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**MARRIAGE, MIGRATION & CHANGE  
IN SMALL-TOWN SENEGAL**

CARLA TEOLIS

Thesis submitted to the  
Faculty of Graduate and Post Doctoral Studies  
In partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for the MA degree in Globalization and International Development

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## Abstract

This paper aims to understand how the significant out-migration of men from small-town Senegal influences the marriage process and resulting conjugal life, specifically in reference to those left-behind. To address this objective, a case study approach is utilized focusing on the region of Kébémér, located in Senegal's peanut basin. Furthermore, gender theory as well as a sociology of the family approach are applied to interpret and give meaning to the different socioeconomic factors at play in shaping the dynamics of marriage and conjugal life. It is argued that while certain elements of the marriage process are experiencing changes as a result of migration (higher brideprice, a delay of first marriage, spousal selection norms and so on), it is noted that migrants tend to remain especially conservative, staying rooted in traditional beliefs and behaviours. In light of such discoveries, conventional notions of 'development' are challenged and alternative understandings sought out.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 BACKGROUND**

Despite the fact that marriage represents one of the most socially significant unions within the African context, a disappointingly little amount of research has been carried out concerning its persistent characteristics as well as its observed patterns of change over recent time. Insight into such trends is particularly useful due to what has been observed as a continuous increasing pattern towards outward migration characterizing a number of countries within West Africa (Grillo & Riccio, 2004; Zeleza, 2002). More specifically, many of these outward movements have been from developing to developed countries. The fact that out-migration is so intense in many parts of West Africa can be seen as a reflection of a globalizing world. Simply said, people migrate as a means out of poverty or in search of a better life.

In light of this, migration can arguably be considered a factor of social change. As Portes (2008) argues, "...migration-induced social change in sending countries and regions tends to be more far-reaching than in host societies. This is due, in large part, to the asymmetrical distribution of economic power, technical know-how, and cultural influence in the global system that privileges 'core' nations and regions" (Portes, 2008, 30-31). But how does social change occur and what might it look like? If we examine the literature, we see a predominance of arguments focusing on the economic aspect of social change in linking migration (and more specifically, remittances) with the potential for greater economic stability—specifically in lesser developed countries (Black & King, 2004; Tiemoko, 2004; Akokpari, 2006). Nonetheless, we argue that this is much too limited a view and suggest instead that greater focus be given to investigating changes occurring in various other dimensions of social life such as within the family and the community. If we return again to the literature, we find discussions surrounding the occurrence of cultural diffusion as a result of migration whereby ideas and behaviours of a host country are adopted by migrants, and these are subsequently often also adopted by a migrants' family or source community. It is observed in such cases that new ideas, values and behaviours often come to partially, if not entirely, replace former customs and beliefs (see Levitt, 1998). Related to this, one specific

realm that is given substantial attention in relation to migration is fertility. In this area of focus, authors seem to present migration as a possible factor in influencing fertility transitions (Mason, 1997; Hammel, 1990). For example, migration may slow down fertility rates due to the simple fact that having an absent husband means less sexual encounters, thereby lessening a woman's chances of becoming pregnant (Massey & Mullen, 1984). Within the scope of our own research, we seek to examine the potential influence of migration on the marriage process and the resulting conjugal union- fertility being one examined aspect. Such knowledge can provide significantly more insight into understanding the links between migration and social change on a more micro level which arguably link to more macro-level changes. As author Philippe Antoine (2002) argues, "Marriage deserves greater attention and is worthy of being studied in and of itself. The evolutions of union formation and marital practices are of profound relevance to understanding changes within society" (75, *my translation*).

Furthermore, studying union formation specifically can provide significant insight into understanding the consequences of out-migration on those left-behind, particularly in connection with social relationships. With regards to the left-behind, it is important here to stress that this notion relates not only to those people who are not migration, but more also more holistically to the source community setting which has been economical isolated and marginalized (Biao, 2007).

Investigating the relationship between migration and social change strictly through an economic lens is insufficient. We must instead focus our attention on examining the changes occurring within more micro-level social interactions as these can provide significantly more insight into understanding the link between migration and social change and in doing so, can furthermore give way to a better understanding of social change in the context of international development as after all, development arguably begins at the local level (Kearney, 1986; United Nations Capital Development Fund, Retrieved online 05/08/2009).

## **1.2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Within the existing literature some of the main issues found to be addressed by researchers concerning marriage in the African context include a focus on patterns of

fertility, especially as it relates to a delay in age at first marriage, its impact on pre-marital sexual relations as well as issues surrounding family planning (Pool, 1972; Bledsoe, 1990; van de Walle & Meekers, 1992; Ezeh, 1997; Randall & Legrand, 2003; Lardoux & van de Walle, 2002). Nonetheless, some research has in fact been carried out concerning the changes characterizing African marriage though by and large, these studies have focused on issues of methodology and interpretation in terms of attempting to better our understanding of the changing forms of marriage (Meekers, 1992; Hertrich, 1996; Lardoux & van de Walle, 2002). In terms of the migration dimension, as noted, research has tended to be heavily economic-focused in centring primarily on the effect of incoming remittances and their related development potential (Diatta & Mbow, 1999; Nyberg-Sorenson et al., 2002). Further to this, while research surrounding gender and migration certainly exists, this field is still relatively new. Furthermore, studies therein tend to focus largely on the gender inequalities and assumptions present within the overall discourse of migration (Pedraza, 1991; Fleisher, 2007; Sinke, 2006; Pessar and Mahler, 2003), as well as the way in which gender plays into the decision to migrate (Adepoju, 2002; Fleisher, 2007), and finally, the social reproduction of gender in transnational spaces (Fouron & Schiller, 2001). As such, we see that very little has been written about wives who are left-behind by migrating men, especially in terms of examining how their situations differ from those of wives married to non-migrant men. For this reason, we argue that this research intends to fill an identified gap within the existing literature.

Marriage within most of West Africa is first and foremost a union between two families and not two individuals. This pattern of union formation is largely rooted in tradition, solidarity relationships, and functions due to unequal gender and intergenerational relationships (Diop, 1985; Sow, 1985; Locoh & Thiriat, 1995; Pilon & Vignikin, 2006). As such, union formation represents an excellent proxy from which to study socio-economic change. The reason for this is two-fold: Firstly, conjugal unions represent an alliance between two families, ensuring the economic and social security of individuals in a context of high vulnerability. As such, changes therein impact significantly more people than just the couple themselves but extent to kin members as well as the broader community. As Dandurand (1992) argues in connection with the first of these, changes within the family unit are deeply interwoven with broader social change. In addition, at the

community level, the effect of significant emigration on the marriage market may imply changes in attitudes among non married people: Young girls may seek to get married to migrant men and thus withhold marriage until they are proposed to by a migrant man. With regard to this, an example of a change in social practice can be witnessed in the African context where contraceptive use is very low. In this case, a delay in a woman's marriage often means a longer period of celibacy where risky sexual behaviours may be adopted with all their consequences in terms of reproductive health (unwanted pregnancies, STIs, etc.). Secondly, the marriage process characteristic of much of West Africa involves multiple steps and stages which take place both before and after the formal ceremony and as such, the areas where change might occur as a result of migration are numerous (Boserup, 1970; Oppong, 1992; Thiriat, 1998; Antoine, 2002; Randall & Mondain, Forthcoming; Locoh, 2007). It is ultimately for the reasons outlined above that it is vitally important to understand the way couples are matched, the types of social changes occurring within conjugal relationships, and to what extent polygyny is widespread and the implications of this for co-wives. Furthermore, by focusing on the post-marital residence setting, we are provided with significant insight into the influence of migration on gender roles and intergenerational dynamics/power relations at play within the household setting. Understanding such changes goes far beyond increasing our knowledge on how the society works, it provides us with indicators of how traditions evolve, socio-economic logics change and much more.

Based on the strong influence of the post-marital residence setting in Senegal in terms of its shaping of gender and intergenerational roles and relationships, our theoretical framework is in part informed by gender theory which, in its simplest form, aims to examine and address inequalities and discrepancies between men and women in areas such as the division of labour within households, childcare, income earnings, and decision-making ability and relative autonomy of members of each sex (Nock, 1987). Gender theory furthermore suggests that inequalities within these areas hamper the development of a society and further facilitate poverty (UNFPA, 2006). Additionally, such inequalities are also argued to potentially have serious impacts on women's access to social capital and may also be detrimental to their health (Sharma, 2007; World Health Organization, 2008).

