nearby market, she selected two pieces of Thiof. In these, she made three deep incisions into which she placed the stuffing made of parsley, chopped onion, garlic, chili, bay leaf, and salt, blended in a mortar. Large red tomatoes were added to thicken the sauce in which cassava, pieces of white cabbage, carrots, turnips and a slice of pumpkin were already cooking. The couscous was swelling up and softening in a steam. Ouleymatou tipped into the saucepan and broke up

> the lumps. She crushed powdered baobab leaves in the mortar and added these to make it more glutinous, then put the mixture back into the steamer which was waiting on the fire. Like an expert cook, she rapidly dipped her right forefinger into the boiling pan and tasted to check the seasoning of the sauce. (114)

Throughout history, women have primarily been associated with the role of nurturer. In Senegal, knowing how to cook is a symbol of good womanhood (Gueye 2010). Thus, by providing a detailed description of the cooking, the narrator underlines Ouleymatou's culinary talents. The details in her choice of ingredients and steps to prepare such a delicacy demonstrate her knowledge of Senegalese cuisine. Food anthropologist James McCann argues that "cookery is a stage for performance" (2009, 3), with the leading performer being the cook, while families, friends, and neighbors represent the audience. As the cook, Ouleymatou displays her skills to the audience (Ousmane and his friends), who react to it by eating and appreciating it.

We see a similar food-related performance in *Mossane*. In one scene, the titular protagonist is scrutinized as she performs the role of hostess. When her future parents-in-law came to visit, Mossane must behave like a "good woman," enacting what she has learned. Although her family and her future in-laws have had a multigenerational relationship, her future in-laws' visit is a pretext to investigate her behavior to see whether she is fit to be their daughter-in-law. As the camera closely follows every gesture she makes, the viewer also evaluates her.

At the arrival of the guests, Mossane's first action is to come out and greet them. She respectfully genuflects when she comes to the main parlor to welcome her future in-laws, keeping her head down. Bowing and deflecting the gaze are essential cultural cues in Senegal, indexing politeness, respect for elders, and a good education. She then unrolls a mat on the floor for them to sit on during lunch while her mother continues greeting and serving the guests drinks.

She goes out and returns with the calabash of water for her guest to wash their hands. Finally, she returns to the kitchen and comes out with a bowl of *ceebu jën* (fish and rice), puts it down, steps back, and waits for the elders to be seated to join them. Throughout the entire scene, Mossane does not speak. She only uses her voice when she invites the guests to eat and when she excuses herself after eating. Her voicelessness points to the belief that *jigeen dafa wara gaat tank, gaat lamiña (*A woman should have a short foot, a short tongue). This saying encourages women to walk and talk less, confining them to the house and controlling how much they can say. Mossane's silence in this scene is also linked to her disapproval of her parents' decision and her refusal to engage further with her guests. Culturally Mossane is expected to continue the conversation and socialize with her guests to show her hospitality; not speaking to them is an agentive strategy that signals her resistance to the marriage.

Like Ouleymatou's, Mossane's culinary talent is celebrated by her guests' nods of approval and appreciative sounds when they taste the food. Her mother, Mingué, invites their guests to evaluate Mossane positively by commenting, "You can judge a woman from her cooking." Indeed, it is widely believed that, from the presentation of a dish, one can judge what type of woman one is dealing with—whether she is clean or dirty, hospitable, stingy, or generous. Mossane's dish alludes to these connotations. Her choice of *ceebu jën* is highly symbolic. In fact, "the rice and fish dish … is a national institution that symbolizes not just a basic need for sustenance but also objectifies Senegalese values such as teránga [hospitality]. Not only is the food itself significant, but the way it is prepared, served, eaten, and with whom it is shared represents the ideals and practices of Senegalese ethics" (Riley 2016, 47). This act of *teranga* manifested through the choice of the dish is emphasized in the scene that immediately follows, where Mossane gives food to a *talibé,* a student at a Koranic school. The presence of the

talibé in the film is also a metonym for the widespread poverty of the rural areas. Despite being poor themselves, Mossane's family is still bound to an ethic of hospitality. The same cultural imperative applies to Ouleymatou, who abides by this ethic when inviting Ousmane and his friends.

The dishes that women present to their guests (*ceebu jen* and couscous) are symbolic in both works. Cultural analyst Igor Cusack notes that "the development of a national cuisine will involve the summoning of a variety of dishes into the ambit of the discourse of the nation, and the very mention then of some national dish will quietly flag the nation" (2000, 209). Like the famous *ceebu jen*, the Senegalese couscous dish is part of everyday cooking that "flags" the Senegalese nation and identities. Scholars have called attention to the importance of food in constructing and expressing identities. Food and cooking as McCann states "can both be the symbol and substance of a national identity" (2009, 6). At the taste of Ouleymatou's couscous dish, Ousmane is reminded of his Senegalese identity, from which he has become distant due to his stay in France and his marriage to Mireille: "His palate delighted once more in hot chilies and the flavor of his native dishes. His eyes were moist, his forehead perspiring; he was happy. It is true; he had forgotten these strong sensations of African life." The taste of Ouleymatou's couscous triggers Ousmane's reconnection with his African roots and identity. Using his hands to eat instead of a spoon and the evocation of symbolic objects such as the calabashes and the large bowl, representing Senegalese culture, illustrate his return.

Moreover, the correlation between Ouleymatou's performance of *jongé* through her culinary expertise with Ousmane's symbolic return to his roots posits *jongé* as a site for nationalist construction. Ouleymatou embodies the nation through her cooking and transmits its cultural identity to Ousmane. The idea permeates the novel with the binary Mireille/Ouleymatou,

representing Western culture versus the Senegalese tradition. Ouleymatou's and Mireille's bodies become sites where cultural discourses are inscribed. Indeed, throughout the novel, "The woman's body represents the place to project the memories and fantasies of racial and cultural authenticity" (Bernard 2005, 598). To Ousmane, Ouleymatou represents his roots. She embodies cultural authenticity, and through her, he revives his cultural heritage. Ouleymatou's body is also a place of resistance against Western ideals. Despite the westernization of the Senegalese culture, her character remains strongly infused with tradition. Her bodily praxis symbolizes her cultural authenticity and her rootedness. It is also representative of the power of women's bodies in the performance of *jongé*.

The Aesthetics of Senegalese Sexuality

In *Scarlet Song*, Ouleymatou uses the Senegalese art of seduction, a key component in *jongé*, to seduce Ousmane into marrying her and thereby improving her living condition. "She was a woman; she was in love; she was adept in the art of seduction and laid her traps to realise her ambition and assuage her passion" (116). Apart from performing good womanhood through the mastery of women's work, doing *jongé* means showcasing assertive female sexuality and sensuality to one's partner. Ouleymatou epitomizes an eroticized female sexuality and sculpts her body as a seduction tool through beautification and eroticization. The narrator, talking about Ouleymatou's body, tells the reader, "Her body! She groomed it; she polished it, she perfumed it. She took every care of it, for it was her weapon of seduction" (115). The narrator provides a detailed description of this "weaponization" in the following passage, where Ouleymatou beautifies her body before visiting Ousmane:

> She powdered her face, applied mascara to her eyelashes, shaved her eyebrows, which she re-drew faintly with her eyebrow pencil. With a brown lipstick, she emphasized the outline of her mouth. She sprinkled a few tantalizing drops of 'Sabrina'- the currently fashionable perfume-under her armpits and between her breasts. As she moved, a gauzy boubou allowed a glimpse, now of a plump shoulder, now of her breast in their lacy prison, now the strings of beads, standing around her hips. She slipped on a pair of red babouches, which emphasized the black coloring of the henna with which she had tinted her feet. (Ba 1995, 109)

In this passage, Ouleymatou resembles the *jongoma*, the embodiment of Senegalese beauty and sexuality. Through numerous references to the products she uses (mascara, an eyebrow pencil, a specific brand of perfume, a boubou, beads, and the *babouches* (shoes), the scene demonstrates the importance of self-care and appearance in Senegalese culture. Even though she comes from a very modest background, she still manages to present herself to the public in a desirable manner. The emphasis on beautification stresses Ouleymatou's awareness of Senegalese beauty standards is represented in the text by the boubou, a traditional garment associated with Senegalese elegance, and coloring her feet with henna, which suggests her sensuality. Through Ba's reference to various parts of Ouleymatou's body (her face, eyelashes, eyebrows, mouth, armpits, breasts, shoulder, hips, feet), her body becomes a canvas on which Senegalese women's "cultural aesthetics of sexuality" (Coly 2019, 115) is inscribed.

In the novel, the author uses narrative techniques that highlight the centrality of sexuality in women's agency. For example, the narrator describes Ouleymatou's ritual of eroticization in a very detailed scene.

> To catch Ousmane at his work! She smeared a scented salve over her whole body till it shone, and her oiled skin clothed her like a velvety film, which followed the swellings of her small firm breasts, curved over her hips to cover her firm rounded buttocks. Clouds of incense rose up from a clay vessel and spiraled around her parted legs; she offered her whole body to its warm, fragrant caresses. She took strings of white beads from a box and draped them tinkling around her hips. She chose a pagne of light material, transparent enough to suggest her curves, while remaining decent. She unfolded a new white bra that she had bought specially to emphasize her bust. She tied a little gongo powder in a piece of muslin and slipped the sweet-scented aphrodisiac between her breasts." (Ba 1995, 108–9).

This scene contrasts with the first description of Ouleymatou, where she is portrayed as a passive subject whose fate is being sealed by her parents. Active verbs paint her here as someone in charge of her own body. Ouleymatou has complete control over her body and knows how to enhance it and use it in her interest: She decides what parts of her body to reveal or hide. The detailed description of her preparation also suggests that sexuality, as enacted in *jongé*, is an art to be mastered. The henna, the waist beads, and the *gongo* powder are symbols of Senegalese women's sensuality, and as a local woman, Ouleymatou manipulates these resources to reach a goal. Ousmane's reaction during their encounter demonstrates the effectiveness of her approach and performance: "Ousmane's nostrils were greeted by the tantalizing scented exaltation that accompanied her movements. Ousmane's eyes wandered with desire from her ample bosom to the curve of her hips, from her plump little bottom to her smooth armpit" (110).

Ousmane's disorientation at the sight of Ouleymatou emphasizes her seductive talent. It also reveals that Ouleymatou is well aware of the effects the products (*gongo* powder, henna, and beads) she uses have on men. Moreover, she deliberately put herself in a position to be seen and appreciated. Consequently, she is not just the object of desire but also the subject that provokes it. Women like Ouleymatou are aware of the male gaze (Mulvey 1989), manipulating it to their advantage. While the visual is crucial in Ouleymatou's performance of *jongé,* Ba also introduces the reader to the olfactory world of *jongé* and its power. The evocation of the perfume, the incense, and the *gongo* powder emphasize Ouleymatou's sensuality, constructing her as femme fatale and helping create an enchanting environment from which Ousmane cannot escape.

Through her embodiment of *jongé*, Ouleymatou succeeds in seducing Ousmane, who marries her as a second wife. This new status opens the doors of bourgeois life for her: "Ousmane had already installed his new family in a house large enough to make a home for his mother-in-law and Ouleymatou's brothers and sisters." (138). Marriage is a source of economic security for her and her family. Ouleymatou's character shows that women who practice *jongé* are aware of the "good womanhood" discourse and manipulate it to their advantage. She also demonstrates that they use an eroticized sexuality to seduce men. While it is important to insist on women's sexual agency as enacted in *jongé,* it is also essential to investigate how women negotiate with the concept to gain ownership over their bodies in a society where the discourse around female sexuality is subject to many norms. As we will see in Safi Faye's *Mossane,* the articulation of *jongé* aesthetics shows the cosmopolitanism nature of the concept and the symbolism of women's erotic bodies.

In *Mossane*, the main character's best friend, Dibor, embodies the sexual aesthetics of *jongé*. While we do not know about her past, she seems to be happily married and in love with

her husband. As we saw in the novel, here too the character who represents the sexual female body is secondary to the story. Dibor makes three significant appearances in the movie. In her first appearance, she comes to finish Mossane's hair, carrying with her a magazine that she hides inside her top. After sitting, she pulls out the magazine. Although, as spectators, we do not fully see the pictures, from Dibor's talk, we learn that the images depict a white couple, seemingly in love. Dibor asks Mossane to look, but she refuses. Dibor continues enjoying the pictures and telling Mossane how good it feels to be in love. Dibor's lack of print literacy does not keep her from interacting with the outside world and discourses about love.

The magazine shows the cosmopolitanism of *jongé* and its assemblage of different aesthetics. Dibor's engagement with the West via magazines challenges the stereotype of the backward rural women, isolated and unaware of the rest of the world and constructs the *jongé* woman as a cosmopolitan figure. Her awareness and interaction with different discourses about romantic relationships are also illustrated by the pile of magazines next to the incense burner in her second scene in the movie. The combination of the local incense burner, a key artifact in *jongé*, with the imported magazines suggests that *jongé* is a discursive space where different ideas about love and sexuality converge.

In parallel to the passage on Ouleymatou's eroticization discussed above, the film features an unconventional scene that reinforces women's sexual agency and ownership of their bodies. The scene starts with transparent curtains that are blown open by the wind to reveal Dibor's bedroom. The clouds of incense rising from one corner of the room take over from the translucent door curtains, leading the viewers to the source of the smoke: a wood censer sitting on the small table. Next to the censer is a pile of magazines, similar to the ones Dibor inspected in the earlier scene. The clouds give way to the clicking noise of waist beads, and we see Dibor

astride her prone and bare-chested husband. She wears a black and white *bécoo* (a small cloth associated with sexuality) and beads around her waist.

Faye's filming technique puts Dibor at the center of the scene. The focus on her naked body in motion compared to her husband's static posture presents her as the principal erotic agent of the scene. When she hears Mossane coming, Dibor abruptly interrupts their lovemaking and dismisses her husband's warning that he is about to have an orgasm. By doing so, she disrupts the Senegalese "patriarchal economy of pleasure" (Coly 2019, 115), which pushes women to focus on satisfying their male partners.

Dibor's depiction in this scene deviates from how many filmmakers depict black women's bodies in cinema. In many African films, the female body is the object of desire for male viewers (Ukadike 1994; Bakari and Cham 1996; Pfaff 2004; Barlet 2011; Coly 2019). However, in this scene, Safy Faye limits the viewer's voyeurism by veiling the scene, using lowkey lighting, and revealing only a small part of Dibor's chest. She also abruptly interrupts the sex act with the unexpected visit of Mossane to Dibor. Moreover, the naked female bodies in Faye's movie are constantly in motion, in contrast to the static representation of women's naked bodies in many Senegalese films. For instance, in *Xala* (1975), the young Nabou is shown naked, lying in bed, waiting for her husband Elhadji to participate in the consummation of their marriage on their wedding night.

The emphasis on Dibor's moving body depicts her as an erotic agent. Faye recontextualizes African women's sexuality through these two scenes and deconstructs the narrative of the "the sexually repressed, sexually inferior, and sexually mutilated" woman (Amadiume 2006b, 4). The discussion between Mossane and Dibor in the scene discussed below also subverts this narrative and reveals the pleasure of sex and sex talk for women.

The Voice of Pleasure

Previous studies of African sexualities have predominantly focused on normative and prescribed sexualities. As Amadiume (2006b, 1) notes, "Most discourse or advocacy work on the subject of sexuality in Africa has been centered more on prescribed sexual practices, either descriptive or critical, and not on subversive alternatives to encourage and open up possibilities for resistance and change that is individual and systemic." But even within the scholarship on normative and prescribed sexualities, African women's sexual agency and pleasure are still underrepresented.

In *Mossane*, Faye unveils the taboo around female sexuality by creating a safe space for her female characters to discuss sex and its pleasures openly. In the scene that follows the lovemaking, Mossane asks Dibor for advice about her romantic relationship with Fara. In an open conversation, Dibor expresses her feelings about the physical intimacy she just shared with her husband. Seductively touching her body, she whispers to Mossane,

> Today my body is with so much happiness! Every time Daouda comes from the field, tired, when I wrap myself in my *bécoo* and pass by him, he loses control. When we get to the room, you can hear him moan like a tam-tam made of goatskin—aaaah *(moaning in pleasure).* Let me take a shower! Take your *bécoo*! *(She throws a small pagne to Mossane).*

Dibor does not shy away from expressing her ecstasy to her friend. Her body language and tone of voice translate her happiness and satisfaction. She continuously caresses herself while talking in a soft voice as if she wants to transmit her feelings to the innocent Mossane, who looks and listens to her, puzzled. On top of sharing her pleasure, Dibor also exposes her husband

by telling her friend about his reaction during sex. She implies her husband's response is provoked by the power of her *bécoo,* a symbolic garment in women's performance of sexuality and a vital object in the culture of *jongé*. Dibor's sexual agency comes to life when she wraps herself in this provocative underskirt.

In the following scene, we see the two young women taking a shower together. While their verbal exchange is minimal, the image speaks at length about the closeness between the two friends and their comfort in their half-nakedness. However, the intimacy between them is not sexual nor erotic. Instead, it is a celebration of women's sensuality and beauty, conveyed through their gestures and exchange of glances (Ellerson 2004). Faye's filming technique, which uses Dibor's movements and the water as a veil to their naked bodies, desexualizes the bathing scene and disrupts the West's obsession with the naked female body (Diabate 2020, 106). Feminist scholars have criticized Western cinema's objectification of female bodies for the pleasure of male viewers. Drawing on psychoanalytic theory, Mulvey (1989) criticized "the male gaze," which focuses on the needs and desires of male spectators. In this scene, Safi Faye subverts the male gaze with the absence of a point of view; that is, the scene is not filmed from a character's viewpoint. The two women are alone, without any male watching their bathing session. As film scholar Vlad Dima remarks: "There is no man on screen observing them, so in the traditional sense of voyeurism, there is no agency to which the male spectator can attach his gaze" (Dima 2020, 158).

Faye's choice of this narrative stance depicts the two girls not as sexual objects for the audience but simply as two women on the journey of discovering their bodies and embracing the beauty of their nakedness. Thus, the camera's focus on the girls' gazes, laughter, and breasts in a nonsexual way contextualizes the notion of eroticism. Indeed, in many African communities, the

breast does not have an erotic function (Pfaff 2004). Faye deliberately disappoints the viewer's voyeuristic gaze by not dropping the two women's underskirts as one might expect in mainstream cinema. Consequently, the scene's purpose is not to entertain the viewer's voyeurism but rather to unveil the taboo of sex and contextualize sex education within the Senegalese context. Such a purpose becomes more salient with the interaction between the two girls once they finish bathing.

The bathing scene is similar to initiation rites where older African women teach younger ones about their bodies and sexuality and purification rituals (Tamale 2005). The scene's symbolism resides in the emphasis on water, a recurrent motif in the movie. Both a literal and figurative meaning can be associated with this scene. By inciting Mossane to take a bath with her, Dibor enacts the importance of self-care and cleanliness, which are instrumental in *jongé.* From a symbolic viewpoint, the bathing scene can be read as a continuation of Mossane's initiation to the aesthetics of *jongé*. Mossane is wearing the *bécoo* that Dibor offered to her in the previous scene. By inviting Mossane to bathe with her, Dibor introduces her to the technologies of the self, a number of operations individuals undertake on their "own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality" (Foucault 1988, 18). She also invites her to take in a new discourse on sexuality and the female body after their silent bathing. The discussion that follows the girls' bathing exemplifies this argument.

