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CHAPTER 6: SOCIAL NETWORKS

This dissertation focuses on the social networks of migrant Serere and Diola women as potential protective factors against sexual risk-taking. I look at the impact of network structure and network tie characteristics on sexual behavior through the mechanisms of social support and social control (particularly norms and sanctions). I hypothesize that norms and sanctions can constrain desired sexual behavior (social control) and social support can reduce the need to exchange sex for economic or other material support.

In this chapter, I will first review the literature regarding what we know about migrant Serere and Diola women's social networks in Dakar. Following that, I will present results from my research on the network structure and tie characteristics of Serere and Diola migrant women's networks in Dakar, focusing particularly on the characteristics that are important for the provision of support and the creation of norms and sanctions. These characteristics will be the independent variables used in the models in Chapters 8 and 9, which test whether these characteristics affect women's sexual behavior as I have hypothesized. In Chapters 8 and 9 I will discuss the potential mechanisms of social support and social control as well, and how they might be working through these network structures to affect behavior.

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What We Know about Migrant Serere and Diola Women's Social Networks

Serere and Diola women are unique in Senegal, in that in both ethnic groups, large percentages of women and girls migrate from rural areas to Dakar in search of

work, independent of any male family members. This is a phenomenon that has been going on for decades, and has evolved to include younger and younger girls and has

become more and more female-dominated. In both ethnic groups, migrants often rely on social networks as they move from rural to urban areas, and once they arrive in Dakar.

Among the Serere, the networks set up by migrants who arrived in Dakar in the 1950s helped the size of the migrant pool grow by the end of the 1960s as migration to Dakar increased. As Pontié and Lericollais (1999) noted, the existence of the migration network constitutes an element of amplification; the movements are not only a result of individual initiatives but are, for a large part, collective strategies. For the Serere, these networks helped migration become generalized and become an indispensable element of survival (Delaunay 1994).

Among the Diola, women and girls also rely on networks to organize migration to Dakar. Women's associations have long been an important part of Diola women's social structures. According to Hamer (1981), "[s]ince the 1940s, one of the most important determinants of female migration has been the age-old women's association that has modernized its traditional structure by institutionalizing migration" (p. 192).

These networks play a second role once women arrive in Dakar in welcoming them and helping them integrate into the urban area. Among the Serere, the migrants who left rural areas as early as the end of the 1950s are still present in Dakar and very well inserted. These women play an important role in the welcome network for migrants. In addition to offering access to housing, the experienced migrants also help new arrivals look for work (Delaunay 1994; Pontié and Lericollais 1999). For both ethnic groups, these migration networks are largely organized based on village of origin (Pontié and

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Lericollais 1999; Antoine et al. 1995). Migrants tend to group themselves in neighborhoods in Dakar based on village of origin, which facilitates solidarity and social support. Among both ethnic groups, these networks offer access to employment and provide security (DeLaunay 1994).

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New networks are woven rapidly in the city, based on the traditional relations of solidarity. Migrants modernize and integrate other types of solidarity to fit their urban needs (Antoine et al. 1995). For example, Gueye (1995) notes that migrants rely on the solidarity they have with others from the same village to help one another face separation from their families and the difficulties of urban life (Gueye 1995). He (1995) explains, specifically that women help each other to not succumb to prostitution.

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Many migrants, as was mentioned in Chapter 4, live in dwellings with groups of other female migrants in Dakar. For these migrants, their lives are organized around these groups, which facilitate the sharing of living expenses. Antoine et al. (1995) also note that these groups tend to seek housing near other migrant groups from their village, furthering reinforcing their connections to the home networks.

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Young migrants, even those who do not live in groups, are put under the responsibility of an elder, experienced migrant, at least initially (DeLaunay 1994). The elder migrants who take responsibility for new migrants are women who are repeating their temporary migrations to Dakar or those whose temporary migrations have become permanent. These migration networks permit youth to try their luck at migration without running great risks (DeLaunay 1994). In so doing, these networks fulfill a function of security and social support. They also provide mutual aid and mutual solidarity.

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An additional role these networks can play is exerting social control over their

members (Delaunay 1994). The fact of migrating itself is a form of control. The Serere community in the Sine does not expel migrants, but families more or less control migration as a part of resource management in the face of economic difficulties. And the connection to the village and family remains, even if it is less strong than it might be in the village (Pontié and Lericollais 1999).

When groups of young migrants rent rooms together, there is one person who is responsible for the room. That person systematically provides control for young girls.

There is not a real **break** between the village and life in the city, where the youth stay

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under the responsibility of an elder who is known by the family (Delaunay 1994). The

amount of social control that can be exercised by the family on the young girl varies. It is strongest when the girl is under the responsibility of a relative from an older generation

(like her mother or aunt). When it is a sister, cousin, or neighbor, the social control will

depend on the relationship between the migrant and the responsible person, their age

difference, and the behavior of the responsible person herself. Usually the person who is

responsible is at least 18 years old, has made many trips to Dakar, and is or has been

married (Delaunay 1994). An elder is also often designated by girls or their families to

help the girls with their relationships with their employers. This also helps maintain a

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certain amount of social control by the family (Pontié and Lericollais 1999; Delaunay

1994).

In addition, migrants in Dakar often develop very active socio-relational lives in the neighborhoods where they live. Women are the main organizers of neighborhood associations, and most women are part of at least one, according to Antoine et al. (1995).

These associations are important in structuring life in Dakar, they note. There are three

main types of associations. The first are the *tontines*: credit organizations or rotating savings groups. These are the most popular groups and the ones in which migrants are most likely to participate. The second type is called a *daayira*. These are Muslim religious groups, which meet to discuss religion. They are the second most popular. The third most popular are *tuurs*, which are rotating groups for different purposes. A *tuur de famille*, for example, is a group of family members that meets on a regular basis at a different person's home to reinvigorate family unity. There are also *tuurs* for village members and other membership groups, and often a *tontine* is a part of the activities of the group (Antoine et al. 1995).

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Many women are members of more than one group (Antoine et al. 1995).

Motivations to join a group include mutual aid, assistance, desire to reinforce and expand relationships, or the wish to find a framework for leisure (Antoine et al. 1995). In addition, all groups provide some forms of social control. This can include the pressure the group puts on other members of society, for example if a group comes to the defense of a member, like a co-wife in a family (Antoine et al. 1995).

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For *daayiras*, however, there is the additional motivation of desiring to better live a Muslim life: finding a frame of reference for norms, values, and behaviors and, according to Antoine et al. (1995), providing a set of tools to manage celibacy in a manner that conforms to the expectations of society. Antoine et al. (1995) find that more and more women are joining *daayiras*. In my data, about 24% of Muslim respondents were members of *daayiras*. About 61% of Catholic respondents were part of a Catholic church group. Among Diola respondents who were asked (N=106), only about 24% were not members of any group. More than 48% were members of a family *tuur*, about 6%

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were members of a neighborhood association, and about 23% were members of a village
tuur. *Tontines* were not specifically asked about since one can be a member without ever
getting together with other members of the group.

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