In light of our focus on issues related to gender, it is necessary to here clarify what we mean by this term as in many settings it is too often misunderstood and/or misused. As is suggested by Jackson and Scott (2002), “Gender as we define it denotes a hierarchical division between women and men embedded in both social institutions and social practices. Gender is thus a social structural phenomenon but is also produced, negotiated and sustained at the level of everyday interaction” (1). In addition to this, Pessar and Mahler (2003) emphasize the difference between this term and ‘sex’ in arguing that, “Sex is best reserved as a simple dichotomous variable: male versus female. Gender is much more complex and involves the ways in which cultures imbue this biological difference with meaning such as demarcating between male and female domains in activities, tasks, spaces, time, dress and so on” (813). In terms of its role within society, it is vitally important that we recognize how embedded gender is in the everyday workings of society, and specifically within regions such as Senegal that remain highly patriarchal in nature. Shedding light on this issue is Agarwal (1997), who notes that,

...Gender relations (like all social relations) embody both the material and the ideological. They are revealed not only in the division of labour and resources between women and men, but also in ideas and representations- the ascribing to women and men of different abilities, attitudes, desires, personality traits, behaviour patterns, and so on. Gender relations are both constituted by and help constitute these practices and ideologies, in interaction with other structures of social hierarchy such as class, caste and race (1-2).

Furthermore, the same author stresses that in various domains, but specifically within the household, gender relations are both established and challenged (Agarwal, 1997). As such, the gender dimension forms a critical part of our theoretical framework in attempting to better understand intra-household as well as broader societal dynamics and the potential changes brought about by migration in these areas.

In addition to focusing on gender as a key element of analysis, we also focus on intergenerational relationships, rites of passage, household decision-making, kin relations, and so on. As such, this approach can be seen as incorporating various elements of sociology of the family. Existing research within this field focuses largely on issues such as new forms of reproduction and women’s status, the role of institutions on the family, changes in marriage patterns and family forms and so on (de Singly, 1993; Desrosiers, 1994; de Singly

& Mesure, 2001; Héritier, 2004). But while this is certainly enlightening and useful when looking at a western context, there are gaps in this approach in terms of explaining and understanding 'family' in both the developing world more as a whole, and West Africa more specifically. Ultimately, both 'family' and 'household' are problematic terms for this research as these notions, which are to be addressed in reference to the Senegalese context, differ markedly from common Western conceptions. Notably, "family", in Western terms, which has in many ways come to be viewed as the universal norm, can be seen as consisting of more individualistic members (Coser, 1964; de Singly, 1993). In contrast with this, within many West African families, there is a much greater emphasis placed on family solidarity and furthermore, an attitude of respect and loyalty is almost expected among family members, though this is not necessarily always the case (Pilon & Vignikin, 2006). Also, households usually consist of more than just the members of an immediate family, as often the wife (or wives) of a man will come and live with him at his parents place, thus living as an extended family (Pilon & Vignikin, 2006).

On the whole, we can say that social organization in Africa is tightly linked to the family and kin relationships in the context of economic and social vulnerability. In light of this, there are arguably significant gender and intergenerational power relationships that exist within the household setting. Not only must a daughter-in-laws interact and negotiate on a daily basis with their in-laws, but in many cases, they must also cooperate with co-wives in the context of polygynous marriages. But how does power play into these different relationships? As Foucault argues, power is something embedded within the very social fabric of society and furthermore, takes place in the multiplicity of smaller daily interactions (Foucault, 1979; Tew, 2002). As such, such power relations can arguably be seen as existing in the daily interactions of household family members. Nonetheless, in light of the greater power of some versus others, conflict is bound to be an inevitable occurrence. With regards to this, Olivier de Sardan (2005) argues that relations of power are formed and negotiated within what he terms an 'arena'. He furthermore suggests that hierarchies exist within these arenas and that depending on one's position within the hierarchy, individuals possess greater or lesser amount power. As a result of these different levels of power, Sardan argues that the conflict inevitably results.

In an effort to understand the influence of migration on the marriage process as well as on the resulting conjugal life, it will be necessary for us to take note of the different power dynamics at play, both within society more broadly, and also within the household setting. These different relations certainly have a role to play in shaping both the marriage process as well as conjugal life and may in fact experience their own set of changes as a result of migration. Ultimately, it is within the family that changes resulting from migration may be most clearly evidenced, thereby providing a type of lens from which to investigate key issues. More specifically, it is those left-behind by outward migratory movements that must be the focus of our investigation as it is within the household context, among those left-behind, that gender and intergenerational relationships play out on a daily basis. Surprisingly, this particular dimension of migration has not been sufficiently addressed within existing research and as such, is an area in need of further probing. As Hanks and Liprie (1993) comment, “While the importance of immigration in African economic development has attracted numerous studies yielding a large body of knowledge concerning migrants and the migration process, it is discouraging to report the paucity of contemporary (1980.s and 1990.s) studies focusing on migration and its effects on the family” (189). Nonetheless, while those left-behind by migration have received some attention in recent literature (Hanks & Liprie, 1993; Black & King, 2004; Tiemoko, 2004; Grillo & Riccio, 2004) these studies have been largely focused on the economic repercussions of migration on these individuals in terms of incoming remittances and as such, have neglected to examine the more social implications of migration on the left-behind.

### **1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

#### **1.3.1 Objectives**

The primary objective of this research is to explore the role played by emigration in shaping social practices and behaviours within Senegal and more specifically, within the smaller rural region of Kébémér. This thesis is thus going beyond the typical economically-centred analysis and as such, does not intend to theorize a causal relationship between migration and development as is the case within some of the existing literature. Instead, our focus remains predominantly micro-level as we look at issues relating to the marriage process and conjugal life. More specifically, we examine the influence of emigration on women’s gender roles and decision-making abilities with attention given to examining how

migration impacts not only the way marriages come to take place, but also, the relationships and familial dynamics that follow in the post-marital residence setting. In addition to this, we also seek to better understand the meanings and significance that individuals attach to the examined activities and social practices (for example, child-rearing, the division of household labour, decision-making processes and so on).

### **1.3.2 Research Question and Sub-Questions**

As such, in an attempt to better concentrate our investigation into such issues, the following primary research question guides our analysis:

To what extent does the significant emigration of men from small-town Senegal to Europe influence union formation, conjugal lifestyle, and more specifically, the decision-making abilities and gender roles of women of marital age within the source community?

Adding to this, the following three sub-questions further guide our research efforts:

1. How does an important and pervasive presence of out-migration of male members affect the marriage process in terms of both the conjugal union itself, as well as the other members of the community?
2. What are the dynamics of conjugal relationships in Kébémér and how are these influenced by the important male out-migration to Italy, both within migrant and non-migrant households?
3. What repercussions exist when a migrant husband leaves his wife/wives behind? More specifically, what differences are present in the sexual behaviour, fertility/family planning patterns and child rearing practices of wives married to migrants as compared to the wives of non-migrants?

In light of the above questions, we hypothesize that migration will be seen to influence both the process of marriage as well as the resulting conjugal life by altering the multiplicity of gendered and intergenerational relationships involved therein. We furthermore suggest, however, that based on the strong rootedness of the studied region in

tradition, changes will be observed as being neither drastic nor necessarily all-encompassing but rather, will form a type of merger between elements of both the 'old' and the 'new'.

#### **1.4 CONTEXT**

The aforementioned issues will be addressed in the context of Senegal. As a country beset by a history of underdevelopment, it has only been over the past few decades that Senegal has come to see signs of both economic and social improvement. Life expectancy remains relatively low resting at an average of 63 years of age. Though showing signs of improvement, the economy continues to struggle with an annual GDP for the year 2007 of approximately US\$54,583 (World Bank, 2007). In addition to this, high unemployment has forced many to migrate to more developed countries in search of a means to survive.