Sitting on the edge of her bed, Dibor works on her friend's hair. Meanwhile, comfortably seated on the floor, Mossane seeks advice about her relationship with her lover, Fara. With a curious voice, she asks: "Dibor, tell me! How can I handle Fara to avoid something bad happening to me?" Dibor answers, "Well! A lover is possible. Fara can take the head of his penis

and rub it slowly until pleasure comes to your clitoris. What is important is for you two to know where to stop. I will prohibit you with one thing. One thing only. … He must not come into your 'seashell'." Dibor's sexual knowledge comes to light in this exchange with Mossane. Her room, which was previously the place of intimacy with her husband, is transformed into a nonconventional classroom where Mossane learns about sexuality. The numerous questions she asks Dibor and her facial expression transmit her confusion, naivete, and curiosity about the topic.

Although Mossane is forced to follow her parents' will and certain traditions, she does not quietly sit and accept her fate. Throughout the movie, she uses several routes to avoid her fate. Her inquiry about sex here shows that she is still in charge of her body despite her parents' control over her choice of marriage partner. While Mossane plays the role of the student, Dibor becomes the teacher, the bearer of knowledge. Mossane sits in an inferior position on the floor and looks up to Dibor, and Dibor's superior position contributes to her representation as an authority figure. The detailed advice she gives to her friend also indicates her knowledge of sexuality. Thus, women who practice *jongé* not only have sexual agency, as noted with Dibor and Ouleymatou, but also sexual knowledge. As a result, they can educate others about sexuality and sexual practices that, in this case, may help prevent unwanted pregnancies. In an interview with film scholar Beti Ellerson, Faye comments on the relationship between the two girls: "My sexual education was like that. We always had an older girlfriend who was married before us, and she explained to the others what went on" (2004, 196).

Dibor's openness about sexuality challenges the binary between rural and urban women, which assumes the "superiority of knowledge about sex by urbanites and Western globalites over 'uninformed' and 'primitive' villagers or 'traditionalists'" (Amadiume 2006b, 4). Her language

use shows her pedagogical creativity and resourcefulness in using local imagery (such as the "seashell") to convey her message adequately. Respecting the taboo character of the topic and its sensitivity, Dibor does not deviate from the norms of respectability imposed by society. She still manages to communicate her lesson while remaining polite and discursively discreet.

Nevertheless, polite language does not mean the absence of transgressions. In the Senegalese context, marital affairs, sex included, belong to the private domain and should remain between the couple (Sylla 1994; Hannaford and Foley 2015). The cultural imperative of privacy (*sutura*) and Islamic sexual ethics forbid the disclosure of intimacy to the public. The very fact of evoking sexuality with an unmarried woman with in-depth details violates the secrecy around sexual practices. By telling Mossane about her husband, Dibor transgresses the strong emphasis on *sutura* (privacy) As a filmmaker, Faye also transgresses this code of honor by including the scenes. But *jongé* offers a space for discursive resistance: Dibor constructs and transmits a counter-narrative of sexuality to Mossane. It also demonstrates that *jongé* liberates discourses of African women's sexuality, pleasure, and desire (McFadden 2003). It allows women to explore and enjoy their sexuality. Talking about sexuality is pleasurable as well. The two girls exchange glances and burst into laughter during their sex talk, demonstrating that *jongé* conversation is a site of pleasure for women. Their laughter denotes the freedom and excitement of this type of discussion.

Conclusion

Mossane and *Scarlet Song* offer vivid depictions of how women perform sexuality. The focus on *jongé* reiterates the importance of the concept in the Senegalese cultural imaginary. Although these works are now dated, their poignant representation of *jongé* highlights its

importance in Senegalese femininity. Ouleymatou's embodied performance of the concept demonstrates that she manipulates traditional discourse about good womanhood at times. Indeed, by performing her mastery of woman's work, Ouleymatou successfully negotiates her way out of her economic marginalization. Both she and Mossane embody the cultural ethic of *teranga* enacted via the symbolic act of cooking and serving food. Their performances blur the lines between agency and victimhood.

As an embodied practice, *jongé* also relies on women's bodies to enact an active and culturally rooted sexuality. Through local processes of beautification and eroticization, Ouleymatou and Dibor reclaim the erotic power of their bodies to perform their sexuality and challenge the traditional representation of female sexuality as passive or controlled. Moreover, Faye's film shows that *jongé* offers women a safe space to talk about sex and educate others. These conversations demonstrate women's knowledge of sexuality but, most importantly, their transgression of the taboo of sex and female pleasure. Hence, *jongé* can also be a discursive site of violations of certain social norms. In both works, the authors articulate this practice as an agentive and relevant tool to women's negotiation of gendered sexuality and social life in the Senegalese context. Using *jongé* as an analytical prism to understand the intricacies of female characters, their bodies, and voices accentuates the need to contextualize our reading and use of feminist lens when looking at nonwestern texts. The focus on *Mossane* and *Scarlet Song* reiterates the significance of the female voice in the representation of women in literature and cinema, for they offer a complex depiction of womanhood, femininity, and sexuality in the African context.

Chapter Two

"My Child, Don't Be Shy! Be *Jongé*": The Shaping of Diasporic Senegalese Femininity Through Discourse and Embodied Performance

> "The word *jongé* comes up all the time if you are Senegalese. You constantly hear it when you are young. You hear it from your mother and your married sisters."
>
> — Ndeye Penda, a twenty-eight-year-old woman living in Oklahoma

Scholarship on gender in Senegal has dealt more with how gender relations impact political, social, and economic life than analyzing how gendered identities are shaped. This chapter examines diasporic Senegalese women's socialization to the concept of *jongé*, a Wolof concept involving a set of practices that enact idealized womanhood, femininity, and an eroticized female sexuality. Practicing *jongé* includes knowing how to take care of yourself and your house (cooking, cleaning, and so on) and using aphrodisiacs, incense, and lingerie to beautify your body and enhance your sexual life. Indeed, across West Africa, Senegalese women enjoy the reputation of being good at these practices. As the epigraph from Penda suggests, a culture of *jongé* pervades the Senegalese landscape and appears in many aspects of daily social life. Giant advertising boards for seasoning or body cream index *jongé* on city streets and in markets. From music videos and television series to songs, people see and hear about *jongé* daily. The omnipresence of *jongé*'s indexical signs highlights its significance to Senegalese femininity, which extends beyond Senegal's borders. In the first chapter of this dissertation, we examined how the female characters in the work of Faye and Ba gain agency through their enactment of *jongé.* We also saw how *jongé* is conveyed through the discussion between Mossane and Dibor. At one point in Ba's novel, the narrator reveals to us that "it was Mother Fatim, the figurehead of the compound, who slipped Ouleymatou incense and aphrodisiac powders at night, with a knowing wink" (Ba 1995, 120). This small anecdote offers an entry

point into of the most important question of this dissertation: how is the knowledge of *jongé* passed down to younger women?

Previous studies of *jongé* have mainly focused on its sexual aspects, arguing that women's use of eroticism when performing *jongé* is "a form of interpretive labor from which [they] gain power in their asymmetrical relationships" (Gilbert 2019, 381). Similarly, cultural anthropologists Dinah Hannaford and Ellen Folley (2015) have shown the role *jongé* plays in negotiating love and marriage amidst economic hardship in contemporary Senegal. Their ethnographic study demonstrated how *mbaraneuse* (women who have multiple male partners for material gain) use *jongé* to create financial security and marital futures. But we know very little about how women learn to use *jongé*.

In this chapter, I focus on the learning and teaching of *jongé* by addressing how, when, where, and from whom women learn about it. Anthropological research (Pelissier 1991; Lancy, Bock, and Gaskins 2010) has extensively explored how children learn normative behaviors both in formal and informal settings, demonstrating that learning is a complex social process that is culturally situated. Building on this literature, the chapter contributes to our understanding of how individuals learn gendered identities. By analyzing interviews with Senegalese women in the United States, I argue that socialization to *jongé* takes different forms depending on the learner's location and age. I demonstrate that women are socialized to *jongé* through both language socialization and embodied performance of the concept. During "lessons" about *jongé*, older, married women convey both asymmetrical gender relations and subversive sexuality. Understanding the communities where particular women grew up enables us to locate the learning of *jongé* as a process embedded in daily social lives both in the homeland and abroad. By exploring communities' role in learning a private, domestic, intimate practice, I show how

novices learn about *jongé* through language socialization and embodied performance and how these lessons construct and transmit womanhood, femininity, and Senegaleseness through discourse.

Research Methods

For analytical purposes, I divide the women I spoke with into two mains groups based on when they came to the US. The first group, seven women, migrated as adults at different times to continue their studies, find jobs, or join their spouses, and thus came to the US having already gained knowledge and experiences of *jongé*. The age range is from their mid-twenties to mid-fifties, and they live across the United States. Many of them have been in the US for more than twenty years; others migrated relatively recently. They all come from urban areas in Senegal, mainly from the capital city Dakar and its suburban areas. Even though ethnic and religious identities were not salient criteria of recruitment, unsurprisingly all participants identified as Muslims; followers of Senegal's dominant religion. While some of them explicitly identified as Wolof, Senegal's dominant ethnolinguistic group, others did not do so explicitly but bore family names or came from regions that marked them as probably Wolof. One participant identified as Pulaar, the second largest ethnolinguistic group in Senegal. Interviewees in the adult migrant group chose to talk to me in Wolof with occasional English and French codeswitching. As one woman mentioned, Wolof "captures better what we want to say," and others articulated similar sentiments.

The second group included three women who came to the US as young children or were born here. All in their mid-twenties, they are the youngest among those I interviewed, and they mostly used English during the interviews with occasional Wolof codeswitching. Their

participation reveals how the younger generation in the diaspora learns about cultural practices such as *jongé,* and how they may change over time and distance.

Locating *Jongé*

Learning is a social process deeply rooted in daily life. Human learning strongly relies on the capacity to identify with those around us (Lancy, Bock, and Gaskins 2010). We learn by participating in the social life of our communities. For many of the women I spoke with, learning about *jongé* and how to do it happened in family settings and in the neighborhood surrounding the family home. These spaces are interlinked, and they represent places where the knowledge about *jongé* gradually circulates. To provide a better understanding of these spaces and their role in the teaching of *jongé,* I use the notion of community of practice.

The social theory of community of practice (CoP) was first articulated by Lave and Wenger (Lave and Wenger 1991; 1998); they defined a CoP as a group of people who engage on an ongoing basis in some joint endeavor. The characteristics of a CoP are mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire, which includes "routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions, or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice" (1998, 84). Learning is an inherent feature in communities of practice. Senegalese neighborhoods in the homeland and Senegalese-majority communities abroad are communities of practice where members learn the norms, beliefs, and practices they understand as Senegalese.

As one would expect, Senegalese families play a central role in shaping their members' identities. According to sociologists Loretta Bass and Fatou Sow (2006), Senegalese families carry a triple heritage that influences family structure and daily life: indigenous African cultures,

Islam, and European/French culture. The impact of this triple heritage (Mazrui 1986) is visible in the Senegalese family code, a legislative document that regulates the family's functioning (Bass and Sow 2006). Nevertheless, because of the country's prolonged contact with the Arabo-Islamic world, many life spheres are mediated through Islam. Life in the family unit is structured by imperatives that bind both the husband and the wife or wives. Both men and women are taught that the husband has the responsibility to clothe, house, satisfy, sexually, and emotionally support the wife and that the wife should look after her husband's wealth, educate the children, and take care of the house and her husband (Hannaford and Foley 2015). Women are taught that they have the religious and cultural responsibility to care for their household and cater to their husbands, and to do so, they should perform *jongé*. Hence the socialization to the practice starts from childhood in their immediate environment. In this section, I retrace the childhood of four women of different ages to demonstrate how their communities of practice had familiarized them with the concept.

Fatou Diop[1] is a divorced woman in her late forties. She migrated to the US in 2005 after working as an accountant for ten years in Dakar, where she was born and raised. Fatou currently lives in California, where she works as a bilingual technical analyst for a software company. Her father was a customs officer, and her mother a stay-at-home parent. Fatou remembers her childhood in Senegal as "very happy":

> I spent part of my childhood in Bargny from the age of four to nine. I have vivid remembrance and souvenirs of my time being a child, and then, like I said, I had a happy childhood. You know as Lebu, parents are very attached to the traditions, to their traditional heritage. But I got a chance. My dad was a very open-minded person, so I did not have that heavy burden of parents being on top of you all the time saying, 'Do this, do that.' To my dad, the only requirement was to be good in

[1] All the names of participants are pseudonyms.

> school. Grades are a must. He used to say, 'The least I expect from you is a master's degree.' And God knows we are numerous. We are like a big family, more than ten kids from my dad's side. But we all were educated and raised in a happy household.

Fatou describes a family environment where traditions are essential by identifying her parents as ethnically Lebu. The Lebu is a subgroup among the Wolof who traditionally settled along the coastal areas and are known for being active in fishing. Lebu people speak a distinct dialect of Wolof, and they are famous for their sense of pride and strong attachment to their culture. However, Fatou paints a picture of a father who is not conservative and invests equally in his children's' education regardless of gender. Indeed, her use of the words *but* and *chance* indicates that she considers herself lucky, implying that her father defies societal norms by sending her to school for advanced studies. In doing so, Fatou reveals that education is a significant family value. She emphasizes this value by mentioning the family's size to show that, despite their number, they all went to school regardless of the cost. This number of children also suggests that Fatou's father was in a polygamous marriage. Thus, her family is a discursive space where western, Islamic, and traditional discourses converge.

Contrary to her father, whom she depicts as a progressive man, Fatou describes her mother as traditional, referring to her as "the epitome of the Wolof woman" and using Wolof axioms about women to further develop her statement.

> On my mom's side, it was a bit difficult because she was really the epitome of the Wolof woman. Like '*Jigeen da ngay degglu sa jekër, top sa waxu jekër. Jigeen dafay noppi bu ñu la waxee dara nga def ko*. *Xale dafay degglu def li nu wax.'*
> [Listen to your husband, do what your husband tells you. A woman must be silent and do as she is told. A child must listen and do what is said.]

When talking about her father and describing her childhood, Fatou uses English; however, when she talks about her mother, she unexpectedly switches to Wolof. While she could have translated these axioms into English, her choice to use Wolof is telling. Linguistic anthropologist Leigh Swigart (1992) argues, "The switch to an unexpected language may … signal a speaker's desire to … connote something special through her speech" (1992, 2). Fatou's codeswitch indexes her mother's rootedness in Wolof culture. Through her speech, Fatou reveals that she grew up seeing her mother perform the Wolof mantras of good womanhood. A good woman must submit to her husband because being submissive and catering to the partner's needs is essential in *jongé*. Consequently, Fatou has received a cultural model of being a woman in her community through her mother's speech and presumably behavior.

Other participants also shared similar experiences of learning about *jongé* in their families. Coumba was born and raised in Dakar and moved to New York in her thirties in 2003 with her two children to live with her husband. When I asked her to recall her first experiences with *jongé,* she remembered her days with her aunt:

> I was very attached to my uncle's wife. I would stay with my uncle and with my aunt, we would do a lot of things together, and she was *jongé*. I would watch the way she behaves with my uncle, and I would say to myself, 'When I grow up, I want to be like her.' I wanted to be like her. My uncle had two wives, and she was the second. She used to tell me, 'Your uncle will always come back here no matter where he goes because the house is cozy.'

Coumba's recollection reveals that she spent her childhood in an environment where *jongé* was present. Even as a young member of this family, she had engaged to some extent with *jongé*. Her ability to identify her aunt as *jongé* suggests a shared repertoire that allows her to see

her aunt's way of doing things as part of *jongé*. Moreover, by describing her house atmosphere as cozy, her aunt implicitly communicated that a "cozy" house is one where a woman practices *jongé* where a man would want to be. The aunt also suggests that being *jongé* is a powerful tool in her polygamous marriage because it gives her an advantage vis-à-vis her co-wife. Indeed, the repertoire of a community "includes the discourse by which members create meaningful statements about the world" (Wenger 1998, 86). Thus, Coumba's aunt, an older member of their familial community of practice, shared the discourses that shape *jongé*. Coumba's aspiration to be like her aunt demonstrates that she has been socialized to *jongé* in the extended family setting even as a young member. While she does not provide details about the type of activities she did with her aunt, we can deduce that her learning about *jongé* occurs during these activities where they mutually engaged in "a lot of things." Her relationship with her aunt was similar to that of an expert and an apprentice. By observing and interacting with her aunt, Coumba learned the techniques and purposes of being *jongé*.

Learning to be *jongé* does not only occur in the family unit. Some participants located their learning of *jongé* in the neighborhoods where they lived. Maymuna moved to the US at the age of twenty-three to continue her electrical engineering studies. Now thirty-seven, she currently lives in DC with her Senegalese husband. Maymuna grew up in Senegal's interior, in Mbacké-Baol, a semi-urban town, 118 miles away from Dakar and home to the Muridiyya, the second-largest Sufi brotherhood in Senegal. Women in this region are very active in what I call the economy of *jongé*, that is, the sale of *jongé* commodities such as the *bécoo* (erotic underskirt), *cuuray* (incense), and *feer* (waist beads). In a mixture of French, Wolof, and English, Maymuna describes her household and neighbors in Senegal thus:

> I grew up in a household where there weren't many people. It was me, my grandmother, and my aunt, who was nine years older than me. My grandmother was a little too old for [*jongé*], but I must admit that there was a big family in our neighborhood next to us. There was a man with four wives. And I would see how those women would behave when it was their turn. In the afternoon, when it was someone's turn, she was well-dressed. She would lay a mattress down in her apartment, because each of them had their side of the building, *defar ko bamu rafet* [nicely done]. You knew it was her turn today.

In Maymuna's description, *jongé* is embedded in the environment in which she grew up. Through this childhood anecdote, she describes how *jongé* plays out in a polygynous marriage. Polygyny is sanctioned by normative interpretations of Islam and supported by traditional Senegalese cultures. Talking about polygyny in the Senegalese context, Bass (2006) asserts that "Islam's presence has reinforced this African custom while limiting the number of wives to four" (2006, 95). While the practice is generally accepted in rural and urban contexts (Antoine et al. 1995), women in rural areas are more likely to be in a polygynous marriage (Bass and Sow 2006). This remark resonates with the number of wives present in the household described by Maymuna.

When explaining how she was introduced to *jongé*, Maymuna describes the wives' behavior when it was each wife's turn. The word "turn" belongs to polygyny's semantic field and refers to each wife's time with the husband. According to hegemonic Senegalese interpretations of Islam, a husband must spend equal nights with each wife (Hannaford and Foley 2015). A wife's turn means that she will spend the night with the husband, and during the day, she is in charge of cooking for the family and attending to other house duties. During these turns, wives

often compete with one another. They go to the extreme to showcase their "good wifehood" by cooking exotic meals and wearing attractive clothing. Like Fatou, Maymuna's ability to distinguish who is doing *jongé* among the wives indicates her awareness and knowledge of the practice despite being too young to practice it herself.