Nonetheless, as one heavily rooted in tradition, characterized by the persistence of polygynous marriage, and known for its strong familial bonds (Diop, 1985; Sow, 1985; van de Walle & Meekers, 1992; Riccio, 2004; Gaspart & Platteau, 2007 Randall & Mondain, 2007), the country of Senegal represents an excellent area of study through which to investigate the impact of outward migration on marriage and conjugal life. Further to this, household size alone makes this country a unique case for investigation, especially concerning the centrality of this unit to our research. In the 2005 Demographic Health Survey it is reported that on average, households in Senegal comprise 8.7 people. This number grows if we look specifically at rural regions with these households consisting of closer to 9.5 individuals (Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006).

For our own research, the focus of our study is rural as we look at the region of Kébémér. It is a small town, located in the Senegalese peanut basin, primarily inhabited by the Wolof, of whom many belong to the Mouride brotherhood (See APPENDIX A for location within Senegal). This region represents a unique case study due to the large prevalence of emigration and rapidly changing social practices characterizing this town. Further to this, it is intended as part of a follow-up to previous research done in 1999 at which time issues of fertility and family planning formed the focus of research efforts, yet the presence and influence of emigration was noted thereafter as being an avenue in need of future exploration. Further to this, the marriage process in this region is especially elaborate consisting typically of the following steps: Initiation of marriage/spousal selection,

negotiation and payment of bride price, ceremonies, and finally, cohabitation. Lastly, the wide prevalence of polygyny within this region also makes it an especially interesting case in looking at the influence of migration on union formation and conjugal life.

Further to the above, it must also be noted that religious affiliation and doctrine is certainly a factor of influence in Kébémér. More specifically, the Mourides- an Islamic brotherhood founded in the 1880s by Cheick Amadou Bamba- have a marked presence in the region of study with Touba, Senegal being its capital and also, the home of the largest mosque in Sub-Saharan Africa (Ricchio, 2004). Furthermore, as part of being a member of the brotherhood, Mourides are encouraged to migrate as it is seen as a type of “training experience” (Ricchio, 2004, 929). The importance of the circular migration of the Mourides is noted by Ricchio in his statement: “Senegalese religious organizations are amongst the most important actors in filling the gap produced by a precarious economic and social situation and a fragile and complex equilibrium of different crosscutting cleavages” (930). In order to facilitate such flows, the brotherhood relies upon “...relations of personal dependence and a deeply rooted organizational tradition” (Ricchio, 2004, 931). In addition to this, in terms of the large prevalence of Islamic faith in Senegal more generally, it should be noted that although religion is often noted among respondents as prompting certain beliefs and/or behaviours, we must remain nuanced in our understanding of its true influence as it is often used as a means to legitimize and reinforce already-existing patterns of behaviour or thought. As Sow (1985) notes, “Koranic thought lends itself to interpretation (*ijtihad*), in the sense of adaptation...Communities have interpreted it in such a way as to shape it to their own culture...” (563).

## 1.5 METHODS

The data analyzed within this thesis includes both semi-structured interviews (41) and life histories (30). In addition to this, and counted as separate, are interviews conducted specifically with migrants (3) as well as `other` interviews categorized separately (4) (for example, interviews with migrant women fall under this category). Together, these comprise a total of 78 collected interviews. In order to provide the reader with a better idea of the age/sex distribution of respondents, the table below contains such information.

**Table 1 - Number of interviews collected by age group and sex.**

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
18-29	15	12
30-49	14	11
50-59	5	7
60+	8	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>36</b>

Source: N6 project database

The data was collected during the period of October 2007 to November 2007 for a separate but related study undertaken by researchers from the University College in London and the University of Ottawa, in collaboration with Senegalese researchers and university students from the University of Chekh Anta Diop in Dakar. The sample for this study was drawn in focusing on the six regions / neighbourhoods within Kébémér, namely: Galla, Mbabou, Medina, Diamagueune, Mbassine and Escale.

The particular approach employed within this research can be loosely classified as a case study. The justification for this rests on the idea that in employing the case study approach, the depth and richness of the data gathered will be used to explain a case of intrinsic importance in contributing to an understanding of the changes in various social trends within the region of Kébémér over the past few decades. As Marshall and Rossman (2006) note, “Case studies take the reader into the setting with a vividness and detail not typically present in more analytic reporting formats” (164). Further to this, author John Gerring (2004) argues that a case study involves descriptive inference and that the strategy of the researcher in such an approach is exploratory rather than confirmatory.

Taking an exclusively rural focus for the purpose of our research, we argue that Kébémér is indeed a case of intrinsic important for a number of reasons. First, it is located in an area where migration is especially prominent and goes back two to three decades. In addition to this, migration in this region bears consequences on families and communities-elements held in regard among the Wolof. Finally, within Kébémér there is a strong religious presence. More specifically, the Mouride network is especially pronounced in this region with the religious brotherhood having a marked presence and furthermore representing much of the migratory flow in light of their strong culture of migration (Riccio, 2004; Bava, 2003). Finally, although this particular case is limited in space and time, as we

know, emigration is a phenomenon affecting many areas within the whole of Africa (particularly rural) and even around the world. As such, this case can be seen as representative of other regions facing similar outward movements and experiencing similar social changes as a result.

Before moving on, however, it is necessary to note that while elements of the case study approach are employed (as outlined above), it is argued that to a limited extent, grounded theory is also indicative of the approach taken within this research. One main way of describing grounded theory is to say that it involves a set of inductive strategies for analyzing the data. "You begin with individual's cases, incidents, or experiences, and develop progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain, and to understand your data and to identify patterned relationships" (Charmaz, 2004, 497). On the whole, however, we chose to adopt a more pragmatic and comprehensive approach, incorporating elements of both grounded theory and a case study but not readily confined by either method. As such, we utilized our own perspective of both of these approaches in order to create a method that fit best with the data. With regards to this, both inductive and deductive reasoning were employed- while the data indeed led to certain findings and generalizations were drawn as a result (exploratory), pre-set questions and hypotheses were also present and as a result, particular themes within the data were searched for in order to answer these queries (confirmatory).

The validity, reliability and representativeness of this research rest on the fact that the interviewers who conducted both the in-depth interviews and life histories were trained using the same methods and principles and were continually guided and directed throughout the data-gathering process by the two head researchers of the project in order to ensure congruency among the different interviewers. The main potential shortcomings of the data relate to the rapport between interviewers and interviewees. More specifically, these have to do with the positionality of the interviewers and included the following elements: 1) their level of education which respondents may have seen as an intimidating factor, 2) the age gap between interviewers and most respondents as this may perhaps have led to a difficulty in relating to various issues and topics raised, and 3) the single status of all of the interviewers as this may have also made the respondents feel somewhat less at ease if they were married

in discussing issues related to this union in fear of misunderstanding or simply because of a general discomfort due to a lack of commonality.

In addition to the above, one potential bias of the data concerns the fact that only those individuals who were present at home during the day were interviewed. As such, many active people (those who work, are involved in the community and so on) may have been missed. As such, the interviews collected may be more reflective of those who are less active.

Having not been directly involved in the data collection process, the data analyzed in this thesis is of a second-hand nature. Ideally, it would have been valuable to have made actual contact with the Senegalese in Kébémér and to have furthermore been involved in the collection of the data. Because this was not the case, I was in a position of dealing with data that was constructed by others and acquired by others still. In light of this, I remained very much aware of my positioning and distance from the data and in response, made a concerted effort to understand how this could affect my own interpretation of the data. I carried out a great amount of research on the context in which the study took place and furthermore engaged in multiple discussions with the lead researchers involved in the data collection process. This was done in order to seek out greater clarification and understanding of the culture, beliefs and overall social organization of those living within the studied region. In addition to this, I was also quite conscious of how my personal background could potential affect the interpretation of the data. As such, I was attentive to how potential biases (i.e. me as an 'outsider' imposing western norms/ideals and as an educated female) could impact the interpretation of the data. This, coupled with a lack of direct exposure to the Senegalese culture, pressed me to spend a significantly lengthy amount of time attempting to account for this gap by carrying out my own additional research in an effort to better understand the context within which the data was collected, especially in terms of the meanings and significance of certain Wolof words and concepts. Overall, well my distance from the data collection process made the management and analysis stages of research significantly more difficult, it is my belief that this same distance also removed me from certain biases that often come along with being more directly involved in the data collection process of a research study.

In terms of management of the data, the first step was to organize all of the collected interviews using the qualitative computer software program QSR N6. On the whole, the software program was employed as a means to organize and analyze the data in such a way as to allow for rapid access to pre-determined portions of the data in order to facilitate the collection, comparison and crossing of different passages. It was furthermore used as a means to record thoughts and insights during the stages of analysis. Secondly, in the summer of 2008, all of the in-depth interviews and life histories were read through thoroughly and clarification concerning content was sought at this time. Following this, categories and themes were generated which were used to build a codebook in order to categorize the data. This was done in collaboration with the two principle researchers who were supervising the fieldwork<sup>1</sup> as they were heavily involved in the data collection process and were thus able to contribute valuable input. Furthermore, it should be noted that this codebook was revised several times in an effort to accurately capture and effectively represent the data. Finally, using the same software program, memos were written throughout the analytic process in order to record personal thoughts, reactions and insights concerning the data.

The actual analysis of the data was carried out using a combination of searches in the N6 software program and furthermore involved the collection and crossing of different codes deemed to bear significance on the topic under investigation. More specifically, the data was analyzed through extracting and exploring trends, concepts and thematic patterns which emerged as prominent during the analysis process. I specifically sought to compare the experiences of both wives of migrants and wives of non-migrants through three key avenues of inquiry; namely: The marriage process itself, conjugal life and its link with post-marital residence arrangements and finally, repercussions of being left-behind on sexual behaviour, fertility and family planning and child rearing. These three areas were chosen as the primary thematic avenues of the thesis due to the fact that in the process of managing, organizing and analyzing the data, their centrality to understanding the influence of migration in shaping the gender roles and decision-making abilities of left-behind wives became very evident.

In focusing on these themes, I consulted the literature for greater insight and understanding. Nonetheless, as much of the existing theories on these topics were found to be very much Western-based and not necessarily applicable to the region of study, I became

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<sup>1</sup> These two researchers come from the University of Ottawa and the University College London.

aware of the fact I was trying to fill a gap. Being mindful of this, I made a concerted effort to examine empirical studies on related issues within the African setting in order to acquire better context for the analysis of the data. To do so, I looked at the work of authors such as Boserup (1970), Oppong (1992), Thiriat (1998), Antoine (2002), Locoh (2007) and so on whose work focuses largely on the marriage process itself as well as the resulting conjugal union within the African setting. Overall therefore, I attempted to gain an in-depth understanding of the family, society, the overall organization of social life, and the marriage system within the west-African setting in order to better analyze the data according to the three primary thematic directions. What should additionally be noted, however, is that in writing the thesis, only the most pertinent and relevant interview excerpts illustrating lives and choices of respondents in relation to the three primary themes were included. Having said this, this was only done once a holistic picture of each of these themes was acquired through emersion in the data and through engaging in rigorous memo-writing. As such, it was not until a saturation point was reached that certain quotes were selected over others to illustrate specific arguments.

As a final note, it is important to point out that although this research paper is written in English, the interviews and life history excerpts have been left in French- their original language of transcription. As the data was initially collected in Wolof (the native language within Kébémér) and subsequently transcribed into French by the interviewers themselves, it was deemed unwise to add a further translation (French to English) in fear that this might cause the data to lose a significant amount of its original content and meaning, thereby potentially lessening the validity of the findings.

## **1.6 ETHICS STATEMENT**

The data analyzed for the purpose of this research was collected with the approval of the University of Ottawa's Research Ethics Board (REB). In addition to this, within the initial proposal submitted to the REB, it was stated that the collected data would be made accessible to master's students. Furthermore, the names of respondents were not recorded in the transcripts. Instead, a description of the individual was provided at the beginning based on demographic information (age, sex etc.). Each was subsequently listed as "R", meaning respondent, throughout the transcript. To further protect the anonymity of the research

subjects in this study, the interviews were both coded and presented within this paper using the abbreviation "R" and additionally, the descriptive information included below each interview excerpts in this paper was minimized in order to prevent the identification of the individual respondent.

## Chapter 2: The consequences of out-migration on the marriage process in small-town Senegal

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Though marriage has been widely studied in terms of its function and purpose in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in terms of its relationship with fertility patterns and child-rearing (Meekers, 1992; Meekers, 1994; Lardoux & van de Walle, 2003; Boye et al., 1991), its connection to migration and more specifically, the impact of the latter on its initiation and functioning, is largely missing from the literature. To first clarify however, in speaking of ‘marriage’ we are referring specifically to the conjugal bond between a husband and a wife that is lived out in everyday circumstances. ‘Union formation’, on the other hand, is used to describe everything involved in the process leading up to marriage. The pattern of union formation is largely rooted in tradition<sup>2</sup>, solidarity relationships<sup>3</sup>, and functions due to unequal gender and intergenerational relationships<sup>4</sup> (Locoh, 2007, Thiriat, 1999, Antoine, 2002, Randall & Mondain, Forthcoming).

Marriage in much of sub-Saharan Africa is especially unique in that it is very much a process rather than an event (Meekers, 1994, Locoh & Thiriat, 1995; Antoine, 2002). By this we simply mean that there are several steps that individuals must go through before reaching the stage of being considered socially as a married couple. Furthermore, each of these stages may be seen to be affected by the migration phenomenon. Related to this, the effect of significant emigration may also be seen to influence the entire community. Collective views and perceptions in regards to marriage and the influence of migration should not be underestimated as these may be influential in *further* impacting the marriage process both among migrants and especially among non-migrants. In obtaining information on marital patterns, it is believed that this will shed light on changes taking place at the

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<sup>2</sup> Customs, norms, habits, etc. that have remained relatively constant in this region since the mid-twentieth century. In this context, this includes elements such as abstinence prior to marriage, polygamous conjugal unions, an emphasis placed on kin relationships and a Muslim belief system which seems to reinforce a patriarchal society and a gendered division of labor (Sow, 2003)

<sup>3</sup> Relationships among kin members characterized by a strong sense of loyalty (Diop, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> This refers to differences between men and women as well as between those from different generations in terms of authority, decision-making power, and overall sense of freedom and autonomy.

familial level as the two are deeply interconnected, specifically within this region. It is for these reasons that it is vitally important to understand the way couples are matched, the types of social changes occurring within conjugal relationship, to what extent polygyny is widespread, and the implications of this for co-wives. Understanding these changes, which have been fundamentally influenced by migration, goes far beyond increasing our knowledge on how the society works: it provides us with indicators of how traditions evolve, socio-economic logic changes and much more. Furthermore, as many African countries (including Senegal) are heavily rooted in tradition, where social and familial relationships play a key role in forming a part of both men and women's survival strategies and daily living arrangements (Tiemoko, 2004), examining the influence of migration strictly from the perspective of the money it can generate is much too limiting. While this has indeed been the focus within much of the literature (Gustafsson & Mackonnen, 1994; Diatta & Mbow, 1999; Olesen, 2002; Tiemoko, 2004; De Hass, 2005) we instead seek to better understand the role that migration plays in affecting one of the most important and prevalent unions in the West African world: marriage. As marriage and union formation are of central importance in Senegal, it is felt that these are excellent 'windows' from which to examine social change.

## **2.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

While we acknowledge that marriage is in fact changing almost everywhere, in this chapter, we seek to examine how migration specifically is leading to particular types of changes. In light of this focus, we pose the following primary research question: How does an important and pervasive presence of out-migration of male members affect the marriage process in terms of both the conjugal union itself, as well as the other members of the community?

Elaborating on this question, we seek to understand whether migration may be seen to influence the marriage process through its supposed connection with greater monetary wealth (bridewealth in particular) which as a result, may in turn decrease the frequency and / or delay marriage among non-migrant men. In addition to this, we also question whether with the increased presence of migrants in Kébémér, traditional means of selecting a spouse might not be altered. With regards to this, we suggest that due to a supposed greater focus

being placed on money, traditions such as arranged marriages may be observed as being left to the wayside in favour of securing greater monetary wealth through marriage to a migrant. The extent to which this decision might additionally be supported by a woman's parents will also be investigated.