Interestingly, Maymuna uses a Wolof phrase, *defar ko bamu rafet* [nicely done], to summarize her description of the setting. The sentence resonates with *defar bamu baax* (to do something exceptionally well), a phrase often used in the discourse of *jongé* to compliment those who enact it well, part of the linguistic and technical repertoire (Wenger 1998) of people that practice *jongé.* Maymuna' s use of this phrase reiterates her deep level of exposure and socialization to the discursive performance of *jongé.*

The experiences of my participants who were born or grew in Senegalese neighborhoods in the US also illustrates the role of communities of practice in the teaching of *jongé.* Anthropologist Ousmane Kane (2011; 2015) describes a Senegalese neighborhood as an "ethnic enclave," that is, " an environment in the host society, which co-ethnics can claim as their own because of the overwhelming presence of most vital service providers that make the migrant feel at home, including ethnic friendly housing, grocery shops, places of worship, schools for religious education, cultural centers, entertainment places, and restaurants" (2011, 58). Harlem is a symbolic place in the history of Senegalese migration to America. It is an ethnic enclave where many Senegalese settle to form what is commonly known as Little Senegal. Senegalese migrants in this community come from various ethnic backgrounds. However, most identify as Senegalese, and Wolof is their lingua franca (Kane 2011). Anta, a Senegalese American in her mid-twenties, was born in Little Senegal. She spent her entire childhood in this area and has

vivid memories of her life there. When I asked Anta about her first experiences with *jongé*, she responded:

> So, for *jongé*, I saw it before I knew what to call it. Even if I was born here, I was raised in a community with lots of African immigrants. My whole building was Senegalese, and the whole neighborhood was full of Senegalese people. They were the only ones to come over to our house, so I had best friends who were Senegalese. The culture was there. My mother would have Senegalese friends over, and they would talk about *jongé* in Wolof.

Anta describes a place where migrant communities recreate or reinvent home in the host land despite their dislocation. She represents a Senegalese community around her that maintained some of their cultural realities from the homeland. For instance, she mentions twice the culture of visiting. Although this is not exclusive to Senegal, it highlights an ambition to preserve cultural norms and maintain a social identity (D'Alisera 2004). Anta's recollection reveals how people transplant cultural practices (including *jongé*) into new contexts. Her depiction shows a community of women engaged in discussions around *jongé*. Anta's childhood environment was a discursive space where the knowledge of *jongé* circulated.

Anta's experience in the US resonates with Bineta's, who grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio. Like New York, Cincinnati is a place where Senegalese migrants converge (Takougang and Tidjani 2009). Bineta recalls being gifted waist beads by a family friend during visits to a Senegalese hair salon. In his study of Senegalese female hair braiders in America, historian Cheikh Anta Babou (2008) notes that hairdressing was not the only income source for these women. They also "made and sold goods, mostly cosmetic and erotic products, destined for

female beautification and bedroom paraphernalia" (2008, 4). These products belong to the economy of *jongé*, and they demonstrate that "the elements of the repertoire can be very heterogeneous. They gain their coherence not in and of themselves as specific activities, symbols, or artifacts, but from the fact that they belong to the practice of a community pursuing an enterprise (Wenger 1998, 82). While Anta was exposed to the discourse of *jongé* within her community, Bineta was introduced by community members (a family friend) via the waist beads, a central tool in *jongé* and similar practices in other parts of Africa (Amadiume 2006a; Thompson 2017).

Families, neighbors, and family friends form an important community of practice for girls and women, playing essential roles in circulating knowledge about *jongé*. I now turn to explore how that learning takes place. What methods are used to socialized novices to the practice?

Language Socialization and Embodied Performance

"My child, don't be shy! Do you understand? Be *jongé*!" Ndeye Penda's eighty-year-old grandmother in Senegal told her over the phone soon after Ndeye Penda moved to Oklahoma as a newlywed. Language is a complex tool for constructing and transmitting knowledge and cultural practices (Ochs and Schieffelin 2011; Schieffelin, Woolard, and Kroskrity 1998), even at great distances. As a practice profoundly shaped and rooted in discourse, *jongé* heavily relies on language to socialize the novices to the concept. During our conversation, Ndeye Penda used the Wolof word *sëys*i to explain why she moved to the United States in 2018. *Sëysi* refers to the act of joining the conjugal house after marriage (*sëy*). By emphasizing the motive of her migration to the US, Ndeye Penda stresses her identity as a newly married woman and implicitly indexes the social expectations to perform *jongé*. Like many Senegalese immigrants, Ndeye Penda

maintains ties with the homeland and calls home regularly via WhatsApp to talk to her family. During these calls, her family members instruct her to be *jongé*. Building on traditional ethnographic methodologies, anthropologist Ayala Fader (2009) examines the use of everyday talk by Hasidic women to teach girls to be responsible and devoted Hasidic women. Along the same lines, linguistic anthropologist Katrina Daly Thompson (2013) explores how Swahili women use and teach one another an idealized language of love to secure a financial and marital future for themselves. While my approach does not use ethnographic accounts derived from participant observation of the interactions between learners and teachers, I show how language socialization still manifests itself even through narratives. Many of the participants shared childhood stories in which they remember being told about *jongé*. When talking about how she learned about *jongé,* Fatim, a Senegalese nurse living in Chicago, told me:

> My mother always told me, 'Even when you cook, you should not be underdressed. Before you eat, when everything is done and ready, you shower, dress up again, put on your perfume, and then serve the meal. Your bed should always be made, and you should put *cuuray* [incense] in your room. You should talk slowly.'

Through these utterances, Fatim's mother taught her daughter how to practice *jongé*. Her understanding of *jongé* demonstrates that it involves both actions and discourse. The lessons can be classified into three categories, each one being mandatory in practicing *jongé*. The combination of house vocabularies ("room/bed") with house chores (cook, make the bed, put *cuuray*) conveys the idea that being *jongé* is knowing how to take care of a house: cooking, cleaning, and using pleasant scents to create a pleasant environment. Fatim's mother explicitly conveys the idea that it is the woman's responsibility to take care of the house. In doing so, she

not only teaches her daughter about *jongé*, but she also transmits a gendered division of labor. When being socialized to *jongé*, women are again reminded of their social role as nurturers. Teachings of *jongé* are discursive spaces that construct and transmit ideologies about womanhood.

Furthermore, through her mother's discourse, Fatim was socialized into the culture of self-presentation. The *jongé* woman, according to the mother, must know how to take care of herself. By hearing the detailed description of the beautification process, Fatim is socialized to self-care, a fundamental aspect of *jongé*. The interaction demonstrates that *jongé* is a performative practice constructed and "instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1988). Being *jongé* means enacting a standardized and idealized feminine identity (Balogun 2012).

The performativity of the practice appears in discourse. Indeed, Fatim's mother demonstrates that the *jongé* woman has a linguistic identity that sets her apart from the other women. When telling this story, Fatim tried to mimic the way her mother spoke to her. She spoke with an exaggerated, low pitch, slowly and softly. I noticed that Fatim, too, had internalized this speech pattern: Even when not imitating her mother, her way of speaking was similar, a soft voice with marked pauses.

The use of low pitch in *jongé* indexes the upper caste in Senegalese society's caste system. The Wolof society is highly stratified via a caste system that distinguishes between the *géer* (upper caste; nobility) and *ñeeno* (lower caste) (Diop 1985; Sylla 1994; Diouf 2001a). This latter comprises the *géwël* (griots) as well as other artisans. Contrary to the *géer* who morally abides by the mandate of *kersa* (restraint), which restricts what she can say or do publicly, the *géwël* is not bound to that politics of appropriateness (Heath 1994). Indeed the speech of the *géer*

is “low-pitched, breathy, low and soft, the *géwël* speech style is high-pitched, loud, rapid, and clear” (Heath 1990, 212). Heath (1990) argues that the act of attributing a specific speech style to different groups expands beyond the caste system to other social categories. Thus, the relationship between the *géer* and *géwël* “parallels those between men and women, between adults and children, between marabouts and disciples, and between patrons and clients, the duties of subordinates in each instance including verbal or performance services” (1990, 212). In Fatim’s case, her mother’s low and soft speech not only indexes her social status as a *géer*, but also as having received a good education and having a sense of respect. This speech pattern is associated with good womanhood and *jongé*.

But most importantly, Fatim’s mother socializes Fatim to the appropriate way of speaking in the context of *jongé*. Thus, Fatim is socialized to *jongé* both *through* language and *to* the appropriate language to use while enacting *jongé* (Kulick and Schieffelin 2008). In learning how to speak appropriately, Fatim learns about the social expectation of submitting to men through speech.

While some parents explicitly use language to explain what *jongé* is and how to practice it, others insist on the harmful outcomes of *not* practicing *jongé*. By doing so, they represent it as valuable, essential to Senegalese feminine identities. Anta, the Senegalese American who grew up in Harlem, remembers going through a similar experience as Fatim. She recalls:

> Here too [in the US] whenever you do something that is not proper as a girl, when you don't look as put together, you would hear your aunties or your mom be like, ‘If you want a husband, you have to do this and that. If you want to keep your husband too, you have to be *jongé*,’ and that the Senegalese man is different

than the American man because he knows what *jongé* is and that his desirable woman has to be *jongé.*

Anta's interaction with these women demonstrates that the *jongé* subject is constructed using "linguistic forms that socialize children and other novices into expected roles and behaviors." (Kulick and Schieffelin 2008, 360) . Expressions such as "proper" and "put together" signals a specific appearance and behavior to be considered *jongé*. It also paints the *jongé* woman as someone desirable and marriageable. The failure to practice *jongé* creates social anxiety about not getting married. This effect is conveyed through the use of deontic conditionals, "conditionals in which speakers specify a behavior and then evaluate it as good or bad" (Kulick and Schieffelin 2008, 362). Because being unmarried is socially constructed as a negative outcome of bad behavior, Anta is told to avoid such an outcome by practicing *jongé,* the culturally desirable behavior for a woman.

The examples of Anta and Fatim demonstrate how older women socialize young girls into *jongé* through language. However, it is not the only resource. While discourse plays a crucial role in teaching *jongé,* learners' enculturation via the material body is also undeniable in the socialization process. Participants shared anecdotes that demonstrate they also learn by observing embodied forms of *jongé*.

Observational learning is a strategic form of cultural transmission. The potential for novices to learn about *jongé* by observing is reinforced by the fact that *jongé* is also an embodied knowledge. Hence children are socialized to the practice by watching the *jongé* body interact with its environment. Anta, for instance, remembered seeing an interaction where her aunt was being instructed to be j*ongé* to find the perfect husband among her various suitors. Anta noticed that every time her aunt had a visiting suitor, she acted out the advice she had received from the

other married women. “Whenever a suitor would come to the house, she would have different mannerisms. How she cooked the food, you know, the presentation of the food. That's part of j*ongé*. The cloth she decided to wear to greet the guy who came over, that's *jongé*. How she wore her hair. Those were not her natural ways of acting.”

In addition to being explicitly instructed on how to be *jongé*, Anta learns what being *jongé* is by observing her aunt's performance. She learns the mannerism and the different steps necessary to be *jongé*. Through observing her aunt's behavior and demeanor, Anta is socialized to techniques of performing *jongé*. These techniques include beauty practices that glorify the body to attract men. She presents her aunt's performance of *jongé* as contextual, elaborated, and purposeful. By using the phrase “not natural,” her description of her aunt’s shows that *jongé* is a practice learned and used only at appropriate times.

Anta’s narration also learns from observing her aunt that being *jongé* is not just limited to putting on an excellent feminine appearance. Doing *jongé* also means having culinary skills and showcasing them. The choice of the dishes as well as their presentations matter. Indeed, preparing and serving food speaks to the Senegalese ethic of *Téranga* (Hospitality). Cultural anthropologist Emily Riley (2016, 47) argues that in Senegal, “Not only is the food itself significant, but the way it is prepared, served, eaten, and with whom it is shared represents the ideals and practices of Senegalese ethics.” Knowing how to cook and being generous about food are highly praised feminine qualities that index good womanhood (Gueye 2010). Through her cooking and service, Anta's aunt embodies this social ethic of *téranga* and transmits it to her audience.

Ndeye Penda shared a similar story that highlights the importance of embodied performances in the socialization of *jongé*. Recalling interactions that she observed between her

mother and father, Ndeye describes her mother as *jongé* and uses an example to illustrate her point:

> For example, she was always coquettish. She made sure to serve the food to her husband. She was fond of serving it herself despite having housemaids. When it comes to presentation, she made sure that everything was perfect. The dinnerware and everything else that goes it with. The making and *jaagar jaagari bi* [walking back and forth femininely].

Ndeye's experience offers an understanding of what it means to be *jongé* with one's spouse. By watching her mother and father's interaction, Ndeye sees how to be *jongé* with a husband. Her mother's behavior vis-à-vis her husband is an embodiment of the principle of care, one of the most fundamental elements in the definition of *jongé*. Thus, Ndeye learns that a *jongé* wife should solely attend to the needs of her husband.

Moreover, at the end of her description, Ndeye uses *jaajar-jaagari* [walking back and forth femininely] to summarize her mother's performance of *jongé*. Like *defar bamu baax* (to do something exceptionally well), *jaagar-jaagari* is part of the linguistic repertoire of *jongé*. *Jaagar-jaagari* is a verb of manner that stresses how one walks back and force when performing a service. *Jaagar-jaagari* is highly gendered and is mainly used to describe a woman's way of doing certain things, especially in the context of *jongé*. It is mostly used to refer to the different activities women are involved in when performing *jongé*, such as cooking, setting the table, and serving food. In this context, Ndeye uses *jaagar-jaagari* to emphasize her mother's demeanor when attending to her husband's needs and to praise her accomplished enactment of *jongé*.

The narratives presented above shows that *jongé* is articulated both in discourse and through embodiment. The socialization to *jongé* starts from early childhood with children

observing everyday performances of the women in their lives. They are subsequently exposed to it via language socialization. In contrast to explicit language use, the socialization to *jongé* via observation of its embodied forms is implicit. In most cases, the performer of *jongé* does not intend to teach, nor is the child there to learn. Instead, most of the socialization process is embedded in everyday activities.

While an essential part of socialization to *jongé* during childhood focuses on teaching women how to perform ideal womanhood and a Senegalese feminine identity, in their adulthood, women are also exposed to sexuality as enacted in *jongé*. Even though the learning of *jongé* starts from childhood and expands through adulthood, some aspects of the practice are only accessible when a young woman reaches a specific life stage, such as marriage. Many of my participants remembered being chased away by adults when talks about sex came up. Indeed, being *jongé* means performing active female sexuality as well.

Some participants shared experiences in which older, experienced women taught them about sexual practices. Khady, a thirty-seven-year-old woman living in Houston with her husband and three children, recounts her first initiation to sex by a *géwël* neighbor she affectionately calls Tata—or "Auntie"—Awa. Talking about her with much enthusiasm, Khady describes Tata Awa as a *jongoma*, a term that shares the same root as *jongé* and which refers to "a class of Senegalese women perceived as beautiful because of their appealing physical features such as 1) the size of their buttocks, 2) the space between their front teeth (a divine mark), 3) an impressive slow walk style" (Ngom 2012). The jongoma is usually perceived as the perfect embodiment of *jongé*.

> Tata Awa was *jongoma* and funny. When I got married, Tata Awa sent her niece to call me. When I got to her house, she invited me into the living room, closed

> the door, and put on porn. I was shocked. She explained things and told me how to act in the bedroom. She was explicit and at ease. Even after [the porn session], I liked talking to her because she was without taboo. I could talk to her about things that I was not able to [talk about] with my mother. Besides, whenever I saw her, she would [teach] me tricks.

By identifying Tata Awa as a *jongoma*, Khady suggests that this woman is knowledgeable about *jongé*. Besides, the figure of the *jongoma* is renowned for being a sexual expert. Khady's account echoes that of Fatim, who also told me that she learned about sex via a *dirianké* (which has the same connotation as *jongoma*) griotte in her neighborhood who gave her a pornographic video to watch when she was preparing her wedding. After the video, the griotte shared sexual tips with her. In these accounts, we see that learning about sexuality occurs at the time of marriage and that griottes play an essential role in socializing the bride. Khady depicts Tata Awa as a creative teacher who does not shy away from using unconventional materials to support her teaching. Pornography in the context of *jongé* is pedagogical support that reinforces the learner's previous knowledge. Both Khady and Fatim recounted their sense of shock and uneasiness during the viewing. Their attitude suggests that they are not used to seeing these types of materials and discussing sex. By showing her a pornographic video, Tata Awa transgresses norms around sex that are in play prior to marriage (Gueye 2013; Thompson 2013). *Jongé* talk about sex is a feminine and discursive space that allows women to educate one another about sexuality.

Conclusion

The opening epigraph vividly articulates the pervasiveness of the concept of *jongé* in Senegalese culture. Because of its omnipresence in Senegal and its diaspora, *jongé* has often been viewed as an inherent Senegalese trait. In contrast, I have demonstrated that women learn about *jongé* through an extended period that starts from childhood and continues into their adult lives. The teaching of *jongé* take different shapes depending on the learner's age and the space in which they find themselves. Thus, through analysis of interviews with Senegalese migrants in the US, I have shown that the childhood environment plays a vital role in the socialization of novices to the practice, and this socialization continues in adulthood, even at a great distance.

The women I talked with grew up in families and neighborhoods where discourses about *jongé* circulated. Within these communities of practice, novices were socialized by older members to *jongé* through a repertoire that includes discourse, artifacts, and embodied activities by people in these communities. By observing the *jongé* body engage in daily activities, children are taught the necessary techniques to the performance of *jongé.*

These technical lessons are supported by active and deliberate socialization that relies on language to convey ideas about *jongé.* In these sessions women perform *jongé* using the body and an ideal of speaking that index good womanhood. Thus, lessons about *jongé* are sites where women construct and transmit ideologies about Senegalese womanhood and femininities. Despite its primary focus on shaping the ideal Senegalese woman, the teachings of *jongé* are also creative spaces where young women learn about sex and sexuality. Using materials such as pornographic videos to teach novice about sex, the griottes display their discursive knowledge of sexuality and initiate young women into new discursive practices in which sex is no longer taboo. An examination of how *jongé* is socialized demonstrates how categories such as

womanhood and femininity are constructed, taught, learned, and maintained—through discourse and embodiment, at home and abroad.

Chapter Three

Doing *Jongé* Abroad: Discursive Negotiations of Senegalese Femininities

While the practice of *jongé* emerged in Senegal, it continues in the diaspora. Senegalese migrants to the United States bring *jongé* practices with them from home and socialize their descendants to them. In the previous chapter, we have seen that women in the homeland and abroad learn to do *jongé* through language socialization and embodied performance and that lessons about the practice construct and transmit ideals of womanhood, femininity, and sexuality. In this chapter, we focus on diasporic women's interpretations and performance of *jongé* to show how they negotiate its meanings.

During my digital ethnographic fieldwork in *Jigeen*, a pseudonymous Facebook group for Senegalese women in the US, I came across a post by a founding member asking others to share their thoughts about an audio file. The post showed a blurry photo of Ngoné Njaay Gewël, a famous female oral performer in Senegal, and the radio station Fem FM's call number. Fem FM playfully combines the sound of the French word *femme* (woman) with the Wolof word *feem* (tricks). The term *feem* is part of the linguistic repertoire of *jongé* and alludes to the strategies women use to enact *jongé*. As reiterated in the station's French slogan, *Secrets de femmes* (women's secrets), Fem FM is a Senegalese community radio station that prioritizes women's issues and strategies to handle them.

In the recording, I heard Ngoné Njaay's excited voice as she shared her knowledge of *jongé* in Wolof. As a self-proclaimed expert, she advised her listeners to be more proactive in their daily performance of *jongé*. She gave culinary tips and beauty suggestions, encouraging her

audience to spice up their sexual lives using traditional plants and incense to create pleasant scents in their bedrooms.

Ngoné Njaay actively preaches about *jongé* on social media platforms like Youtube and Facebook. She is also a regular guest on many TV shows in Senegal, where she carries baskets full of waist beads, incense, and other commodities used in *jongé*. Even though she lives in Senegal, Ngoné Njaay is followed by many people in the Senegalese diaspora, selling her *jongé* merchandise at home and to customers in the diaspora. Indeed, diasporic Senegalese women regularly call in during her TV appearances to seek advice about *jongé*. Nevertheless, not all Senegalese women in the diaspora value her advice.

The post in *Jigeen* generated sixty-five comments, with women unanimously criticizing Ngoné Njaay's recommendations and pointing out her "unilateral" understanding of *jongé*. One woman asked: "Why is it always the woman who works to please the man?" Many women used the "like" or "love" reaction buttons to show their positive stance toward this rhetorical question. Others brought up time constraints, emphasizing their busy schedules as working women, which prevented them from following Ngoné Njaay's advice.

Indeed, the *jongé* described by Ngoné Njaay requires women to devote much time to their marriage, preparing elaborate meals and beautifying themselves to please their husbands. In her study of *jongé* in Senegal, anthropologist Véronique Gilbert (2019, 381) argues that *jongé* is a form of "interpretive labor." In other words, women who practice it constantly work to interpret and meet their husbands' needs. Ngoné Jaay's discourse about *jongé* resonates with this argument. Consequently, many women in the *Jigeen* discussion dissociated themselves from this type of *jongé* because, according to them, it does not fit with their realities as women living in the US. While, in Senegal, many women have housemaids or help from family members to take

care of household duties, freeing them up to focus on *jongé,* most women in the diaspora do not have this luxury.

The debate generated by Ngoné Njaay's lecture among the women in *Jigeen* speaks to an essential issue in the study of diasporic communities: how immigrants negotiate the meaning of certain practices from the homeland. Scholars have extensively explored Senegalese immigrants' religious identities in the diaspora, emphasizing a Senegalese Sufi group called Muriddiyya. This literature has documented the transnational Murid trade to show its economic, religious, and cultural impacts on Senegal and its diaspora (Rendall and Diouf 2000; Babou 2002). But in most of this scholarship, Senegalese female migrants have been neglected. This lack of representation is not only due to Senegalese woman's "late" immigration to the US (a decade after Senegalese men began immigrating in the 70s, according to (Babou 2008) but also to earlier assumptions about migrants as being mostly men (Pedraza 1991). Over the past three decades, however, researchers have paid greater attention to the intersections of gender and migration to show how this approach complicates our understanding of these two categories (Pedraza 1991; Curran and Saguy 2001). Building from this literature, scholars have explored how immigrants negotiate gendered ideologies (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

Some works dealing with the Senegalese diaspora have examined how women's economic mobility impacts household dynamics and gender relations, forcing men and women to redefine gender roles and deconstruct former notions of femininity and masculinity (Babou 2008; Kane 2011). This chapter contributes to this conversation by focusing on women's experiences in a cultural practice primarily performed by women. By centering women's narratives of *jongé,* I examine how language, gender, and transnationalism intersect in diasporic conceptions of *jongé*. How do diasporic Senegalese women (re)define *jongé*? Through analysis of in-depth

interviews with eleven women, I argue that women in the Senegalese diaspora use linguistic strategies that challenge or reproduce hegemonic discourses when defining *jongé.* By doing so, they emphasize their individuality. I also argue that definitions of *jongé* are a discursive site where diasporic women negotiate ideologies about gender and female sexuality. The analysis demonstrates how cultural practices—even as central as gender—gain new meanings when transplanted into a different context.

As a practice deeply rooted within discourse, *jongé* is an ideal site for examining intersections of gender, language, and sexuality. Consequently, I pay close attention to the discursive practices of the women I spoke with about *jongé*. I look at how they used stance, codeswitching, and other linguistic practices to articulate their positionalities. The first section of the analysis introduces three women, Bineta, Anta, and Coumba, who shared their definitions and understanding of the concept. In these definitions, these women focused on their subjectivities. Their narratives section allows us to see what *jongé* means for women instead of how dominant discourses define it. In the second section of the chapter, I focus on three other women, Fatou, Maymuna, and Nogaye, whose discussion of *jongé* brings forward the intersections of language, gender, and sexuality in the practice. While the first three women emphasized their understandings of the concept, the second three pronounced their alignment or with the notions of gender and sexuality embedded in the practice.

In the excerpts from my transcripts below, I mark the speaker's emphasis, language choice, pauses, and, where relevant to my analysis, intonation (see Table 1).

Table 1. Transcription Guidelines	
Bold	Emphasis
Italicized	Urban Wolof
<u>Underlined</u>	French
(.)	Untimed pause
[ ]	Additional information
?	Question intonation
,	Continuative

The Articulation of Transnational *Jongé*

In this section, I introduce three women, Bineta, Anta, and Coumba, who vehemently insist on their individuality to offer counter-narratives of *jongé* that stress their transnational identities, influencing how they understand and practice it.

Bineta

I met with Bineta over a Zoom call on a hot summer afternoon in Madison. From her living room in Ohio, she appeared comfortable in her orange tank top, ready to tackle a subject I knew was of high interest to her. Bineta and her friend Anta, whom I interviewed weeks before, have a podcast where they engage current issues from a "Senegalese American perspective" (Ndiaye and Diop, n.d.). In the first few minutes of our interview, Bineta introduced herself and talked about her background in a mix of urban Wolof, English, and French. Then I asked her to define *jongé* for me. She started her answer with hesitations and fragmented sentences in French. Noticing that she struggled to articulate her thoughts, I reminded her she was free to speak

English. My remark seemed to come as a relief; she immediately switched to English and expressed her definition of *jongé* in these terms: "For me," she said, pointing at herself, "*jongé* is a set of behaviors that someone can have, and someone else will find attractive, but not everyone, and that's why I don't like a universal definition of *jongé*. That's where I have an issue when someone tries to take one picture of what *jongé* is and apply it to everyone. I," she said, again pointing to herself, "can describe what, for **me,** is *jongé*."

In this quotation, Bineta starts her statement by defining *jongé* as a set of behaviors but does not develop this idea further. Instead, she takes an evaluative stance of disagreement with a particular discourse about *jongé*. Linguist John Du Bois defines stance as "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means, of simultaneously evaluating objects, positioning subjects (self and others), and aligning with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field" (Du Bois 2007, 163). Throughout this excerpt, Bineta takes stances toward specific interpretations of *jongé*. Immediately after giving her definition, she expresses her feelings about other people's views of the concept. She conveys her affective stance via utterances such as "I don't like" and "I have an issue," indicating her disalignment (Du Bois 2007) with what she calls a "universal" definition of *jongé*. Throughout her speech, she implies the circulation of a hegemonic definition of *jongé* and disagrees with it. When I asked her to define the concept, she laughed and said, "I always fight about *jongé*," suggesting that she frequently engages in conversation about the topic. Her stance is a dialogical act that shows she interacts with several discourses about *jongé* and disagrees with some of them.

Bineta's position on *jongé* emphasizes her subjectivity and individual interpretation of the concept. Du Bois argues that subjectivity and positioning are interlinked because "the act of positioning regularly invokes a dimension of speaker subjectivity" (Du Bois 2007, 152). In other

words, when evaluating something, we position ourselves towards that object, and that act of positioning is an expression of our subjectivity. When Bineta uses the first-person pronouns "I" and "me" and points at herself in emphasis, she accentuates herself as a speaking subject and her positionality. The stress on her subjectivity is an agentive strategy that shows her control over what *jongé* is instead of how Senegalese society depicts it. While her discursive practice indicates a particular connection to Senegal, it also demonstrates that she values her individuality. Her attitude is similar to many of the women I talked with during the research.

Anta

Anta, Bineta's friend and podcast co-host with whom I had spoken a few weeks earlier, is also a Senegalese American born and raised in the US. While Bineta limited herself to responding to other discourses and did not define the practice, Anta discussed what *jongé* means to her, its implications for gender relations in Senegalese society, and why women should reclaim the concept for their self-affirmation. When I asked Anta the meaning of *jongé*, she responded in English thus:

> *Jongé* is a sort of a performance of not just sexuality but (.) like we said this in our podcast: The closest thing we can compare it to is like a form (.) like a love language, like performing a love language. But where it's dictated by things that are not necessarily important to the performer. Like you can be performing *jongé*, and the things you're doing don't mean nothing to you, but they mean more to the person you are performing it to, or I guess society states that this is what's important to the men and specifically the Senegalese men. I have yet to see performances of *jongé* where the Senegalese male gaze is not centered. And that's

> what me and Bineta were saying [in the podcast]: that we want *jongé* to get to that point where women are doing it for their own sexual freedom (.) and for their own sexual expression, which some argue they sort of are in some instances. I think it depends on context, but like in the majority of cases, it's to secure a husband or to secure wealth (.) to secure something, but always at the hands of the Senegalese men, always dictated by the **needs** and **desires** of the Senegalese men.

Anta's definition reveals her belonging to two competing "habitat[s] of meanings" (Hannerz 1996, 22): a Senegalese one and a Western one. Anta differentiates between *jongé* in a Western context and *jongé* in dominant Senegalese understandings throughout her definition. Anta's attempt to define *jongé* reveals that she engages in an ongoing process of negotiating meaning. Her language use captures such a process, but language is not the only element at stake. Social theorist Etienne Wenger argues that the negotiation of meaning is "the process by which we experience the world and our engagement in it as meaningful" (1998, 53). This process involves two key elements he calls *participation* and *reification*. Participation materializes our involvement with the world around us: our constant engagement and connection with our environment through various activities such as "doing, talking, thinking, feeling, and belonging" (1998, 56), while reification represents the forms we ascribe to these experiences through different processes such as "making, designing, representing, naming, encoding, and describing, as well as perceiving, interpreting, using, reusing, decoding and recasting" (1998, 59).

This process of negotiating meaning is reflected in Anta's definition of *jongé*. When asked to define the concept, Anta starts her response but pauses in the middle of her thought process in search of *le mot juste* 'the right word' in her cultural and linguistic repertoires to

articulate her definition. She then uses the term *love language*, a pop psychology concept developed by Gary Chapman (1992), to show five ways ("languages") in which people experience and express love. As Wenger explains, "All that we do and say may refer to what has been done and said in the past, and yet we produce again a new situation, an impression, an experience: we produce meanings that extend, redirect, dismiss, reinterpret, modify or confirm—in a word, negotiate anew" (1998, 52). In using the phrase "love language" to characterize *jongé*, Anta reinterprets the concept and therefore, she produces a new meaning that aligns with her current context. Indeed, her choice of this term to explain a practice tied to Senegalese femininity demonstrates her exposure to American discourses of love and relationships and their influence on her understanding of *jongé*.

Although Anta compares *jongé* to a love language, she quickly underlines the difference between *jongé* and love languages by describing what performing *jongé* means in Senegal. Anta does not directly mention Senegal as a place; however, the label "Senegalese" appears four times in relation to men or males. Her use of "society" also clearly means Senegal in this context. This labeling occurs after Anta takes an epistemic stance conveyed here by the marker "I guess," which concludes her observation of how and for whom *jongé* is performed. Stance-taking allows us to see how people use language to construct and perform their subjectivity in everyday interaction. Thus, by describing and evaluating the performance of *jongé*, Anta suggests a Senegalese understanding of the concept, which focuses on putting one's husband's preferences and needs ahead of one's own. She further develops her position, arguing that the Senegalese performance of *jongé* is "dictated" by cultural notions of what men need or like. She emphasizes this view by describing *jongé* as a practice centered around the "Senegalese male gaze." Her use of this academic term critiques specific interpretations of *jongé* and evidence of her education

level. When voicing her criticism, Anta enunciates her view of what *jongé* should be and voices her alignment with Bineta. Anta's mention of Bineta in this segment demonstrates her intersubjectivity with her friend. In saying "we want," she implies that she and Bineta take the same affective stance about *jongé*. For them, *jongé* should be a practice that allows women to express and live their sexuality freely. Through words like "their own sexual freedom" and "their own sexual expression," Anta redefines *jongé* and disagrees with what she sees as the hegemonic understanding and practices imposed by Senegalese society.

In her articulation of what *jongé* should be for women, Anta emphasized the self. For instance, by including the word "own" twice, although it is grammatically nonessential to her statement, she conveys her preoccupation with self-awareness in the performance of *jongé.* In line with literary scholar Lisa McNee's (2000) argument that Senegalese women use verbal art like *taasu* (a form of panegyric) and autobiographies for self-representation, Anta constructs *jongé* as a "selfish gift" that allows women to take ownership of their sexuality, express it, and live it beyond the male gaze. Like Bineta's, Anta's articulation of *jongé* reveals her espousal of individualism, arguably influenced by a US-American emphasis on individuality.

Coumba

My discussion with Coumba reinforced the individualistic interpretation offered by Anta and Bineta and suggested a diasporic understanding of *jongé* that differs from the dominant one in Senegal. However, in contrast to the others, Coumba attempted to explain this difference using context and relationship to time. From her balcony somewhere in New York, she appeared in the fading light of the dusk on my computer screen, wrapped in her *mëlfa,* a type of jilbab. Her dress and the time made me think she had probably just finished performing the Muslim evening

prayer. We started our conversation with greetings and introductions. After more than fifteen minutes of introducing ourselves and getting to know each other, we began to talk about *jongé*, and I asked her definition. In a mix of urban Wolof (in italics) and English (in Roman script), she replied:

> *For me, it's not something permanent. It's not something you do every day. I think that some days* you just feel like that. It's a way of acting that makes **you** happy. I mean, that makes **me** personally happy, and doing it, I know it can make my husband happy as well. You understand what I mean? It's for my personal pleasure. It makes me smile. Like from the way I am acting *jongé*, you know? *Making things nice, cooking good food, burning incense, bringing out the waist beads.*

Coumba's opening statement on *jongé* suggests her awareness of circulating discourses about the practice. Her repeated use of the word "not" hints at a contrast between her understanding and the concept's hegemonic definition. Indeed, throughout the interviews, as we have already seen with Bineta and Anta, diasporic Senegalese women respond to some aspects of the dominant interpretation of *jongé* in Senegalese society. In the same vein, when Coumba says, "it's not something permanent," she rejects the perception of *jongé* as a perpetual daily practice. Her comment can be read as a critique of the view of *jongé* as a natural practice that one engages with constantly. Coumba takes an affective stance to formulate her disalignment with the idea of practicing *jongé* continuously and presents it instead as contextual and based on one's feelings. Coumba's evaluation of *jongé* reveals her interaction with different discourses about how and for whom women should perform *jongé.* Later in our conversation, she came back to the question of

permanency in *jongé* using urban Wolof (in italics), French (underlined), and English (no special formatting) and added,

> *That's why I told you it cannot be* permanent. You have to have the time. *Me, for example, can I do jongé* from Monday to Friday? *Women in Senegal can do jongé if they want* twenty-four, seven. *They have housemaids, so when they get off work, they can start burning their incense and have their* jongé time because *they have the time*. But, us, we are not in the same context. It's different. Do you understand? And beyond that, it's a state of mind. *You have to be stress-free*. There are many parameters for you to give a hundred percent what you want in terms of jongélogy.

Coumba's development of her statement about permanency demonstrates how definitions of *jongé* intersect with language, identity, and migration. She contrasts women in Senegal, on the one hand, and herself and others in the US, on the other. Her use of "us" and "we" to talk about diasporic Senegalese women versus "women in Senegal" implies sameness and difference. According to linguistic anthropologists Kira Hall and Mary Bucholtz, sameness "allows for individuals to imagine themselves as a group," while difference "produces social distance between those who perceive themselves as unlike" (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 369) By using "us" and "we," she constructs women in the diaspora as one group that shares a common identity: the same broad context, living outside of Senegal. Coumba builds on this discourse to explain the impact of this difference on the diasporic conceptualization and practice of *jongé.* She compares these two groups through their relationship to time: one group has time to actively engage with *jongé* while the other lacks it. Coumba's comparison demonstrates that "sameness and difference are not objective states, but phenomenological processes that emerge from social interaction.

Similarities and differences become organized hierarchically in social contexts" (Bucholtz and Hall 2004, 369). Thus, Coumba sees women in Senegal as having an advantage because "they" have resources (like "housemaids"), which alleviate their duties and enable them to concentrate on performing *jongé* daily and thoroughly. Meanwhile, most diasporic Senegalese women do not have this privilege.

Terms indexing temporality permeate Coumba's commentary on *jongé.* For instance, she uses "Monday to Friday," "twenty-four, seven," and, repeatedly, "time." The presence of this temporal lexicon in her talk accentuates its significance in the diasporic performance of *jongé.* Furthermore, Coumba's coinage, combining the word *jongé* with the English word *time* (*jongé* time), highlights her linguistic creativity, transnational identity, and temporality's importance in interpreting and performing the practice.

Beyond the constraint of time, Coumba reaffirms the privileging of the self in women's enactment of *jongé*. Terms such as "state of mind" (*état d'esprit*) or "stress-free" (*il faut sa xel dal)* underline the role emotions should play in *jongé*. She ends her statement with another coinage, "jongélogy," to point out the complexity of *jongé.* The attachment of the Greek-derived suffix -*logy* to the concept of *jongé* suggests that the practice is a scientific discipline and that women who practice it put much effort into it. Having time and being in the right "state of mind" is central to the practice.

Like Bineta and Anta, Coumba also navigates multiple discursive spaces, conveyed through her use of different languages to articulate the meaning of *jongé*. For instance, when describing what "acting *jongé*" means, she speaks in Wolof and enumerates ways of doing (making things nice) and items (waist beads) that point to well-known elements of *jongé*. Nevertheless, she primarily communicates in English

when sharing her feelings about the practice. Coumba's linguistic strategies, coinages (*jongé* time, jongélogy), and codeswitching throughout show the process of negotiating meaning and demonstrate her multilingual identity and transnational belonging. Coumba's discourse and willingness to share her experiences with me, an enactment of hospitality, falls into what linguistic anthropologist Maya Angela Smith calls "global Senegality," marked by mobility, multilingualism, and the practice of hospitality, essential traits of "being Senegalese in the diaspora" (M. A. Smith 2019, 25).

Coumba's stress on the self when talking about *jongé* deconstructs the male gaze's centrality in the hegemonic definition and performance of the practice and echoes Anta's advocacy. Even though she evokes her husband with the modal "can," his happiness is depicted as only a possible outcome of hers. She vehemently insists on herself with phrases like "me personally" and "my personal," which emphasize the centrality of subjectivity in her understanding and performance of *jongé*. Throughout her speech, she highlights the pleasurable emotions that the performance of *jongé* provides her. Her use of affective predicates like "happy," which she repeats three times, and "smile," evokes a sense of personal fulfillment. Coumba's definition of *jongé* underlines her agency in practicing it.

Women's emphasis on their subjectivity and individualism in their understanding and performance of *jongé* suggests a contestation of the dominant definition of *jongé* and awareness of gendered ideologies embedded in the practice. Through their discursive practices, *jongé* becomes an ideological site to understand how women in the diaspora navigate gender, sexuality, and Senegaleseness.