To answer the above noted questions, certain parts of the database were utilized more than others. More specially, codes focusing on barriers to marriage, the influence of migration on family and community life, spousal selection, and the prevalence of polygamy were employed to a greater extent and were furthermore often cross-coded in order to understand the impact of migration on the marriage process in the studied region. In addition, we also attempted to examine how these different issues were perceived and discussed by migrants versus non-migrants as well as their respective wives in order to acquire a better picture of the influence of migration on specific aspects of the marriage process.

Prior to examining the questions previously specified, it is first useful to take a closer look at what marriage really looks like by first examining its presence and characteristics within developing countries as a whole, then looking more specifically at the African context as well as more specifically within Senegal.

## **2.3 PUTTING MARRIAGE INTO CONTEXT**

In order to better understand the influence of migration on the marriage process, we now look at some of the main characteristics of the latter in the four aforementioned contexts, beginning more holistically with developing countries as a whole.

### **2.3.1 Marriage in Developing Countries**

Based on existing research, marriages in developing countries are seen to share some familiar characteristics. One of the most common of these is early first marriage as compared to Western standards (Pison et al., 1995; Westoff, 2003). Furthermore, these early union formations often come with their own set of consequences. Regarding this trend, in focusing on marriage within developing countries more holistically, Singh & Samara note that,

...women who marry at a young age are likely to find motherhood the sole focus of their lives, at the expense of development in other areas such as formal education and training for employment, work experience and personal growth. Even their marriage

may be jeopardized: An early age at first marriage is associated in the long term with a higher probability of divorce and separation (1996, 148).

Furthermore, this trend toward early union formation in developing countries is noted as being especially prominent within rural areas. On another note, union formation in developing countries is often seen to be more diversified in terms of the different types of unions allowed – i.e. polygynous, polyandrous etc. (Westoff, 2003). As is noted in 2003 DHS comparative report on trends in marriage and childbearing in developing countries, within much of the developing world as a whole, marriage is undergoing significant changes (Westoff, 2003). In the report, Westoff notes that informal unions are becoming increasingly prevalent as a number of individuals seem to be living together prior to marriage. The delay in age at first marriage for women implies a longer period of celibacy and thus to a higher likelihood for sexual relationships to occur before marriage, leading to the increase of out of wedlock pregnancies (For sub-Saharan Africa: Garenne & Halifax, 2000). In addition, while polygyny seems to be remaining prevalent in much of Sub-Saharan Africa, it is conversely experiencing a substantial decline in most other developing countries, and remains more common in rural areas and among uneducated women (Westoff, 2003). Interestingly enough, in this report as well as within other literature, Sub-Saharan Africa seems to be presented as the region undergoing the least amount of change as in essence, it seems to be going against the observed shift toward more Western-like patterns which are increasingly characterizing other parts of the developing world. What must ultimately be stressed however, is that marriage in many of these regions (and especially in West Africa) is highly formalized and tightly interwoven with traditions comprising entire sets of rules, norms and codes (Meekers, 1992; van de Walle & Meekers, 1994; Antoine, 2002). We are using the case of the Wolof in Senegal to illustrate this point. The misinterpretation comes on the part of outsiders in their inability to recognize and legitimize the importance and formality of these unions as a result of the western lens through which they are examined (Meekers, 1994).

### **2.3.2 Marriage in Africa**

If we turn our attention to now look at Africa as a whole, we find yet another set of trends. First and foremost, marriage is a process which can take several years to be fully completed. As Pison et al. (1997) note, “...en Afrique le mariage est plutôt un processus

qu'un événement ponctuel" (76). As such, a Western model of union formation simply does not fit within this context (Meekers, 1992). To further explain, Meekers (1992) notes that, "African marriage is a complex institution that generally proceeds by stages, most of which are characterized by the performance of prescribed rites" (61). In following this, it is not surprising to note that family is a key unit in the marriage process and is furthermore deemed to have significant say in spousal selection, the negotiation of bridewealth as well as the various other steps leading up to the marriage ceremony (Meekers, 1992; van de Walle & Meekers, 1994). Kinship ties are so strong in Africa that they typically take priority over the conjugal bond itself. It can in fact be said that social relations as a whole are almost entirely based on kinship ties (Sow, 1985). Note the way this is commented on in research

...the conjugal bond is thought to be relatively weak in sub-Saharan Africa, that is, frail by comparison to the ties of lineage and the demands that other kin outside the marriage can place on the husband and wife (National Research Council, 1993, 104).

Bride price is another common feature of the marriage process in many African societies with "more than 90% of sub-Saharan societies" engaging in such payment exchanges (Anderson, 2007, 152). As Anderson further explains,

Because women generally join the household of their groom at the time of marriage, bride price is typically considered to be the payment a husband owes to a bride's parents for the right to her labor and reproductive capabilities...the size is linked directly to the number of rights which are transferred and not to the wealth level of the families involved (2007, 158).

Further to the above, we must also note that in much of Sub-Saharan Africa, marriage is often arranged by parents. As was noted earlier on in the chapter, familial relations are at the core of an individual's social life and as a result, their opinions and desires are expected to be taken into account when it comes time to select a spouse. In addition, as marriage represents not only a union between two individuals but more so, between two families, selection of an appropriate spouse is often seen to be a task fit for parents in light of their assumed knowledge and wisdom (Pilon & Vignikin, 2006; Diop, 1985). Despite this, as will be discussed later on in this chapter, spousal selection by parents is in fact seeing a decline due to factors such as education, Western influence, and so on (Sow, 1985). Nonetheless, their opinion in such matters seems to remain highly valued and actively sought after.

Lastly, it should be noted that polygynous unions, meaning marriage arrangements whereby a husband is permitted to have more than one wife, are found to still be quite common in many areas of sub-Saharan Africa (Ezeh, 1997; Hayase & Liaw, 1997) and are typically given legitimacy through religious doctrine (Lardoux & van de Walle, 2003). This allowance of a husband to possess multiple wives is in fact, according Pison et al. (1997), perhaps the characteristic most closely associated with African marriage.

### **2.3.3 Marriage in Senegal**

This brings us to the country within which our own research is centered: Senegal. In the 2005 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) for Senegal, it is noted that,

In Senegal, marriage constitutes the privileged domain of sexual activity and procreation. In a country where 95% of the population is Muslim, marriage is universal, and remaining single is more or less unconventional phenomenon (Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006, 99, *my translation*).

As such, not only does marriage represent the only legitimate avenue to sexual gratification, but furthermore, as a result of the sexual privileges it endows, it is also considered a necessary union in order to produce offspring- something that is viewed among most Senegalese as being of importance in following with the Islamic prescription to grow the Muslim population (Sow, 1985; Diop, 1995).

Existing literature concerning marriage in this country greatly reflects the broader African trend of marriage whereby it is seen as much more than a simple ceremony and resulting conjugal union, but rather, a process, as was discussed in the preceding section. As Diop (1985) explains,

Le long processus matrimonial, depuis les premières démarches, les fiançailles, jusqu'à l'arrivée de la mariée au domicile conjugal, s'étendant souvent sur plusieurs années, témoigne de l'importance que représentent à la fois l'acquisition d'une épouse pour le groupe receveur et la perte d'une femme pour le groupe donneur (97).

Further to this, while the steps involved in the Senegalese marriage process are multiple and varied, according to Diop (1985), whose research is primarily focused on the Wolof, the main ethnic group in Senegal, it generally follows that there is first a declaration of intentions on the part of the young man to marry a young woman. This first stage is essentially the initiation of marriage and is done for a variety of reasons (to be discussed later

on) but in all cases typically involves a high degree of family involvement. This is then followed by negotiations between the two families in order to work out all of the details of the marriage but most specifically, bride payment. These negotiations vary depending on the relationship between the two families - i.e. whether they are there are kinship ties, or perhaps the two families belong to the same ethnics group. With regards to the bride price, this is essentially an agreement made between the two families specifying the amount to be given to the bride's family as a type of compensation for the labour they will lose when she leaves the home to live with her husband. Following this are a number of steps which may vary but tend to include a formal engagement, the Muslim marriage ceremony (*takk*), consummation, and lastly, the wife's leaving of her natal home to join that of her husband and his family joining of the conjugal home in following with the patrilocal norms characteristic of the Wolof. It should be noted, however, that this last step (cohabitation), however, can often take place months, or even years after consummation, depending on the circumstances of the individuals and their families (Diop, 1985).