Negotiating Gender and Sexuality

So far, we have met three women who manifested their disalignment with the hegemonic discourse about *jongé* and emphasized their subjectivities when interpreting it. But not all women disalign with this discourse. Nogaye, Maymuna, and Fatou espoused definitions of *jongé* that focused more on the notions of gender and sexuality which characterize the concept and gave their opinions about them.

Senegalese interpretations of Islam and the Wolof cultural construction of gender and sexuality highly influence popular understandings of *jongé.* The teaching of *jongé* is a discursive site where gender and sexuality are constructed and transmitted to young girls. Consequently, when learning about *jongé*, young girls also learn the social expectations of their gender and how to perform their sexuality. Throughout my interviews, the definition of *jongé* became a site of negotiation of cultural understanding of gender and sexuality in the diaspora.

Nogaye

Nogaye proudly represented herself as a *jongé* woman who devoted her time to her marriage, contrary to other women in the US. She spent most of her life outside Senegal, between Europe and the US. She was a stay-at-home mother who owned an online business. In her definition of *jongé*, Nogaye observed that being *jongé* is not just limited to performing sexuality. What is most important is the woman's behavior towards her husband. In Wolof, she elaborated:

> *What I consider jongé is a soft woman who accepts commands and is obedient. As they say, "Accepting that your husband is your leader." They say a man is just like a child. You have to deal with him in a certain way to*

the extent that even when you wear torn underwear, he will think that's jongé. It's a way of doing and being with your husband beyond the bedroom.

Nogaye's discourse shows her internalization of an "Islamized Wolof gender ideology" (Gueye 2011, 69) conveyed through words such as "commands" (*ndigël*) and "leader" (*kilifë*). Indeed, these Wolof terms index the hierarchy of power in Senegalese Islamic brotherhoods. The leader gives commands, and the disciple obediently executes (Babou 2007). Nogaye's repetition of this lexicon to describe the relationship between husband and wife shows the reproduction of this power structure in marriage. Gueye observes that within the Islamized Senegalese culture, marriage for women is "work, for the complete submission to their husbands is something they should seek to accomplish as long as they should live. A husband's thanks and a positive testimony for a job well done are a passport to paradise for a wife" (2011, 79). Hegemonic understandings and performances of *jongé* reinforce this view: to be *jongé* means submitting and obeying the husband's commands.

In contrast to the other women we have seen, Nogaye takes a positive stance toward widely circulating definitions of *jongé*. Her interpretation of the concept reaffirms some dominant discourses about Senegalese womanhood. In contrast to the other women, who explicitly articulated their opinions and provided personal understandings that underline their subjectivities regarding the concept, Nogaye's use of "they say" shows her alignment with a hegemonic understanding of *jongé*. When she says performing *jongé* is being "a lighthearted woman who accepts commands and is obedient," Nogaye alludes to the ideals of femininity and womanhood in Senegal. The idea of being "lighthearted" implies docility and a level

of sociability to navigate social relations in the household and the larger community. Her definition of *jongé* also reveals the association of wifehood with motherhood. Nogaye paraphrases the Wolof saying that compares a man (husband) to a child who needs his wife's care to remind us that practicing *jongé* is not (just) about wearing sexy attire. Instead, it is about performing these gender roles. Such rhetoric indexes the gendered division of labor in Senegal, which constructs women as caregivers and nurturers, and the "patriarchal economy of pleasure" (Coly 2019, 88), which puts the needs and desires of men at the center of women's preoccupation. Nogaye's allusion to the Wolof saying justifies the amount of care and love women should devote to their husbands in their daily performance of *jongé*. Nogaye appears to agree with the gender hierarchy and the social expectations of being a woman in the Senegalese society reinforced by the dominant practice of *jongé*. Her view demonstrates how some women in the Senegalese diaspora preserve the gender hierarchy and norms of subordination (Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia 1992; Kane 2011; Tinarwo and Pasura 2014) in their performance of *jongé.* But Nogaye's conservative position when discussing the gendered implications within *jongé* was not shared by the other women, who were more critical of the concept.

Fatou

On an early Thursday afternoon, I gathered my things to prepare for my meeting with Fatou. I set up my table close to my windows, ensuring that I would have enough lighting for the camera. Wearing a casual outfit and with my hair in cornrows, I started the Zoom call. While waiting for her to join the call, I nervously adjusted my camera. After a few minutes, Fatou

logged in, dressed in her colorful wax *taille-basse* (a famous Senegalese outfit) with a matching *musóor* (head wrap) on her head. I could not overlook Fatou's *sañse* (the art of dressing beautifully) for the occasion (Mustafa 2002). I felt underdressed.

Fatou Diop was a divorced mother who had lived in the US for the past sixteen years at the time of our interview. Before migrating, she worked as an account assistant in Dakar for several years. Fatou was eager to talk about *jongé,* which she characterized as an essential aspect of being a Senegalese woman. As she put it,

> *Jongé* is something very particular to Senegalese society, and we own it; I own it. *If you know Senegalese women, you know we are on top of our game*. We are the most beautiful women. *Senegalese women are beautiful no matter how you look; whether they are dark-skinned, light-skinned, short, or tall, they are all beautiful* because we know how to put our best foot forward. We know how to carry ourselves. We know how to dress even with the smallest and simplest thing.

Throughout my interviews, the participants recognized the significance of *jongé* in the construction and performance of Senegalese femininities at home and abroad, although they could have rejected the concept. For instance, Fatou articulates *jongé* as a critical element informing Senegalese identity, particularly Senegalese women's identity. Her use of "we own it," "I own it," and the repetition of "we" throughout shows that even after spending years outside of Senegal, she still proudly identifies with Senegalese women who practice *jongé* and sees *jongé* as an outstanding characteristic of Senegalese womanhood.

Like Coumba, who summons context and location to establish a difference between Senegalese women in the diaspora and those in Senegal, Fatou employs the same semiotic process to construct the sameness of Senegalese women. Indeed, she uses *jongé* to explain the

power and singularity of Senegalese womanhood. As she argues, Senegalese women's beauty does not lie in inherent physical traits such as skin color ("dark-skinned" or "light-skinned") or height ("tall" or "short") but instead in their embodiment of *jongé*. Her epistemic stance, conveyed via the reiteration of "we know," constructs women's knowledge and celebration of their femininity. Nevertheless, Fatou's excitement when she talked about women's beauty in their embodiment of *jongé* soon dissipated when she reflected on the current performance of *jongé* in Senegal, which she argued has turned from "the art of seduction to the art of being or living just for a man." Fatou further contested this understanding by concluding: "That's where I kind of stop or I'm stuck because it does not resonate with me anymore." This concluding remark illustrates Fatou's struggle to identify with some understandings of *jongé*. By saying "anymore," she suggests a change of attitude, perhaps due to migration.

In the diaspora, women treat *jongé* as an ideological site of negotiation of gender and sexuality. Feminist scholarship has demonstrated the centrality of gender in the process of migration (Pedraza 1991; Pessar and Mahler 2003). In many cases, the immigrant household becomes a site of negotiation of gender relations (Fernandez-Kelly and Garcia 1992). This navigation of power relations is also reflected in discourse. The women's engagement with *jongé* demonstrates that the definitions of the concept become a site of contestation and negotiation for women in the Senegalese diaspora.

Navigating Power Relations in *Jongé*

While many of the women with whom I spoke recognized the importance of *jongé* in Senegalese women's identity, they did not shy away from criticizing the power relations in hegemonic definitions and performance of the concept.

Fatou, whom we met in the previous section, did not limit herself to expressing her concern with present performances of *jongé*. When I asked her to explain more what she meant by her statement, she responded:

> *Today when people talk about jongé, it's like,* [speaking rapidly and using her fingers one at a time to list each piece of advice she mentions] *"You have to be jongé for your husband. Do this! He will love you more! When you are intimate, do that! He'll be happy," and so on. Do I only live for a man? Who is that man for me to be at his service?* To be on the pursuit of his happiness? That man is not the US constitution!

In this excerpt, Fatou criticizes the gender hierarchy and power structure shaping the relationship between women and men in Senegalese society, reinforced by popular understandings of *jongé*. She begins her statement by observing people's recommendations on how to perform *jongé*. Within that discourse, the emphasis is placed on what women should do to satisfy their husbands' needs. Her use of urban Wolof here to report people's lessons about *jongé* shows that she knows the type of language people use in Senegal to encourage one to perform *jongé*. By speaking in Wolof to relate this particular information, she also enacts her Senegaleseness.

Furthermore, during this excerpt, Fatou spoke rapidly and used her fingers to enumerate the advice women get. This change in speed, gestures, and repetition of the verb "do" points to the Senegalese society's pressure on women to perform the ideal *jongé* woman. The enumeration of people's recommendations is followed by a series of interrogations in English that stress her questioning of gender relations in Senegalese society. Fatou's codeswitching from Wolof to English indexes her

Americanness and resistance to dominant forms of *jongé and* the link between the two. Her evocation of American concepts like "pursuit of happiness" and "US constitution" demonstrates that she has been exposed to other cultural resources and is conscious of her individuality.

For sociologist Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, "people construct their lives out of cultural resources within a social structural context, but through the process of migration and resettlement, cultural ideals and guidelines for appropriate behavior change" (1994, 193). Fatou deconstructs the gendered ideologies that shape the practice. Indeed, her characterization of women's performance of *jongé* as a "service" challenges the unequal power relations between men and women in the institution of marriage. Throughout her speech, she uses powerful American symbols ("US constitution" and "pursuit of happiness") to contest the structure of power that pushes married women to submit to their husbands. Her statement, "That man is not the US constitution," accentuates her rejection of the unequal power relations between men and women within Senegalese society. While Fatou could have used other constitutions as an example, the choice to resort to the US implies that a wife should be more loyal to the US constitution, to American ideals, than to the husband, who represents Senegalese ideals. The metaphor underscores the sacrality of the relationship between husband and wife in the social construct of *jongé*. In comparing these two, she refers to how women who practice *jongé* are told to respect and adore their husbands. She refuses to abide by this because only the constitution deserves that level of respect, and, she suggests, obeying her husband in this way would violate her constitutional rights.

Maymuna

Echoing Fatou's criticism of women's devotion and submission to their husbands, Maymuna denunciates how the hegemonic discourse of *jongé* neglects women's sexual pleasure. Maymuna is a married woman in her late thirties who migrated to the US at twenty-three to continue her studies. After completing her education, she chose to remain in the US to pursue a career in electrical engineering. Maymuna described herself as a proud Bawol-Bawol, referring to a region in the interior of Senegal, the epicenter of Murridiya and famous for trade. Indeed, women in this area are very active in designing and selling products like *bécoo* and waist beads used in *jongé,* a business I explore more thoroughly in the last chapter. Maymuna shared that she imports these products from Senegal and sells them to women in the US. However, from the beginning of our conversation, she seemed bothered by certain aspects of *jongé* and how people perform it in Senegal. She pointed out the contrast between women's sexual conduct when enacting *jongé* and their subordinate social status: In Senegal, you see a young bride, so shy that *she won't even dare to look at her husband*, but she is in all her states of *jongé*: *putting waist beads, wearing beccoo,* but she won't even dare to have a conversation with her husband.

Maymuna critiques the Senegalese sexual imaginary that "calls for a woman to be a virginal, sexually ignorant bride who transforms into an erotic goddess upon marriage" (Gilbert 2019, 395). The young bride's sexual behavior contrasts with her submissive attitude towards the husband. Her remark also exposes the intimate

inequalities that are present in *jongé*. As she says, "In Senegal, talk about *jongé* always refers to sexual desire, to what the woman can do to seduce the man." Maymuna critiques the social pressure on women to please their husbands and that the Senegalese construction of sexuality revolves around what satisfies men. Therefore, she redefines *jongé* to incorporate a more egalitarian relationship: For me, it's first of all respect within the couple, between the husband and the wife. It's the mutual attention between the two members of the couple. Stating that *jongé* is "mutual attention," Maymuna rejects the unequal balance of pleasure in the hegemonic understanding of *jongé*. Her discourse suggests a recontextualization of *jongé* and a renegotiation of gender relations.

Conclusion

In Senegal, *jongé* has long been constructed as a homogenous practice and an essential trait of Senegalese femininity. But Senegalese women in the diaspora do not always agree with popular interpretations of the concept. Using linguistic strategies like stance-taking, the women I talked with challenged hegemonic understandings of *jongé* and articulated their subjectivities as transnational beings when defining the practice. Through their discursive practices, women put forward their conceptions of *jongé*. The emphasis on their individuality questions the essentialization of Senegalese femininity through the concept of *jongé*. Their interpretations of the concept demonstrate their navigation of multiple discursive spaces about love, sexuality, and womanhood. While in Senegal, the discourse about *jongé* revolves around women's continuous work to cater to men, in the diaspora,

many women redefine the concept to focus on women's agency in their performance of the practice. Hence, in the diasporic conception of the term, some women reclaim *jongé* as a pleasurable practice that can empower them.

By pointing out the focus on men in the hegemonic understanding of *jongé*, diasporic Senegalese women show their awareness of the gendered ideologies embedded in the practice. Therefore, they construct definitions of *jongé* as an ideological site of negotiation of Senegalese notions of gender and sexuality. In their discussion of the concept, women unravel the unequal power relations that shape the practice. They condemn women's subordinate position, castigate the intimate inequality between men and women in the practice, and press for more egalitarian gender relations.

Nevertheless, not all women share this posture. For some, being *jongé* means meeting the social expectations of Senegalese womanhood and femininity. This approach reveals how some women in the diaspora continue to espouse the hegemonic interpretation of the concept and maintain the gender hierarchy and norms of subordination embedded in the practice. Indeed, this way of interpreting *jongé* allows them to maintain their cultural identity as Senegalese women. The analysis of diasporic Senegalese women's engagement with *jongé* demonstrates that *jongé* has become a transnational practice which reflects the diverse ways that cultural practices and even notions of gender are negotiated in the diaspora.

Furthermore, the diasporic women's discussion of *jongé* implies that women in Senegal do not engage in negotiation and take the practice at face value. My focus on diasporic women here should not be understood as implying that women in Senegal do not also

engage in negotiation; they likely do, albeit in different ways. Further research addressing this implication may reveal how *jongé* unfolds in Senegal amid socio-economic transformations.

Chapter Four

Selling Eroticism: Senegalese Urban Sexualities and the Economy of *Jongé*

> *Jigeen su bëggee am manoré day jongé te bari feem.*
> (A woman should do *jongé* and have many strategies if she wants recognition.)
> — Titi, *Jigeen feem*, 2013

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Senegal witnessed crucial political ruptures with significant economic and cultural changes. These social transformations reconfigured access to private and public spaces (Diouf 2003). With the market liberalization and the media's democratization, practices and discourses around sexuality that were previously circumscribed to the private sphere became more visible and audible in public spaces.

In this way, *jongé* made its way to the public sphere. Television shows about how to spice up one's sexual life, posters indexing women's prowess when performing *jongé*, and new trade of *jongé* paraphernalia invaded markets and digital spaces. The commercialization of the practice gave birth to new consumption practices through which Senegalese women express their sexualities. Through feminist ethnographic methodologies and critical discourse analysis, this chapter examines the relationship between consumption and sexuality in the context of *jongé*. By examining the linguistic, symbolic, and material resources used to perform *jongé*, I demonstrate that Senegalese women construct and enact their sexual and social identities through producing and consuming sexual commodities. Buying, selling, talking about, and consuming these goods is also where they negotiate their sexual, social, and economic agency.

Scholarship on sexuality in Senegal has touched on women's performance of their sexuality in practices such as *mokk pooj* ('soft thigh', another term used for the Senegalese art of seduction or *mbaraan* (having multiple male partners) to respectively "gain power in their asymmetrical relationships" (Gilbert 2019, 381) or cope with their economic subordination

(Foley and Drame 2013). This chapter contributes to that scholarship by focusing on women's intimate consumption. By doing so, we gain a deeper understanding of sexuality and intimacy in Senegal and contextualize women's consumption within local and global economies. It also adds to the research on Senegalese women's sexual practices by exploring what I refer to here as the *economy of jongé*, an umbrella term for the production, circulation, and consumption of *jongé* paraphernalia and the social interactions at local markets in Dakar to show that Senegalese women consume local and global erotics to perform their sexuality. I also argue that while at the market, a public place, the *jongé* stall is a feminine intimate, liberated, and pleasurable space where women explore different facets of sexuality, eroticism, and other social issues. Women's consumption practices and interactions reveal that *jongé* is a place of empowerment and cultural métissage that highlights Senegalese women's cosmopolitan and Afropolitan identities.

Commodification of *Jongé*

December is an important time for avid practitioners of *jongé*, a month of love and celebration. It is a time when the weather is nearing cold in Senegal, and when lovers and spouses are eager to embrace the warmth of their incense burners and the comfort of their scented rooms. The price of the charcoal used to burn incense rises due to high demand during this month. A few days after returning to Senegal in December 2021, I rushed to the local market of my hometown, Rufisque, to witness this famous month when the Senegalese art of seduction is at its highest.

Rufisque is located about twenty-five kilometers from Dakar, the capital. Rufisque or Tëngeéj, the Wolof name of the city, is a historic and culturally vibrant place. We were in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic when I arrived; with my mask on, I hurried toward *Marsé*

Tëngéej (Tëngéej Market). In the past years, the market has become one of the biggest in the Dakar region, attracting traders and clients from neighboring cities. It is always crowded. Every day seemed like a *Korité* or *Tabaski* eve, when Senegalese Muslims rushed to this place to prepare for these holidays (Eid-al Fitr and Eid-al Adha, the most prominent Islamic holidays).

As I crossed Route Nationale, which separates the city into two—the administrative and business district on one side and residential neighborhoods on the other—I braced myself for the hurdle to come in *Ruxu Disquettes* (trendy girls' corner), one of the busiest alleys leading to the center of the market. As suggested by its name, the alley is a famous place to buy various items associated with femininity. Stalls of clothes, shoes, pieces of jewelry, rolls of fabrics, and all kinds of products sit alongside this alley, waiting for the interest of the clients. In the background, loud music from the trendiest songs mixed with the hurly-burly of passing cars on the main road, calls for clients to come and buy things, and voices negotiating items and prices.

Clinging to my crossbody bag containing my notebook, phone, and ID card, I elbowed and jostled through the crowd, searching for my final destination. After a few minutes of squeezing and pushing through, I escaped from *Ruxu disquette*s and made my way towards the center of the market. The market has various alleys displaying assorted goods, from groceries to hair products. You can find almost anything you need without much trouble. Stores host small stands of shoes, jewelry, fruit, and *jongé* paraphernalia at their entrances.

One stand particularly caught my eye with its showcase of *jongé* items. A table presented a display of commodities (Fig. 1). Mint-flavored massage cream, lozenges used by partners to perform cunnilingus or fellatio or in aphrodisiac concoctions, shining waist beads of all colors and sizes, and *bécoo* (a sexy underskirt worn by women) hooked on what appeared to be a tent for protection from the sun hung over the stacks of lingerie with images of models posing on the

packaging. Small plastic containers of minted honey, minted shea butter, and other local products for feminine hygiene and sexual satisfaction sat meticulously on one side. On another side, white undergarments printed with images of white couples in explicit sexual positions lay next to plastic containers filled with *gowé*, a local incense, and various perfumes. The table offered a colorful spectacle of modern-day *jongé*.

Figure 1. A stall of *jongé* paraphernalia at the market.

A group of women surrounded the stand and purchased some items. As they left and exchanged thanks for what seemed to be a successful transaction, the seller, a fair-skinned woman dressed in a swiss voile fabric, declared with satisfaction and enthusiasm: “Oh yeah, come back here next time to see me, *Doktëru jeeg ji*. You won’t regret it.” Ndeye, or *Doktëru jeeg ji (*doctor of married women) as she calls herself, is a businesswoman who has sold *jongé* paraphernalia at the market for many years. Stands like hers can be seen throughout the market and in all the biggest markets of the capital, such as Marsé HLM, Tilène, Marsé Sam, or Sandaga.

In the past twenty years, *jongé* has become a profitable industry and coveted commodities that Senegalese women consume daily and at different levels. In Marxian theory, commodification points to the process of attributing market value to goods and services previously not present in the market. My use of *commodification* in relation to *jongé* refers to how it is "bought or sold; packaged and advertised; fetishized, commercialized, or objectified; consumed or assigned values and prices; and linked in many cases to transnational mobility and migration, echoing a global capitalist flow of goods" (Constable 2009, 50).

Indeed, many products continued to be marketed under the *jongé* label to attract potential consumers. Companies use the practice to advertise their products, from food and beauty products to music, and attract Senegalese women into buying them. For instance, a famous Senegalese food industry has created a cooking spice named *jongué* which they claim will "accompany" women into culinary prowess. Music videos and TV shows also encourage Senegalese women to perform *jongé*. While the media has contributed to *jongé's* commercialization, its commodification stems from Senegal's significant economic and cultural changes.

In the 1980s, like many other African countries, Senegal redefined its economic trajectory with the implementation of the International Monetary Fund's Economic Structural Adjustment Program. This set of governmental policies aimed to expedite the liberalization of the economy. The process had detrimental consequences on the population, particularly among the most vulnerable categories. Loss of jobs, higher living costs, the lack of good education, and a reliable healthcare system characterized the life of many Senegalese (dit Ndongo Dimé and Calvès 2006). Rural Senegalese paid most of the price for these economic hardships, with a rural exodus to the urban areas, mainly Dakar. The previously state-controlled economy gave way to

an increasing informal sector marked by the development of local businesses and precarity (Thioub, Diop, and Boone 1998). While liberalization of the Senegalese market brought new economic configurations, it also engendered important cultural shifts, including a redefinition of gender roles in traditional Senegalese households (Perry 2005). The harsh economic consequences of the free market on Senegalese households have redefined the idea of work for everyone.

Scholars have demonstrated that female participation in economic activities has grown throughout Africa since trade liberalization. In Senegal, women became more active outside the house through petty trade to generate more income to support their households (Perry 2005). Indeed, in parallel to *goórgorlu*, a concept derived from the Wolof word *goór* (man), a new term emerged to capture the daily struggles of Senegalese to make ends meet in the face of harsh economic realities: active women adopted the term *jigeen jigeenlu* to characterize their participation in the daily struggles for the survival of the households. As economist Marieme S. Lo notes, *jigeen jigeenlu* represents "a marked and distinctive gendered identity, imbuing the popular idiom *goorgorlu* with a gendered interpretive and archetype, to shift the meaning of survival into a gendered terrain, conveying a reality of survival that is not intrinsically male but female too" (2011, 163). Consequently, *jigeen jigeenlu* deconstructs assumptions about men being in charge of the households and emphasizes women's role as breadwinners too.

Beyond the redefinition of labor and gender roles, the liberalization of the market gave birth to new modes of production and consumption. For instance, the products used by women in their staging of *jongé* combine local and imported goods, while previously, they used mainly local goods. This combination demonstrates the critical changes that marked the practice and its integration into the global trade circuit. The number of *jongé* stalls in Dakar and *jongé*'s

omnipresence in Senegalese popular culture and digital platforms demonstrate that an entire economy has developed around the practice. Selling *jongé* is nowadays a profitable activity. Indeed, the testimonies I gathered from women involved in this business illustrate this critical shift.

Ndeye, whose stall I described above, is a woman in her late forties who has been selling *jongé* paraphernalia her entire life. In her introduction, Ndeye explained her history and trajectory in the business to me. She tied her involvement to a family tradition selling *jongé* paraphernalia across Senegal. “I used to accompany my mother at markets around the country and big events like the *Magal* [celebration of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba, the founder of the Murid brotherhood and his return from exile] and the *Gamou* [Mawlid, celebration of the Prophet Mohamed’s birthday], and we would sell waist beads.” Looking at her stall, it was evident that the practice had evolved beyond beads. She explained, “We add these items because of the new demands.” By pointing out what made the business at the beginning and its new form, she evokes a change that marks the new direction of practicing *jongé* articulated through the consumption of various goods.

Like Ndeye, many of my interviewers inherited their businesses but transformed them to meet new realities. However, I also met Senegalese women whose ancestry was not traditionally associated with the economy of intimacy. Their involvement underlines how a commodity culture has been created around the concept, representing a promising avenue for generating income. For example, Rose is a Christian woman from the Njago, an ethnic group mainly found in southern Senegal. Her non-Wolof background makes Rose unusual among *jongé* businesswomen. She told me that she picked up the knowledge of *jongé* from a griotte neighbor who was involved in the business of selling “women's secrets,” a term used by many to refer to

jongé paraphernalia. Women like Rose, who sell *jongé* paraphernalia for its profitability, are becoming more numerous. Indeed, during one of my days at Ndeye's stall, a young woman came by to purchase some products in bulk and resell them in her residential neighborhood in Dakar. Her interaction with Ndeye, who knew which products she wanted before she even asked for them, and their exchange on the rapid sale of some of the previous items she had purchased suggested that she was a habitual client who found this activity very lucrative.

Jongé's productivity as a business contributing to women's economic security became salient in my discussions with market women. Confessions about how much of a profit they regularly made by selling these items were shared with excitement and gratefulness. "I'm very grateful and satisfied with my business. I owe whatever I have today to this," said Ndeye as she rearranged her stalls. Codou, another woman I met who sells at Marsé HLM, echoed Ndeye: "I can provide for myself and help my mother thanks to my activity."

The various stalls I visited were always packed with clients. The businesswomen I spoke with also highlighted their busy schedule during December and near New Year's Eve and Valentine's Day. For cultural studies scholar Jo Ellen Fair (2004), the celebration of Valentine's Day in Africa is infused with local understandings and constitutes a place where African urbanites negotiate the intersection of love, modernity, and mass culture. In Senegal, New Year's Eve and Valentine's Day are love holidays and sales reach their peak because of women's rush to buy *jongé* products in preparation for their romantic celebrations. A few days before New Year's Eve, I witnessed two young women with freshly painted henna designs on their hands coming to the stalls shopping for products in preparation to welcome home their husbands from abroad.

"If you came during December 31st, you would have been amazed! The market was packed. I ran out of provisions. That day alone, I sold more than $350!" exclaimed Rose. Rose's narrative of her success during the holidays suggests that Senegalese women highly covet *jongé* products. During my days at various stalls, I later discovered that their success was incited by a rigorous business model informed by cultural and economic realities to attract clients and sell their products.

In West Africa, women traders are renowned for their "resilience, ingenuity and savvy business practices under precarious economic conditions and changing ecologies" (Lo 2013, 467). The sellers I met were fierce businesswomen well-versed in local market etiquette and global trade demands. When preparing to leave my first encounter with Ndeye, she pulled out a business card from her waist bag and handed it to me. The card (Fig. 2) featured pictures of waist beads, sexy underskirts known as *bécoo*, her name "*Ndeye, Dokteru jeeg ji*"—the "doctor" of married women—and her WhatsApp numbers. The graphic design on the business card incorporating her contact information to advertise her products shows that Ndeye runs a well-organized business despite being involved in the informal sector. The incorporation of communication technologies like WhatsApp underlines the integration of the economy of *jongé* in e-commerce networks. Indeed, the hundreds of pages specializing in the *jongé* business on Facebook and Instagram reinforce this idea. All the other women I interviewed had WhatsApp numbers and advertised their products using the status feature on WhatsApp, which people otherwise use mostly to share information about their daily lives. They received orders online and partnered with local delivery services to satisfy the demands of their clientele. They also told me that they sell items to Senegalese women in the diaspora and partner with some to export

their products to Europe and the United States. For instance, Maymuna, whom we met in the previous chapter, imports and sells *jongé* paraphernalia to women in the US.

Figure 2. Ndeye's business card.

The women's business model is well incorporated into the local economy of instant money transfer through which they receive payments for different orders. Scholarship on mobile money in Africa has pointed out its role in promoting financial inclusion for many African women (Asongu 2013; Suri and Jack 2016; Okello Candiya Bongomin et al. 2018). Women's use of mobile money to conduct their business in the context of *jongé* represents their innovative approach and highlights their economic and financial resilience.

While WhatsApp allows *jongé* saleswomen to reach a wide audience, advertise, and sell their products, it also indicates their mastery of the local market etiquette of *sutura,* the Senegalese and Muslim mantra of privacy, which allows some clients to express their needs in private outside the looks of passersby at the market. *Sutura* (discretion) regulates social relations, and breaking this code of honor can lead to social death (Sylla 1994; Mills 2011). In her study of female entrepreneurship and social media in Khartoum, Steel (2017, 251) argues that women "transcend conventional gender norms and classic divisions between public and private, online and offline, and work and family" in their daily business practices using social media. What is of

interest here is women's navigation between public and private life via Facebook and WhatsApp in an Islamic society where women's access to public life is still contested. Despite maintaining physical stalls, saleswomen also use online services to abide by the norms of *sutura*. Indeed, as many of the women I spoke with explained, some clients are not comfortable coming to the stalls and being seen purchasing certain *jongé* paraphernalia. Having WhatsApp numbers allows saleswomen to "assist them privately." The incorporation of WhatsApp into the business model of *jongé* highlights saleswomen's tactical negotiation of the private and the public space in a society where public talk about sexuality is still taboo to many.

Local and Global Erotics

It was a Tuesday morning when I received a WhatsApp message from Rose, inviting me to join her on a trip to Centenaire. I was excited and ready to seize the opportunity of tracking where so many saleswomen's products came from. I jumped in a taxi, destination Pompiers shell station, where I would meet her. During my interviews with *jongé* saleswomen, many told me about Centenaire, where they buy some of their *jongé* items, especially the beads they use to make the *fer* (waist beads) and lingerie. Centenaire's alleys are among the longest in Dakar, known for hosting the annual military parade celebrating the country's independence on April 4th. Centenaire is also famous for its Chinese stores along its alleys, present in the streets of Dakar since the late 1990s (Cissé 2013). By the 2000s, Centenaire had become a wholesale hub, and many Senegalese traders visited these stores to buy clothing, shoes, and other products they retailed.

As Rose and I reached Centenaire, I saw Chinese stores with Senegalese assistants behind the counters bordering the alleys on both sides. At the exterior of the stores, big plastic bags

filled with merchandise welcomed customers. On top, various clothing items hung in display, including lingerie. Rose entered one of the stores, and I followed her. She talked to one of the Senegalese assistants while a Chinese man sat quietly behind the counter, reading. After a few exchanges about colors, sizes, design, and price, Rose bought three different lingerie sets in bulk, some of which she had purchased previously but ran out of it because of high demand during the holidays. We did the same in a couple of other stores, where she bought bedroom decorations such as heart-shaped lights, rose petals, and alphabet-designed stickers that have become trendy for bridal room decoration.

In one of the stores, we found Daba, the youngest among the market woman, whom I had also interviewed and spent time with at her stall at Marsé Tëngéej. Like Rose, she came to purchase crystal pearls to design her waist beads. We finished shopping at Centenaire and quickly stopped at Petersen, another market in Dakar, where Daba bought small containers of fenugreek powder, which is apparently used to boost the libido. Daba, Rose, and other saleswomen I spoke with regularly make trips like these to restock their stalls, combining local products they buy or concoct themselves and imported commodities such as the lingerie they purchased in the Chinese store.

In their performance of *jongé,* women use products from different parts of the world to embellish and eroticize their bodies. Research on body politics has shown that the eroticized African body through aesthetic processes such as scarification, labia elongation, and excision have been highly valued in many African societies (Biaya and Rendall 2000; Tamale 2006). Anthropologists Biaya and Rendall (2000, 708) argue that "eroticism is the body's embellishment by methods that blend its accessories with its attributes, as flesh itself is worked in such a way that blurs the distinction of the cosmetic and the organic." Indeed, the *jongé* body

becomes erotic through its ornamentation with objects such as waist beads and the *bécoo*, which have erotic connotations in the Senegalese cultural imaginary.

Women's bodies in their performance of *jongé* become canvases on which discourses on gender and sexuality are inscribed through the deployment of various technologies of the erotic. Poststructuralists have shown that the body is instrumental in the modern-day operation of power (Foucault 1995). My approach to the *jongé* body builds from the Foucauldian notion of the "docile body" to show that women's apparent docility and embodiment of heteronormative sexuality in the context of *jongé* is productive of subversive discourses on gender and sexuality and creates an alternative for self-representation and self-empowerment.

The aesthetics of sexuality in Senegal is characterized by a métissage of local and global erotic paraphernalia with discursive practices around sexuality. The erotic technologies in *jongé* deploy objects and products to create a visual, sensual, and olfactory environment. Throughout the markets, imported commodities constituted a significant part of the stalls. Products such as sexy nightgowns like western baby doll lingerie, imported products for erotic massages, different kinds of lubricants, and other products for oral sex enrich the repertoire of *jongé*. European lingerie sets in all shapes and sizes dominated the stalls. These commodities were the most popular among the women who frequented the stalls during my days in the field. According to the saleswomen, Senegalese women, particularly the younger generation, were more attracted by European lingerie because "they are trendier and more *tubabé*."

Toubab is commonly used across West Africa to designate a white person and anyone with a light-skinned complexion. In this context, however, the adjective has less to do with skin color and more with attitude. In fact, "the process behind the choices of body display reveal the reflexive application of taste, an exercise where women emerge as sophisticated consumers and

skillful arbitrators of the appropriate erotic allure" (Wilson-Kovacs 2016, 189). Being *tubabé* means embodying modern ideals, being sophisticated with good taste, and being in contact with global trends. Moreover, *tubabé* also connotes the embodiment of Western sexual ethics and performance and Senegalese urban femininity using lingerie.

Women's consumption of lingerie has generated much controversy among feminist scholars. Senegalese women's consumption of sexy Western nightgowns needs to be contextualized within the practice of *jongé* as an empowering garment. In contrast to earlier feminist discourse, which depicted lingerie as a patriarchal tool controlling women's bodies (Wood 2016), postmodern feminism rejects the universalism and essentialization of feminist discourse and emphasizes the need to situate interpretations of social phenomena (Anzaldúa 1987; Oyewumi 1997; Hooks 2000; Mohanty 2003; Dosekun 2020). Indeed, commodities have a social life, and they change "regimes of value," that is, they are assigned different values through the course of their life as they move in time and place (Appadurai 1994; 1996). Western lingerie allows Senegalese women to perform their sexuality freely and enact their urban and cosmopolitan identities. Women's choice to wear lingerie and mix it with other local products such as waist beads or incense underlines their Afropolitan identities. The term Afropolitan refers to the understanding that Africa and African identities are intrinsically linked to interaction with multiple cultures. In their daily practices, Africans build cultural bridges to contribute and maintain ties with the rest of the world (Mbembe 2005; Wawrzinek and Makokha 2011; Selasi 2013). Similarly to the celebration of Valentine's Day, the consumption of European lingerie should not be seen as an expression of Western cultural imperialism because doing so would "deny Africans' agentic, self-reflexive, and desirous presence and participation in the flow of things" (Dosekun 2020, 30). In this context, women's use of *tubabé* is an Afropolitan enterprise

of being in constant engagement and negotiation with the modern world, accommodation of global sexual consumer culture, and navigation of multiple discourses about femininity and sexuality.

As with lingerie, domestication happens with other products and at various levels. For Biaya, many objects and practices arrived with Islam and Muslim trade in Senegal. While they did not initially carry a sexual connotation, the sensuality of these Arab products facilitated their "incorporation into the traditional repertory of erotic equipment" (Biaya and Rendall 2000, 714). Perfume and incense are part of these products that have gained an erotic meaning in today's understanding and performance of the practice and have become indispensable in any staging of *jongé*. There are alleys dedicated to selling good scents in many markets in Dakar. Big stores, mainly run by men, sell imported and local incense in bulk or retail to clients.

The process of domesticating global erotics in *jongé* is pervasive. Another significant example is white cotton fabric with sex positions printed on it, which is used to make lingerie sets, men's undershirts, or bedroom sheets (Fig. 3). The prints depicting white couples in various sexual situations appear on bedroom sheets, women's nightgowns, or men's undershirts. My interactions with Ndeye, Rose, and Daba revealed that they order the images from a man, who then retrieves them from pornographic websites and prints them. Although the printing may suggest a mimicry of Western erotics, its combination with Wolof phrases domesticates the erotics within Senegalese sexual practices. Expressions praising the beauty of men's circumcised penises, such as *rafet jongal* (beautiful circumcision) or utterances voicing women's sexual desire, such as *tël ma* (hold me up), are written underneath the images.

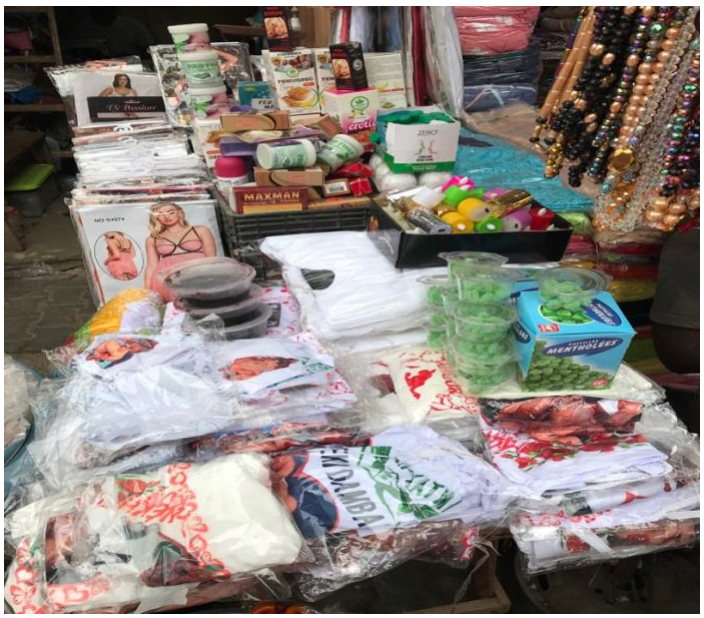

Figure 3. Display of lingerie and undergarments with erotic pictures.