While the aforementioned steps represent how the marriage process is typically carried out in much of Senegal, we must remain aware of nuances. For example, it is necessary to point out that the marriage process as described above can in fact be quite time consuming and may take up to several years to actually be completed. The issue of duration is particularly dependant on the groom's ability to find the means of financing the marriage. Lastly, it must also be noted that the marriage process itself varies among different ethnic groups in following with specific norms and traditions (Delaunay, 1994; and Mondain et al., 2007 for the Sereer; Enel et al., 1994 for the Diola)

It should be noted here that while certain elements of marriage within Senegal have experienced significant changes in past decades, others have seen greater stability, remaining relatively constant over the years. Table 2 (on the proceeding page) profiles some of the key statistics surrounding marriage taken from four separate DHS surveys and focuses specifically on women. In looking at this table, a number of notable trends emerge.

**Table 2 - Demographic variables relating to marriage: Senegal, 1986-2005<sup>5</sup>**

	<b>DHS 1</b> 1986	<b>DHS 2</b> 1992/1993	<b>DHS 3</b> 1997	<b>DHS 4</b> 2005
<b>Proportion (in %) of single women (ages 15-49)</b>	18.8	25.0	26.9	27.0
<b>Women's median age at first marriage (ages 20-49)</b>	16.6	16.6	18.0	18.5
<b>Proportion (in %) of women living in polygynous union (all ages)</b>	46.5	47.3	46.0	40.0

**Source:** Demographic Health Survey (DHS), Senegal: 1986, 1992/1993, 1997, & 2005

In looking at the above table, we can first observe that between 1986 to 2005 the proportion of single women gradually increased for a grand total of an 8 percent augmentation over the course of 19 years. Reflecting on this, the increase in the proportion of single women across time in fact shows an increase in age at first marriage and thus an increase in the proportion of single women at young ages (when previously they would get married). It should further be noted that, although not indicated in this particular table, the percentage of single women greatly declines as age increases. For example, the 2005 DHS reports that while 70.2% of women aged 15-19 were single, for those aged 45-49 this number drastically decreases to a mere 0.6% (Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006) demonstrating the still persistent universality of marriage.

In addition to this, if we look at women's median age at first marriage, what we see is an overall increase for a total of 1.9 years over the period of 1986 to 2005. It is also worth mentioning here that within Senegal, women tend to enter into their first marriage at a much younger age than most men. As is reported in the 2005 DHS, "Almost half of the women (48%) were already married in turning 18 years old and more than 8 out of 10 women (84%), before age 25 ans" (Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006, 103, *my translation*).

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<sup>5</sup> 1. Median age means that 50% of the women surveyed have got married at that age and that the remaining 50% will get married after.

Lastly, one final key feature of Senegalese marriages concerns the wide prevalence of polygamy in this region which has in fact been seen to be relatively stable over time (Lardoux & Van de Walle, 2003). While the above table shows a decline in this trend, the numbers remain quite constant with the only real shift occurring in 2005 with a drop of 6% from 1997. Despite this decrease, however, it is reported in the 2005 DHS that, “In Senegal, despite the predominance of monogamous unions (60%), polygamy is a widespread practice as it affects 40% of all married women” (Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006, 101, *my translation*). As a result of this, the marital union between husband and wife becomes all the more complex with the presence of co-wives and furthermore, multiple sets of children. The dynamics resulting from this unique set of relationships, however, will be discussed at greater length in the chapter that follows.

Having now a better understanding of marriage in the context of developing countries, Africa at large and lastly, Senegal, we now move on to analyze and discuss our results concerning the various elements involved in union formation itself and furthermore, the influence of migration on this socially significant process. Let us begin, therefore, by looking at some of the primary reasons given for entering into a marriage.

## **2.4 RESULTS**

In presenting our results within this chapter, we begin by looking at the marriage process in Kébémér in focusing more generally on the reasons given by respondents for entering into marriage. Following this, we shift our attention towards the influence of migration in looking specifically at its impact in terms of spousal selection, a perceived movement towards individualism, and lastly, its impact on the practice of polygyny.

### **2.4.1 The Marriage Process in Kébémér**

As a small, predominantly rural area of Senegal, Kébémér presents us with a unique view of marriage as it is a region that it has been substantially affected by out-migration and is furthermore characterized by polygyny and a patrilocal post-marital residence pattern. In combination, these elements provide rather distinctive insight into how marriage is affected by migration in a multiplicity of ways and furthermore, how the changes brought on by this phenomena play out in the everyday lives of men and women. In order to first better

comprehend the marriage process in this region however, we begin by looking at some of the most common reasons given by respondents for entering into a conjugal union.

**a) Reasons for marriage**

In understanding the complexity of the marriage process in Senegal and the subsequent heavy involvement of kin therein, it is important for us to look at the reasons given by respondents for marrying in the first place. Acquiring an understanding of this is of utmost significance as it provides us with an excellent means of understanding the underlying values and beliefs of those in the studied region as well as fostering a deeper appreciation of how families and communities are dealing with the multiple changes that have arisen as a result of emigration from this area.

In the data collected, one prevalent trend found regarding the motivation of both men and women in finding a spouse seems to center on the desire of these individuals to remain morally pure. Furthermore, the crucial link between marriage and fertility must be equally stressed in that getting married is tightly linked to parenthood and especially to motherhood. What we find to be most often the case is that men tend to explain their decision to marry as resting on the first of these reasons (sexual gratification) while women often stress the second (childbearing), though this is much less often explicitly stated.

The passage below serves to exemplify the aforementioned reasoning given by males:

*I: Revenons-en à ton mariage. Quelles étaient à l'époque les raisons de ton mariage?*

*R: Mes raisons étaient simples. C'est à dire que je ne voulais pas m'habituer à faire des choses moralement indécentes. En plus le mariage te permet d'avoir plus de courage à cette période de la vie : voilà mes raisons.*

(Male, age 43, married)

In addition to this, as is described in the passage below, men often explain their decision (or rather, desire) to marry as a being a means of alleviating the tasks and responsibilities typically assigned to their mother within the household. In bringing his new wife to the household of his extended family, it is assumed that such roles will be taken up by the new wife upon her arrival<sup>6</sup>.

*I: Tu es marié?*

*R: Non, je ne suis pas marié (...) mais moi je suis jeune.*

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<sup>6</sup> The dynamics of households, including roles and responsibilities and the interweaving of complex gender and intergenerational dynamics will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 2.

*I: Mais tu l'envisages ?*

*R: Ah ! Oui, dans l'avenir.*

*I: Comment tu l'envisages ?*

*R: Bon moi je pense qu'avec l'aide de Dieu, d'ici deux ou trois ans. Je me marierai parce que ma mère n'a pas de fille donc il faut qu'on marie une femme pour qu'elle vienne ici l'aider, lui tenir compagnie. Avec l'aide de Dieu il se pourrait même que je me marie avant deux ou trois ans s'il plait à Dieu.*

(Male, age 23, single)

One last common reason given by both women and men for entering into marriage is that it is done as a way of honouring one's parents, or rather, as a sign of obedience to them. In many of the interviews, while respondents seem to express that they experienced a certain amount of reluctance in marrying their now - husband or wife, they often elaborate by noting that regardless of their own personal preferences, it was done as a means to fulfill the wishes of parents. Not surprisingly, this is most often cited by men and women whose marriages have been arranged by their parents and also, often by those who have entered into an endogamous union marriage with a kin member as such arrangements are typically done as means to strengthen familial bonds and loyalty. *Endogamous union*, as the concept is used here, signifies a marriage between two members of the same kin group and/or caste. In much of Senegal, endogamy is used as a means of ensuring that wealth remains within the family, and also as a strategy to build and maintain alliances (Diop, 1985). The passages below exemplify the reason given for getting married as being the result of an arrangement carried out between the parents of the bride and groom. You will note the prevalence of endogamy among these particular arranged marriages.