The domesticating process is possible because global and local erotics have fused. While *jongé* has evolved in the light of globalization and the arrival of other commodities, traditional paraphernalia are still very popular among consumers. For example, many women buy beads named *tocc xuur* (smash testicles), the white cotton *bécoo* (underskirt), or the incense *gowé* because they point to a "traditional" and authentic womanhood and performance of *jongé*. These *yëfu maam* (ancestors' stuff), as the saleswomen called them, index a local knowledge and practice of sexuality without outside influence. Throughout my encounters, saleswomen and clients praised the importance of these items because of their cultural meanings. When discussing the significance of the waist beads, Fama, a Laobé woman who sold waist beads in a Dakar suburb, emphasized, "The waist beads are weapons and protection at the same time." The construction of beads as protection is not new or exclusive to Senegal. The *tocc xuur*, made with white, red, or black beads, is believed to offer protection from evil (Jolles 1991). Women's continuous consumption of this kind of beads shows their navigating of the traditional and spiritual in their practice of *jongé*.

Naming Strategies

Naming practices reflect a strategic move to attract consumers and the cultural embeddedness of the sellers who use popular culture in the marketing of their products. The branding and marketing of *cuuray* (incense) constitute a locus for social commentary. Names such as *Faramarène Cuura*y index to young Senegalese urbanites who identify as Faramarène, fans of "the golden boy" of Senegalese music, Wally Seck. Other names include popular slang like *Rang muy gaw* (let's make it quick) by rapper 10000 Problemes or *Na baggass yi Dugg* (get in the stuff). *Baggass* is a slang term that refers to men's genitalia. These names build from an emerging youth culture articulating a new urban identity of living stress-free and enjoying every bit of life to its fullest despite hardships. Their integration in the economy of *jongé* underlines the creativity and cultural awareness of the sellers. It shows that the consumption of incense or perfume is also a space of articulation and reproduction of Senegalese cultural identities.

The naming practices around these commodities are representations of the sociocultural realities of Senegalese society. Indeed, local erotics use food consumption, wrestling, and fishing metaphors to construct and express Senegalese sexual imaginaries. Naming the material culture of *jongé*, that is, the various products associated with the practice like waist beads or incense, is a space of linguistic creativity and multilingualism and also a site of reiteration and contestation of Senegalese notions of gender and sexuality.

The presence of food language through the names of the products represents an essential aspect of *jongé's* discursive practices. Throughout my fieldwork, I came across various products alluding to food. For instance, *Petit Pois* (green peas) is a small ball-shaped product the size of a pea, sold to women for its tightening effect on the vagina. This product was present in all the

stalls I visited, and saleswomen and satisfied clients praised its ability to tighten and rejuvenate women's vaginas. *Café* (coffee) is another favorite product that supposedly enhances men's sexual performance. For example, when describing how to use the product to a young woman, Rose explained: "You can wait until bedtime, pour it into the tea or the milk you made, mix it well until it dissolves and serve it to him." Rose's directions on how to use the product resemble a cooking recipe. The conflation between the world of cuisine and the performance of sexuality appears on different levels of women's conversations.

The language of cooking pervades the discursive practices of *jongé*. Throughout women's interactions, verbs such as "to spice up" or the word "spices" allude to the various products were constantly present in their discourses. Another expression that captures the way women should use some of the products is articulated in the Wolof word *roof*. The verb *roof* means to insert; however, the noun refers to several condiments mixed to create a stuffing to be inserted in fish or meat. Here the term *roof* (insert) is used to refer to the application of products like *Petit pois* into women's vaginas. Indeed, the act of stuffing is central in Senegalese cooking practices. The most famous national dish, *ceebu jen,* requires the stuffing of the fish to have a perfect result. Moreover, *roof* is created through the grinding or pounding of ingredients in a mortar and pestle, which beyond their functionality in cuisine, represent sexual intercourse and fertility in many African cultures (Biaya and Rendall 2000; Tamale 2006; Gilbert 2019).

In the context of women's interactions, the naming practices and the desired objectives in using the products symbolize the Senegalese sexual imaginary. While women's sexuality is conceived as vaginal and maintained as virginal with tightening products such as the *Petit Pois*, men are culturally expected to be sexual performers because sexual performance is synonymous with virility and masculinity. Indeed, the women's interest in their partner's sexual performance

deconstructs the discourse of man's sexual expertise and their choice of products reproduces ideologies about masculinity and heteronormative sexuality. The name of the "coffee" product destined for men's consumption here is quite significant as drinking coffee shots is a masculine practice highly associated with manhood and virility.

Cultural references to wrestling dominate local erotics as well. Wrestling is a popular sport and one of the long-standing cultural practices of the country. A large body of work has examined Senegalese wrestling, focusing on its cultural, political, and economic implications (Peano 2007; Wane and Chevé 2017; Havard 2018; Ndongo and Tine 2018; Hann, Chevé, and Wane 2021). Wrestling is not only a space of cultural expression but also a site of construction and reconstruction of identities. More interestingly, in wrestling the body is deployed via different techniques to dominate and ultimately win. Both wrestling and *jongé* heavily rely on corporeal technologies of domination.

The Senegalese bedroom in women's staging of *jongé* becomes an arena where a couple prepares themselves for the performance of sexual expertise. Wrestling as a metaphor for sexual intercourse also signifies the negotiation of power between the couple during sexual intercourse and after. It is common for people to use the verb *bëré* (to wrestle) or the noun *lamb* (wrestling) to talk about sexual acts. In wrestling, the wrestler spends time and money on bodily practices when preparing for combat. His preparation includes, among other things, intense sessions of exercise, during which he reviews different strategies and tactics, and consultations with marabouts in charge of the mystic aspect of sports (Peano 2007; Wane and Chevé 2017). On the day of a match, the wrestler undergoes several body rituals. As anthropologist Irene Peano (2007) describes, "The mystical preparation … is centered upon the wrestler's body, on which water mixed with gris-gris and other fluids is poured. To protect them, several gris-gris amulets

are tied around his arms, legs, torso, and even head. Others are folded into his loincloth, the only piece of clothing worn during the match" (2007, 44). Besides their mystic value, these accessories are ways of adorning the wrestler's body.

Women's bodies in the enactment of *jongé* undergo similar aesthetic practices through accessorization, beautification, and eroticization. Hence parallelism can be drawn between women's erotic paraphernalia and the accessories of the wrestler. For example, the waist beads resemble the wrestler's gris-gris in their place on the body. Traditionally, some kinds of waist beads are believed to have protective qualities, the same function as the gris-gris on a wrestler's body. Meanwhile, the *bécoo*, the diffused incense, and perfume are like the wrestler's loincloth and the other elements he applies to his body.

They also employ other terms belonging to the linguistic repertoire of wrestling to capture the negotiation of sexual relationships between men and women. Sexual intercourse is depicted as combat, a struggle for power, and a quest for victory. Terms such as *rofoo* (to come in close contact), *wër ndomb* (the act of dominating an adversary by taking him at the waist), *daan* (to win), *daanu* (to be defeated, to sexually orgasm), all of which are movements that the wrestler undertakes throughout a match to gain control and defeat the adversary, connote the act of negotiating power. Indeed, wrestling requires not only physical strength but also intelligence. It's about making the right move at the right time to dupe the adversary. This dynamic is transposed into the bedroom during sexual intercourse by using wrestling terms.

Even though an essential part of the discourse about *jongé* is pleasure, doing *jongé* is also tactical. It's about having *feem*, the "feminine finesse [with] artful tricks and strategies used to deceive or convince a man" (Gilbert 2019, 381). *Feem* combines both material tools and discursive practices such as sweet-talking and allows women to seduce, manipulate, and,

theoretically, control men (Nyamnjoh 2005; Foley and Drame 2013; Gilbert 2019). As we saw in chapter two, during the process of socialization teachers reiterate the importance of having *feem,* and in chapter three we saw how it is deployed creatively to attract a female audience with the name of the radio designed to serve women.

Certain products' names and cultural connotations reflect the power invested in them. For instance, there are different kinds of waist beads with various functions. *Bine-bine* (waist beads made of small beads) are characterized by the use of tiny pearls to create a waist belt that can be worn indefinitely both as a seduction tool and for its aesthetic value. *Tocc xuur* is another kind of waist bead that reflects the product's power in women's performance of sexuality. For the saleswomen, *tocc xuur* is a must in every *jongé* woman's bedroom. It is the ultimate tool of seduction and domination because of its imposing nature and enchanting sounds around the waist. "When you wear it, they know you are ready; you are not joking," said Ndeye. The name means "to smash men's testicles," a strong image that connotes its power. The testicles represent biologically and culturally the essence of masculinity in many phallocratic societies (Mbembe 1992). They are conceived as a place where men's power, strength, and social identity lie. Therefore, smashing the testicles can be understood as a metaphor for dispossessing men of their embodied power. Names such as this communicate women's desire for more power, therefore naming is a place of projection of many desires for women. In the same way that inscriptions on bedroom sheets or waist beads explicitly voice women's sexual desire, certain names translate higher demands reflecting the unequal power relations that shape gender dynamics in Senegalese culture.

On another level, naming practices are a site for contestations of women's economic marginalization. Indeed, the spatial division in the market demonstrates women's economic

marginalization and their continuous fight for public space and financial power. The saleswomen occupied small spaces for their stalls, usually at the margins of big stores owned by men. Through their linguistic creativity, women contested this economic marginalization in the Senegalese society. Several famous products, such as minted chocolate, honey, or incense, had the label *caabi ker gi* (the house key). Despite the progress on deconstructing some gendered ideologies, property ownership and land ownership are still gendered in Senegal and women are still lagging when it comes to owning houses. Moreover, a man is the *borom kër* (owner of the house), literally and figuratively. *Caabi ker gi* here evokes women's desire for property ownership because having it gives power. This appellation also implies that using these products will procure women figurative ownership of their homes and power over their husbands.

The symbolism behind naming practices can also be seen in one of the most erotic products in *jongé*, the *bécoo*, a historic garment through which one can see the evolution of sexuality in the Senegalese society. Traditionally, the *bécoo* represented the most intimate and private object in a Senegalese woman's wardrobe. It has been defined as a central piece in Senegalese eroticism throughout history(Biaya and Rendall 2000; Gilbert 2019; Coly 2019). The *bécoo* is often produced by women who use local fabric and creativity. They come in different sizes, lengths, colors, and patterns. One crucial fact about the *bécoo* is their given name. While the variable names of different types of *bécoo* follow trends, one particular design, the *mbalu jen* (fishnet), a type of *bécoo* with the same design as a fishing net, remains a popular one among consumers. The name of this item suggests its erotic powers, allowing women to catch and control men as one would do with a fish.

Beyond being a large industry mainly dominated by men, fishing is also a metaphor for dating and romantic relationships (Nyamnjoh 2005). Men are compared to fish, particularly *coof*

(grouper), an expensive fish used to make the national dish *ceebu jen* (fish and rice). Hence, when a woman says, "I have a *coof*," she means that she has found a handsome man. By embodying the masculine domain of fishing in their practice of *jongé,* women state their sexual power and assert their abilities to trap men with their seductive talents. The fishnet *bécoo* is also a symbol of power negotiation. Men might be the controllers of the economy or the strong ones in public, but, in private, women construct and enact their sexual and discursive agency, which derives from their appropriation and erotization of the body.

The combination of Wolof and French words in the names of the products (Petit Pois, Café, mbalu jen) shows how women who practice *jongé* are at the intersections of several cultures. It also demonstrates the interdiscursivity, borrowing words from different contexts such as cooking, fishing, sports, and so on. Through discursive practices, women who practice *jongé* perform cosmopolitan identities.

Jongé, **a Site of Discursive Transgressions**

A few days after I met Ndeye, I began visiting her stall almost every afternoon. Clients seeking *jongé* paraphernalia came in greater numbers in the afternoons than during the mornings, when they either work outside the home or attend to their various house duties. Ndeye's stall sits in front of two big stores: a sewing studio owned by a man and a Muslim clothing store selling hijab and abayas, everything a Muslim woman needs to cover up her body. Opposite Ndeye's stall, right in front of the clothing store, her husband has a stall of shoes. When I first arrived at Ndeye's, Aicha, the woman who ran the clothing store, was inquisitive about my presence and did not shy away from finding the motive of my visit. After I explained to her the reason for my presence and interest in *jongé*, she exclaimed, "You have arrived at the right place! With Ndeye,

doktëru jeeg ji, you will learn so much." We all laughed at her remark. Aicha pulled out a bench excitedly and invited me to sit down near her store, where I could keep my eye on the interactions at Ndeye's stall. My journey in the field observing the interactions between the saleswomen and their clients and their engagement at the stalls revealed *jongé* to be a pleasurable, uncensored, and intimate space where women explore the various aspects of sexuality and eroticism. In Senegal, talk about sexuality is still taboo. Sex matters, or "bedroom affairs," a term many Senegalese use to refer to a couple's sexual life, are relegated to the private domain. However, this contrasts with the overwhelming presence of *jongé* talk on television and the incorporation of *jongé* into urban landscapes. Sexy nightgowns and locally made underskirts known as *bécoo* and waist beads exposed in front of shops throughout markets and alleys in Dakar cohabitate with pharmacies, hair salons, and stores. At times, they are just a few blocks away from mosques or churches. The displays of commodities meant to be consumed and talked about privately in the public market symbolize a certain deterritorialization of sexuality from private to public spaces (Deleuze 1986; Appadurai 1996).

Across West Africa, marketplaces are "points of convergence" of people from various social categories (Lo 2013). The clientele at the *jongé* stalls offers a microcosm of Senegalese women's identities in terms of age, ethnicity, marital status, and social ranks. Women of all categories came to seek products from the saleswomen. As the saleswomen shared with me, they "had something for everyone, no matter your budget." Indeed, accommodating the clients and their various needs is central in the interactions at the *jongé* stalls. Saleswomen used laudatory language to attract clients to the booths. For example, whenever someone stopped in front of the stall, they were greeted with expressions such as *sama xarit* (my friend), *diriyanke bu rafet bi* (beautiful woman, epitome of Senegalese beauty standards) before being asked what they would

like. Such communicative practices aim to make clients feel good about themselves and set the space for a pleasant and comfortable conversation. Consequently, they were at ease expressing their needs without reservations or fear of judgment. By creating an atmosphere of camaraderie embedded in local practices, saleswomen allowed their clients to engage in pleasurable and uncensored discussions about sexual life through interactions with their products.

Overt discussion about sex is still reserved for the private domain, but at *jongé* stalls, both clients and saleswomen use discursive practices that transgress the taboo of sex talk. Women used metaphors and printed sexual language to communicate about sex and sexual practices. When clients inquired about a product, the saleswomen offered a detailed explanation of what it was and how to use it in explicit language.

These sessions seemed very pleasurable, with laughter throughout and excitement to hear and discover more. In their discursive practices, the saleswomen use amusing metaphors to refer to genitalia and the woman's name *Ana Ndiaye* to personify the vagina. Some clients had a clear understanding and familiarity with such commodities and the language used to describe them. Others appeared to be novices, and this usually required an explanation from the saleswomen, who carefully and passionately walked them through each product and its benefits. During one of these teaching sessions, a woman pointed at the small containers filled with products for oral sex and asked about their usage. Rose explained with excitement that they were "for sucking the *biberon* or the *crevettes*"—literally "feeding bottle" and "prawn crackers." The client nodded in approval and laughed at hearing the word *biberon.* She then asked a follow-up question about the ingredients and pointed out another container, and Rose responded, "This one is for tightening." The woman looked at the product and exclaimed: "Yes! That's what I need! At this moment, I need something to tighten me up!" Both burst into laughter.

This kind of interaction characterized by question-and-answer sessions between customers and saleswomen was widespread. It underlines significant aspects of the *jongé* stall. The camaraderie between women and their laughter shows that discussion around sex and sexuality is a pleasurable topic (Gueye 2013; Thompson 2013). It also indicates the collaboration that exists between the two parties.

Notably, neither Rose nor her client used the Wolof or French word for *penis* or *vulva*. Nevertheless, there was a mutual understanding that *crevettes* (prawn cracker) refers to the vulva, and *biberon* alludes to the penis. The same thing happened again when they talk about tightening. Even though coded language points to the taboo around explicit language, it stresses the collaboration between women. The interactions illustrate how the socialization into *jongé* we saw in chapter two continues into adulthood with the introduction to new products. It also demonstrates both clients and saleswomen actively participate in the process. The client contributes by nodding, asking follow-up questions or clarifications, or simply through laughter. As a novice, she is not simply passively receiving socio-cultural knowledge about *jongé* but rather contributing to meaning-making about it (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986).

At the *jongé* stall, sex is not represented as a duty that one should fulfill but as a pleasurable act for women. The graphic representation of sexual positions and the explicit expressions enunciating women's various sexual desires construct *jongé* as a liberating space. At the stalls, customers can choose ready-to-use waist beads with inscriptions such as "*Baise Moi*" (fuck me) or "*Saf Data*" (tasty vagina/vulva) or choose to customize the beads with their sassy expressions. Expressions like these acknowledge women as sexual beings, and their desire is often dismissed or unaccounted for. In Senegal, as in many other Muslim societies the code of honor restricts what women can say out loud about sex (Thompson 2011; Gueye 2013). Women

who talk openly about sex in public are regarded as lacking good morals or restraint (Gueye 2013). Yet research has demonstrated that women in some Muslim societies rely on cultural artifacts with words printed on them to communicate various messages about their married life and even offer social commentaries (Thompson 2011; Omari 2016). As articulated by feminist discourse analyst Michelle Lazar, "Every act of meaning-making through (spoken and written) language and other forms of semiosis contributes to the reproduction and maintenance of the social order, and also in the sense of resisting and transforming that order (2007, 150)," In the case of *jongé*, the inscription of this sexual language on accessories designed to adorn the body allows them to sidestep the taboo of sex in spoken language.

The presence of these artifacts and the discursive practices show that *jongé* is a space of transgressions of social norms of restraint. For example, one day at the stall, a dark-skinned woman, veiled and dressed in a jellaba like those sold at the store behind Ndeye's booth, came to buy lingerie. The familiarity that marked her interaction with Ndeye suggested that she was a regular customer. After greeting each other and catching up, the client asked for lingerie. Ndeye got up and pulled out some to show her. After looking at the proposed ones, her client exclaimed, "Ana yu caaga yi?"—Where are the slutty ones? They both laughed at her question, and Ndeye went deeper into her stock, trying to find what her client had requested.

The interesting part of this interaction is the customer's use of the word *caaga*. It is popular knowledge in Senegal that, in traditional society, a *caaga* meant a divorced woman. However, the term has evolved to mean a woman of loose morals or a prostitute. The word *caaga* loosely translates as "slutty," as revealed in this scenario. The woman's dress, all covered in loose, modest clothing, completely contrasted with her discourse and the quest for more revealing lingerie to wear. Such a conversation stresses women's discursive subversions at the

jongé stall despite social norms of restraint. As argued by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, language should not be reduced to its communicative role because it is also a medium of power. Linguistic exchanges are both places of expression and reproduction of social structure (Bourdieu 1991). In Senegal, women's speech differs from men's in that women are linguistically held to higher standards regarding respecting the code of honor. Speaking "correctly" and appropriately according to Islamic and traditional norms is an essential trait of good womanhood.

Women's discursive practices at the stalls subvert social restrictions on language use. The fact of speaking publicly about sex here is already a subversion of the established norms which authorize what should be addressed openly or privately. Moreover, the women's use of explicit sexual language such as "saf data," "fuck me," or "caaga" transgress the social norms of appropriateness and respectability that governs women's speech within Senegalese society. Their interactions and discursive practices construct the stall as a feminine, semi-private, and empowering place.

"Feeminism": Tactics of Pleasure, Agency, and Power

Women's engagement and openness to different commodities designed for enhancing pleasure underline the centrality of sexual pleasure in the practice. Female sexual practice is not only limited to procreation but is also a locus for self-enjoyment. The saleswomen characterize their business of *jongé* paraphernalia as "neexal sëy"— making marriage enjoyable. This way of understanding their business highlights *jongé* paraphernalia as part of an economy of pleasure. *Jongé* creates the space and the tools that lead to happiness. The term *neexal sëy* captures two critical dimensions of gender relations in the Senegalese context. The word *sëy* has a dual meaning in Wolof: *marriage* and *sexual acts*. This conflation of meanings demonstrates that sex,

particularly pleasurable sex, is a significant aspect of marriage and a central feature of a good marriage. It also alludes to the Wolof and Muslim understanding that sex should only occur within marriage. *Neexal sëy* stresses the commodities' role and power to procure pleasure and contribute to a long-lasting marriage.

Hegemonic discourses about *jongé,* as we saw in the previous chapter with diasporic Senegalese women, emphasize the work women do to please men; however, my observation at the market revealed that being able to initiate and provoke pleasure is essential for the *jongé* woman. There is power in the capacity to procure pleasure, to dominate one's partner sexually. This attitude is well captured in the word *feem*, which insinuates women's ability to trick, manipulate, and control men using discursive practices and *jongé* paraphernalia, as we saw in the second chapter. *Feem,* underlines women's knowledge, creativity, and sexual power. It builds from women's understanding of their environment and creativity to control and gain power. *Feem* is the art of negotiating everyday life. It extends beyond the bedroom to the arena of social life generally and that means knowing how to play the social game.

I view *feem* as deployed within *jongé* as a form of "Nego-feminism" (Nnaemeka 2004), emphasizing the vital role negotiation plays in the African articulation of feminism. *Feem* "challenges through negotiations and compromise. It knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around them. In other words, it knows when, where, and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts" (Nnaemeka 2004, 378). It allows many Senegalese women to cope with social expectations and go around patriarchal norms by manipulating cultural imperatives of womanhood, femininity, and sexuality.

As an aspect of Nego-feminism, *feem* is "structured by cultural imperatives and modulated by ever-shifting local and global exigencies" (2004, 378). It stems from a deep understanding of local realities of gender, gender relations, and sexuality. It underlines Senegalese women's awareness of their socio-cultural and economic status and their creativity in negotiating them. A perfect illustration of this occurred at Rose's stall when she sold a sexual stimulant for men to one of her customers. The product, called *coffee*, as we saw above, comes in the form of a pill. When explaining to her customer what it was and how to use it, she said, "When it looks like this, they will not take it. You know men are complicated. So, you dissolve it in his tea or his coffee. He won't even realize it, but you'll get what you want." Such a statement shows the woman's use of different strategies to lure men into doing what they want, including manipulating certain cultural imperatives to their advantage.

Nurturing is a significant marker of Senegalese womanhood (Gueye 2010; Hannaford and Foley 2015). Within the household, the wife is responsible for feeding the husband. In the context of *jongé*, manipulating this cultural imperative for one's advantage is highly valued. A famous Wolof proverb states, "A woman who can satisfy her husband's belly will control him." Rose's advice falls into this discourse. She uses the act of feeding as a strategy for women to manipulate for their gain. In this case, "tricking" the husband into drinking the coffee under the pretense of catering to him will result in sexual satisfaction for the woman. The emphasis is not on whether the husband likes it but rather on the wife's satisfaction at the end. Such satisfaction is not just in sexual pleasure but in the sense of control, of power she exerts over the husband. According to saleswomen, clients often came back to confide their success in getting what they wanted from their husbands after using their *feem*.

The interactions between Ndeye and her clients challenged the preconceived view of men as the primary sexual agents. Clients were eager to buy different products and learn new techniques to improve their sex lives. Instead of seeing this as a burden that falls on women as conveyed by certain women in the diaspora, as we saw in chapter three, I see it as a choice they make to be responsible for seeking sexual knowledge and information and being comfortable with their sexuality. At the stalls, women are constructed as the sexual agents within the couple. They are encouraged by saleswomen to embrace this as powerful. Ndeye frequently uttered "*Jigeen dafay moom gooram*"—'A woman should own her man'—whenever she was satisfied with a client's efforts to claim her seductive talents. As saleswomen like to remind their customers, a woman should be seductive because being seductive for them is a powerful trait.

The Stall, a Feminine Space

The *jongé* stall is an uncensored, pleasurable, and empowering space for the clientele. This is possible because the women involved collaboratively work to keep this space intimate. Even though most of the transactions take place in the market, a highly public place, the interactions among the women are still private. Women buying lingerie sets or bedsheets with sex positions would use the nearby Muslim clothing store to unfold the products and inspect them further before deciding.

At the market, both saleswomen and customers abide by the ethic of *sutura,* a term borrowed from Arabic, meaning concealment or coverage. It translates an Islamized Wolof sense of discretion, privacy, and modesty (Sylla 1994). *Sutura* traditionally applies to both men and women, but the concept has become highly gendered. In women's case, *sutura* "extends to feminine modesty in general—properly covering the body with voluminous clothing, avoiding

unnecessary circulation in public space, and guarding one's chastity" (Mills 2011, 3). *Sutura* regulates what women can wear, where they can go, or what they can say. Both Ndeye and her clients embody this code of honor to avoid appearing as lacking *sutura* and offending other people. At the stalls, the performance of *sutura* encompasses respect for this code of honor. It underscores women's choice to preserve the intimacy of their interactions, defend the secrecy of their space, and protect themselves from male voyeurism.

Indeed, women construct the stall as a feminine space where they explore and share *secrets de femmes* (women's secrets). During one encounter, Rose explained the products to a group of clients and how to use them while a man selling hijabs stood near the stall, clearly paying attention, watching, and listening. When she noticed the man's presence, Rose told him to move on because the women were having a conversation. The man removed himself without resistance, knowing that he was at the wrong place. Keeping the *jongé* stall private for women to comfortably explore their sexuality was a shared preoccupation for the saleswomen I encountered. From the clients whispering when they don't want to be heard to secretive exchange of products both saleswomen and their clients collaborated to maintain the confidentiality of their interactions. Nevertheless, the intimacy and confidentially that shaped the transactions between the women exceeds the mere need to keep female sexual affairs private. It reveals the saleswomen's intersecting roles as traders, confidantes, and advisors.

The stall can also be a space for women to consult and counsel one another on various issues. In her research with various markets' traders in Dakar, economist Marieme Lo notes that the social "identity of women traders transpires a wider range of social functions such as counseling, that suggests multiple embodied and intangible identities" (2013, 468). My encounters with the saleswomen confirm this statement, especially in the context of saleswomen

who deal with a hyperfeminine business. At the stalls, there is a significant flow of information on *jongé* and other social issues that women confront in their daily lives. The mutual understanding of the *jongé* stall as an uncensored and private space allows the sharing of information between saleswomen and their clientele. Moreover, through their communicative practices, the saleswomen establish trust with their clientele. As mentioned earlier, how saleswomen approach their customers is embedded in local market practices. Saleswomen not only use camaraderie for advertising their products, but it is also the basis on which their advice to the customers becomes legitimized. Saleswomen resorted to affective labels such as *sama xarit* (my friend), *cherie* (my love), and *sama nene* (my child) to establish the connection with their clientele and to perform their roles as confidants and advisors.

The women's performative role as counsellors is reinforced by their choice and use of affectionate language. Indeed, the affective labels they used to address their clients underline how saleswomen deploy their linguistic capital (Bourdieu 1991) to adapt to their audience and meet with the realities of the "linguistic market" of *jongé* characterized by sweet-talking. These confidence sessions cover many social issues that shape Senegalese women's lives. Discussions of sexuality, marriage, in-laws, financial situation, widowhood, and pregnancy, to name a few, marked the interactions. The saleswomen recounted stories in which a client confided about having issues in their marriage and needing advice on how to handle them. I witnessed one exchange in which a woman in her late forties confided that she had lost her husband some years ago and looking forward to getting married again. I could sense the sorrow in her voice. Rose listened to her with care and attention, nodding with every word the woman whispered. She prayed for her and reassured her that God would eventually bring the best man for her and when that happened, Rose would take care of her with the paraphernalia. Rose's affection and acute

attention to her client point to her familiarity with these situations. As Lo (2013) has also shown, the stall becomes a place of informal counseling at the market, underscoring the fine line between selling and counseling in the marketplace. Thus, interactions between saleswomen and clients construct the stall as a cathartic and therapeutic place, enabling women to release and share their burdens in a society where emotions are taboo and mental health is not taken seriously. Women take up many roles without respite.

The saleswomen's self-naming practices validate the stall as a place of counseling and their roles as counselors. Throughout their interactions, the saleswomen called themselves *xaritu jigeen ñi* (friend of women) or even, as we saw with Ndeye, *doctëru jeeg ji* (doctor of the married women), the most famous one. Clients confirmed this appellation by referring to saleswomen as *sunu doctër* (our doctor). The use of this label by women in the business of *jongé* extends beyond the marketplace. On television and online platforms, saleswomen confidently see themselves in these roles. Thus, the naming practices are not just for marketing strategies. As Lo (2011, 168) points out, "the name suggests a conscious effort to portray a positive self-image, a collective identity, as well an attempt to reinforce their agency within the macro-level structure that impedes their self-efficacy." By calling themselves these names, they validate the relevance of their trade within the larger socio-economic context.

Moreover, the name *doctëru jeeg ji* also captures the social role that saleswomen embody as similar to doctors. In their narratives, the women shared various anecdotes in which they advised people on several issues. This embodiment of medical identities shows up in their discursive and communicative practices, permeated by medical language and references. They used a pharmaceutical lexicon with words like *doom* (pills), *toox* (drops), and *pomate* (ointment) to explain the usage of the products. They acted as if they were giving prescriptions and

directions on using the medicine. Not only do clients ask for the components of the products, but the saleswomen also carefully explain the dosage to avoid misunderstandings and misuses. As one saleswoman said, “We want to make sure what we are selling to our clients is not dangerous for them.” The safety of the products women consume has generated controversy in the media. I have seen many shows where health specialists warned against some of the products and their harmful potential for men and women. However, the saleswomen's reactions throughout the interviews showed that they were aware of these safety concerns and took their clients' well-being seriously. They were keen to actively listen to their client’s needs and concerns and offered solutions accordingly.

Conclusion

In Senegal, local traditions and Islamic discourses often prevent women from expressing their sexuality in public. Nevertheless, *jongé* represents one avenue through which Senegalese women can talk about and explore their sexuality without fear of being repressed. The social construction of *jongé* as an essential and valuable trait of Senegalese womanhood and the new economic realities of capitalism has engendered the commodification of the practice. A large business of *jongé* commodities entangled with global market realities has given birth to new modes of consumption through which Senegalese women perform their sexuality. Within this new configuration of the practice, Senegalese women are not just consumers but smart businesswomen who understand the cultural and economic realities of the market. Indeed, the women’s business models and narratives of their experiences show their cultural embeddedness and economic resilience. Throughout the chapter, *jongé* commodities stand out as essential tools for constructing, expressing, and negotiating sexuality. By combining local and global erotics,

women build from different linguistic, material, and symbolic resources to perform sexuality and express their cosmopolitan and Afropolitan identities. Their interactions and discursive practices at the stalls show their cultural agency in using, critiquing, and contesting the discourses behind these commodities.

Women's exchanges at the stalls construct the *jongé* stall as feminine and intimate space where they feel empowered to explore and share knowledge about sexuality and female pleasure. However, the interactions are not only limited to the technologies of pleasure. The stall is also a therapeutic and cathartic place where women seek and get advice on various issues that shape their daily lives. Paying attention to various aspects of women's interactions at *jongé* stalls demonstrates how they negotiate with the institutions and ideologies that shape their lives. By focusing on the economy of *jongé* we also understand how intimate consumption fits into the larger picture of socio-cultural and economic processes.

Jongé, an Art the Everyday

In this dissertation, I explored *jongé* and how it is constructed, transmitted, and negotiated by Senegalese women in Senegal and the diaspora. Through close reading and ethnography, I have examined the complexities of the practice, its meanings, and its relevance in understanding Senegalese women's identity and agency in the Senegalese context. I have also demonstrated the intersectionality of the concept with gender, sexuality, language, religion, and nationality.

The first chapter of this dissertation foregrounded this research with decolonial and contextualized readings of the works of prominent Senegalese novelist Mariama and filmmaker Safi Faye. Through the close reading of the fictional representation of *jongé* in these works, we saw that the concept of *jongé* challenges the established and dominant narrative of African women's victimhood and blurs the lines between the binary of victimhood versus agency.

Throughout the film and the novel, the female characters of these works embody *jongé* by performing idealized womanhood and eroticized female sexuality. Their performance reveals how women who embody *jongé* strategically manipulate cultural imperatives to gain agency and negotiate their environment. My analysis of their performance demonstrated that jongé is not an isolated practice but exists in tandem and interacts with other ethics such as *téranga* to attain its social relevance. My focus on women's performance of *jongé* deconstructed the previous narrative of African women's sexuality as passive, repressed, or mutilated and showed *jongé* to be a site of sexual pleasure for women and transgressions of the taboo of sexuality.

The rest of the dissertation went beyond the imaginary world to explore what *jongé* means and looks like in real-life settings with ethnographic accounts from women in the diaspora and Senegal. The second chapter demonstrated that, while *jongé* has been mainly seen as an

inherent trait of Senegalese women, women's accounts of their childhood memories of the practice revealed that language socialization and embodied performance play critical roles in the teaching and learning of *jongé*. This learning starts from childhood and continues into their adult life in communities of practice where a repertoire of discourses and artifacts indexing *jongé* circulates. Moreover, through these narratives of *jongé*, we saw that the lessons are a discursive space where older women construct and transmit ideologies about Senegalese femininities and womanhood while teaching subversive sexuality through creative means. Such an analysis puts forward the performativity of *jongé* and the active processes through which gendered categories such as womanhood and femininity are constructed, taught, learned, and maintained through discourse and embodiment at home and abroad by Senegalese women.

Chapter three examined the intersections of language, gender, and transnationalism by centering on diasporic women's conceptions and negotiation of *jongé.* The salience of their discursive practices when defining *jongé* revealed that they disagreed with hegemonic interpretations of the concept and articulated (re)definitions that emphasized their individuality and transnational subjectivities. These accounts contest the essentialization of Senegalese femininity in dominant conceptualizations of the practice and stress women's agency in performing the practice and the pleasurable possibilities of doing *jongé*. Furthermore, the women deconstruct the economies of pleasure, which put men's needs first, and the unequal power relations that shape hegemonic interpretations of jongé. In doing so, they construct *jongé* as an ideological site of negotiation. However, not all women in the diaspora rejected the dominant understanding of *jongé* or the ideologies of gender and sexuality associated with it. Their approach underlines how the practice allows them to preserve their cultural identity as Senegalese women.

In the final chapter, I focused on the economy of *jongé* with a close examination of the discursivity and materiality of the practice. It demonstrated that the new economic configuration and its cultural ramifications had led to the commodification of the practice. In Senegal, *jongé* has become a vibrant and profitable business run by fierce businesswomen. The main characteristic of *jongé* paraphernalia is the mixture of local and global erotics, which underline the different linguistic, material, and symbolic resources Senegalese women consume to perform their sexuality and express their cosmopolitan and Afropolitan identities. In a country where public discourse about sexuality is controlled and repressed, selling and buying *jongé* commodities at markets provides women an intimate and private space to explore different aspects of their sexuality and the technologies of pleasure. It also allows the discussions of issues that shape their daily social lives, making interactions about *jongé* cathartic and therapeutic for many women.

My focus on Senegalese women's practice of *jongé* throughout this dissertation comes from the ambition to correct the victimization of African women. Using ethnography as a method of investigation, the research centers on women's narratives of *jongé* and their engagement with the practice in their daily lives. This research complicates our understanding of agency and challenges the previous representation of African Muslim women as passive consumers of knowledge and obedient subjects. Throughout the dissertation, we see Senegalese women engaging with *jongé*, creatively manipulating, and contesting cultural norms to generate new ways of coping with their environment. Thus, this research offers a new perspective on the study of women's engagement with cultural imperatives. Research on Senegal has often eschewed the topic of *jongé* even though this practice is unavoidable in daily interactions with Senegalese people. By focusing on the practice, the project shows how *jongé* interacts and

intersects with different social identities in Senegal. While this work focuses on Senegalese women, it advances our understanding of gender in this context and contributes to the broader understanding of the relationship between language, gendered bodies, and material culture.

On a methodological level, this dissertation contributes to the larger field of cultural studies through its interdisciplinary approach, practiced at the intersection of the humanities and the social sciences. The use of feminist epistemology and linguistic anthropology through both ethnographic and discourse analytic methods advanced our understanding of how power, gendered identities, and agency are negotiated in the discursive practices within *jongé*.

One of the main contributions of this dissertation to the scholarship on gender remains in its humanistic approach to this topic with its inquiry into the everyday lives of women. The scrutiny of women's discursive practices and the material culture of *jongé* reveals women's cultural agency and creative contributions to material culture. It also reveals their economic resilience and ingenuity. More importantly, the exploration of their discursive practices and performance of *jongé* show that everyday talk and uses of the body are part of the more significant social structure and can give us a better comprehension of human relations and the negotiation of our environment.

Whilst this dissertation elucidates *jongé,* it also raises interesting research questions that merit further investigation. Although men are not included here, a focus on how they understand *jongé* and what doing *jongé* looks like for them would add to our comprehension of masculinity and manhood in the Senegalese context as well as of gender relations. It would also be interesting to explore how intimate spaces (such as the bedroom) are configured and maintained through the display of *jongé* paraphernalia. This dissertation has shown that the mundane matters. Everyday practices are reflexive and constitutive of the more prominent social structures

that regulate human life and their interactions. This approach has a particular significance when exploring women's engagement with the everyday. Attention to the domesticity of their lives reinforces our understanding of the intertwinedness of the private and the public as well as the operations of power in these spheres.

Within this context of expanding this research, the future development of this project will provide a greater analysis of the intersections of *jongé* and nationalism in Senegal through a deeper exploration of the visual culture and the mapping of the jongéscape, for example by examining the billboards and the stalls in urban areas to understand how the jongéscape contribute to the contruction of jongé as a nationalist practice. Moreover, analyzing the jongéscape offers the opportunity to theorize jongé as a sensorial practice where the visual, the sonic, and the olfactive simultaneously interact. Most importantly, a close reading of the jongéscape will introduce an interesting perspective to this research by showing the relationship between space and social identities. This approach will enable us to examine and understand how women's marginalization at markets connects to the bigger picture of their socio-economic marginalization as well as how they navigate it.

Although throughout the dissertation the concept of power and agency are used several times in relation to *jongé*, I do not offer a thorough discussion of these terms. In the future I aspire to provide a more contextualized and thorough discussion of the question of power and agency in the African context using the perspective of scholars such as Mudimbe (1988), Mbembe (1992), Mahmood (2011), and Diabate (2020) among others who have theorized about these concepts. This latter would require a longer-term ethnographic study to analyze how Senegalese women who engage in *jongé* in their daily lives understand their performance in relations to power and agency. Such an undertaking would reinforce the decolonial approach of

this research by complicating and contextualizing understanding of these notions and how they interact in the performance of *jongé*.

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