*I: te rappelles-tu de la façon dont ton mariage était organisé?*

*R: tu sais dans ce cas là, on te présente à quelqu'un de la famille et on vous marie. C'est comme ça. Celui avec qui je me suis mariée je ne le connaissais même pas. Ce sont les gens de la famille qui nous ont mariés.*

(Female, age 43, married)

*I: Donc vous n'êtes pas sortis ensemble?*

*R: (geste de la main) Non, non.*

*I: Pourquoi tu as choisi de te marier comme ça?*

*R: Tu sais, les parents ont arrangé le mariage.*

*I: Tu aimes ton mari bien que vous n'êtes pas sortis ensemble?*

*R: Oui, je l'aime mais nous ne sommes pas sortis ensemble.*

*I: Parles-moi de ton mariage. Quel effet ça t'a fait de recevoir un cadeau d'un homme dont vous n'êtes pas sortis ensemble.*

*R: "Diakhabnama" Ça m'a surpris au début mais à la fin c'était pas grave. Après quand les parents te demandent de te marier tu ne peux pas les désobéir, en plus c'est un parent proche.*

(Female, age 30, married)

*I: Celle que t'a mère a voulu que tu maries c'est une parente?*

*R: Oui.*

*I: Est ce que tu est d'accord pour marier celle que ta mère a arrangé?*

*R: J'y peux rien, c'est la volonté de ma mère, il faut que je m'y conforme. C'est mon parent, je dois le respecter que ma mère m'a choisi. Je sais que c'est le souhait de ma mère et que je dois le faire.*

(Male, age 32, single)

In the above interview excerpts, not only is there a marked respect demonstrated by these men and women towards their parents, but also, a clear trust in their decision making. Within many of the interviews it is in fact expressed that being obedience to one's parents by honouring their selection of a spouse is a traditional value held in high regard and one that it must be maintained, even at the expense of one's own desires. In addition to this, it should also be noted that mainly women, but also men of *different ages* are influenced by the tradition of arranged marriage, thereby demonstrating its pervasive and enduring presence within the studied region.

Having a better understanding of the motivations prompting individuals to marry, and of the process involved in carrying out such arrangements, it is necessary for us to now examine the ways in which migration can be seen as influencing this process due especially to the fact that, as noted earlier, changes within the family will certainly contribute in the ushering in of broader social change among society at large.

#### **2.4.2 Migration & Change**

While the above discussed traditions continue to have a marked presence in Senegal, our data confirms the fact that marriage in Senegal is indeed showing signs of change. For example, as we showed in Table 1.1, age at first marriage has been gradually climbing over the past two decades. This in part comes as a result of an increase in the prevalence of migrants from this region and the changing behaviours and beliefs that have come along with such movements. Nonetheless, we must be cautious so as to not assume that such changes are solely the result of migration. As shown previously, marriage is in fact experiencing change in much of Africa, and not only because of migration. Delay of first marriage,

increasing pre-marital sexual relations, a prevalence of divorce, and a movement toward more flexible-type unions represent just some of the changes been observed in Africa over recent decades (Antoine, 2002, Loco & Thiriat, 1995; Hertrich, 2007; Dial, 2007; Delaunay, 1994). For the purposes of our research, however we focus specifically on those changes that are arguably occurring primarily as a result of migration. Let us begin, therefore, by looking at the issue of spousal selection in terms of its changing characteristics in light of the increased presence of monetary wealth in the studied region.

#### **a) Spousal Selection & Money**

First and foremost, with the increased prevalence of out-migration from rural Senegal to different areas of Europe, both money itself, as well as consumer products of assumed high monetary worth, are becoming more prevalent and visible in regions such as Kébémér as migrants both send funds back to family members, as well as invest in houses and cars during return trips. In the midst of economic hardship as well as widespread poverty, it is perhaps not surprising to find that, in seeing the monetary success of migrants displayed through various means, money is coming to hold greater importance in the studied region. What we ultimately observe within the data is that the increased monetization of society is having an impact on social behaviour and decision-making patterns at large, but more specifically, on spousal selection, the onset of the marriage process itself, and lastly, the general importance and value awarded to marriage as a sacred union. Let us therefore examine the first of these in closer detail.

As migration has provided many men from Kébémér with the ability to generate significantly higher incomes than they were previously able, the result has been that often, this money is invested in wives through means such as bride payments. While this may at first appear to be a positive change, it has subsequently made finding a wife among non-migrant men a much more difficult task as monetary expectations among women and their families have increased. In fact, many women are now basing their spousal selection on the amount of money that will be provided as bride price.

Below are interview excerpts which serve to highlight the changing nature of spousal selection in Kébémér due to the increased value being placed on money. The resulting inability of many non-migrant men to afford the increase in expected bride price is stressed as being particularly troublesome.

*I: Ce que je veux savoir c'est s'il serait facile pour toi d'aller prendre une deuxième femme ça l'a été pour ton premier mariage?*

*R: Non, c'est différent. Tu sais ici si tu n'es pas émigré où si tu n'as pas une certaine situation économique, il n'est même pas facile pour toi de trouver une copine. Ça c'est un méfait de l'émigration.*

(Non migrant male, age 40, married)

*I: Que penses-tu des mariages ici à Kébémér ?*

*R: J'ai vu que les filles ici étaient trop matérialistes. Elles ne pensent qu'à leurs intérêts. Elles pensent qu'elles doivent toutes avoir des maris riches. Et elles veulent toutes se marier à des émigrés. Ce qui fait que ceux qui sont là et qui n'ont pas un bon travail ont du mal à avoir une femme. Elles se marient par intérêt et par l'argent. Si jamais elles restent avec un menuisier ou un maçon, dès qu'un émigré arrive, elle te laisse tomber. Et cela ne leur fait rien du tout. Ce n'est pas normal parce que chacun a sa chance. Le mariage doit se faire dans l'amour, mais si tu regardes l'argent. C'est vrai que l'on a envie que l'on subviennne à ses besoins, mais si tu ne regardes que l'argent, tu ne feras pas quelque chose de normal. Et en plus il y a beaucoup de gaspillage dans les mariages. On donne à hauteur de 1 million 9 cents, ça c'est trop.*

(Non-migrant male, age 23, single)

As is evidenced in these passages, money has come to have a large influence on spousal selection in many rural communities, often limiting men's chances of finding a good wife if they are not in possession of a substantial amount of money. Interestingly enough, it is not only the 'potential wives' that seem to be holding out for large sums of money, but in many instances, they are in fact encouraged to do so by family members who will even negotiate on their behalf for a larger sum. In looking at the data, we in fact observe that with the support of their mothers, many women hope for a migrant man as a husband. This in itself represents a significant change in the marriage process in terms of the influence of the family. As we noted earlier on the chapter, marriage in Senegal is seen as a means of forming new alliances or strengthening existing ones. However, as migration has entered the picture, we are, to a certain extent, seeing the replacement of these values with the desire for financial prosperity. Diop comments on this very trend among the Wolof in noting that,

It is sign of profound structural change that characterizes Wolof society where wealth tends to precede relationship, the individual replaces the group and the social exchange among women becomes an economic competition in the search for a spouse (1985,104, *my translation*).

With the greater prevalence of migrants in Kébémér and the resulting observation of community members as to the incoming funds and investments of these individuals, the initiation of the marriage process has not only become less attainable for non-migrant men but as previously noted in brief, it has also subsequently led many women to delay marriage as they await the proposal from a migrant, knowing that the bride price offered will likely be substantially larger than that from a non-migrant man. This trend is reflected in the passages below.

*I: Est-ce que cela ne pose pas de problème à ceux qui sont ici?*

*R: C'est la raison pour laquelle les filles ne se marient plus, parce que les jeunes veulent se marier mais tu ne peux pas aller dans une maison où on vient d'offrir à une fille 500.000 F alors que tu n'as même pas 100 F à la poche (...) Ce sont les émigrés qui ont rendu tout plus cher, c'est eux qui empêchent aux gens de prendre femme.*

(Male, age 50, married)

*R: ... Les jeunes filles également ont une préférence pour les émigrés italiens. Elles se vantent d'avoir un mari italien. Les mariages d'hier et d'aujourd'hui sont différents.*

(Female, age 60, married)

*I: Peux-tu me parler du mariage à Kébémér?*

*R: Les femmes aiment les maris émigrés parce que c'est à la mode. Tu sais qu'au Sénégal les femmes aiment les maris émigrés.*

*I: Est-ce que parce que les émigrés ont plu de "teranga" [réussite financière]*

*R: Ah (hésitation). Oui c'est à cause de leur "teranga".*

(Female, age 35, married)

In addition to the above, however, it appears as though some women have in fact become turned off with the idea of marriage altogether due in large part to their observation of the sometimes often dissolution of migrant marriages. This particular perspective is noted by a woman in the following passage :

*I: Qu'est ce que cela apporte à la communauté? [La migration]*

*R: Il y en a qui apportent des choses positives à la communauté tandis qu'il y en a qui la détruisent.*

*I: Et pourquoi?*

*R: Parce que quelque part c'est à cause d'eux que les femmes ne se marient plus. Quand ils viennent, ils donnent deux millions, se marient, reviennent l'année suivante, divorcent et se remarient. Ils viennent trainer, faire la cour aux filles.*

(Female, age 25, married)

In sum, what we are seeing is a disruption in the initiation of the marriage process caused in large part by the increasing presence of migrants. The potential impacts resulting from a delay in, or even the complete halting of the marriage process are numerous and may include, for example, a decline in the number of births, unwanted pregnancies out of wedlock and the like.

#### **b) Individualism**

In addition to the above, it is perhaps not surprising to find that the attitudes of community members - and women in particular - are also being shaped by the changes brought on by migration. Many respondents either observed in others, or reflected in their own responses, more individualistic tendencies. While these perceived changes may certainly be the result of a combination of factors, we suggest that one of the primary influences guiding this shift is in fact migration. Not only does it seem to have encouraged the adoption of certain more European values and norms centering around individual choice, but it has also given men in particular greater leverage in choosing a spouse in terms of their ability to be more selective owing in large part to the greater wealth obtained through working abroad (previously discussed).

Delving further into this issue, we move on to discuss the perceived shift toward greater individualism specifically in terms of spousal selection. With regards to this, the data reveals that numerous men and women are now choosing to find a spouse on their own, without the involvement of parents and/or other family members. While this can presumably be seen as in part resulting from generational change more broadly, it is not unfounded to additionally argue that migration, and the subsequent influence of European norms and values, may also be playing a role in the noted shift away from arranged marital unions within the investigated communities. What this shift in spousal selection also implies,

however, is a change in family roles. While it was noted earlier that many parents remain heavily involve in choosing the spouse of their son or daughter, what seems to be occurring in greater frequency within the studied region is that spousal choice is being made on the part of individuals themselves, leaving the opinion or rather, approval of parents to be sought out afterwards. As such, a certain amount of power and influence is taken away from parents as this now becomes shifted to the individual themselves, forcing parents to take on more of a supportive role. But while this change in familial roles in terms of spousal selection is quite widely accepted among the younger generation, we find in the data that those individuals from older generations view this shift as signalling a loss of tradition and moreover, an embedded sense of entitlement on the part of young people. These differing opinions are evidenced in the passages below with the first two being excerpts from interviews conducted with younger community members, and the last two, with those from older generations.

*I: Peux t'on revenir sur le mariage des jeunes filles à Kébémér?*

*R: Avant on pouvait donner en mariage une jeune fille maintenant ce n'est plus le cas, je peux même dire que ça n'existe plus. La tendance aujourd'hui c'est de se fréquenter entre jeunes et se marier.*

*I: Et toi quel ton avis personnel?*

*R: Moi je suis contre le mariage arrangé, on doit laisser le choix aux jeunes de s'aimer mutuellement et de vivre naturellement leur mariage. C'est pas bien de forcer en mariage ça ne va créer que des difficultés car chaque partie du couple peut exprimer son désaccord en disant qu'elle ne veut pas et qu'on l'à force.*

(Female, age 25, married)

*I: Est ce qu'on peut parler de ton mariage. Comment tu as connu ton mari?*

*R: Moi j'étais venue en vacance dans cette maison (là ou je l'ai trouvé), mon mari est actuellement à Dakar. Mon mari était venu aussi dans cette maison, après on s'est connu, on s'est échangé des numéros de téléphone. Il m'appelait quand j'étais à Tivaoune (rire) jusqu'à ce que ça a aboutit au mariage.*

*I: Donc vous êtes sortis ensemble?*

*R: Oui on est sorti juste 1 an. On s'est connu juste à la fin des vacances 2005 - 2006*

*I: Tu es apparentée à son mari?*

*R: "wawaw" (oui) mon mari est mon demi-frère et aussi le fils de ma "badiène" (mon homonyme).*

*I: Est ce que c'est un mariage arrangé?*

*R: Non on s'est aimé, on s'est fréquenté jusqu'à ce que le Bon Dieu en décide ainsi.*

(Female, age 19, married)

*I: Pour ce qui concerne le mariage, comme tu t'es marié il y a longtemps, comment faisait-on le mariage avant et qu'est-ce qui a changé entre temps?*

*R: Ca a beaucoup changé parce que moi quand je prenais ma femme, on ne se connaissait même pas, c'est parti d'une proposition des parents. Quand on s'est vu, le mariage religieux était déjà célébré. Mais ça les jeunes d'aujourd'hui ne l'accepteront jamais que ce soit la fille comme le garçon. Ils te diront qu'ils ne vont pas s'engager sans pour autant connaître la personne.*

(Male, age 63, unknown marital status)

*I: Y a-t-il une différence entre les mariages d'hier et ceux d'aujourd'hui et si oui en quoi sont-ils différents?*

*R: Les mariages d'hier sont différents de ceux d'aujourd'hui en partie en cause de l'émigration. À l'époque on se mariait par la force des choses et on ne choisissait pas soi-même son conjoint. Ce sont les parents qui le choisissaient pour nous. On te disait un bon jour que tu te maries à un tel. Et tu ne pouvais pas refuser. On t'annonçait un bon jour, "prépare-toi, fais tes bagages parce que tu dois aller chez ton mari". Actuellement ça n'existe plus. Si je dis à ma fille que je veux qu'elle se marie avec un tel ou tel, elle refusera. Elle me montrera clairement son choix.*

(Female, age 60, married)

As is evidenced in the above passages, the shift in terms of spousal selection is viewed quite differently among different generations. Those of older ages seem to, in a sense, idealize the past, commenting that the choosing a spouse should be something done on the part of parents. Furthermore, the fact that young people are now taking such matters into their own hands represents, in their opinion, a rather unfortunate change within society. In contrast to this, those members from younger generations seem to view spousal selection on the part of the future husband or wife themselves as being something quite normal and in fact, expected. In addition to this, it must be highlighted that while indeed younger generations tend to 'choose' their partners, they still remain in the realm of what is considered socially acceptable. For example, in the passage above taken from an interview with a 19 year-old woman, while she noted having selected her spouse herself, her now husband was in fact related to her and as such, she followed the traditional custom of marrying endogamously.

In addition to the above frustrations expressed by those from older generations in terms of a perceived greater individualism on the part of younger people in choosing their own spouse, these same individuals seem to also hold the belief that marriage nowadays has lost many of its formerly attached traditions and has, in the process, become (according to them) less valued. This common perception, as observed within the data, is expressed in the following passages:

*Les mariages d'hier et d'aujourd'hui sont différents. Les jeunes hommes aussi ne se marient plus par principe. Ils ne se marient plus pour le meilleur et le pire. Ils ne voient que leur argent. Même s'ils dépensent des millions pour une fille, ils sont capables de la laisser juste pour montrer qu'ils ont de l'argent. Ils laissent rapidement tomber les filles.*

(Female, age 60, married)

**I:** *Avec ces dots exorbitantes croyez vous que les jeunes hommes d'aujourd'hui auront les moyens de prendre une épouse?*

**R:** *Ils ne sont pas prêts de se marier. Chaque soir ils invitent les filles pour "gérer" [ce mot signifie ici passer du bon temps avec une fille, pas nécessairement entretenir des rapports sexuels]. Je ne saurais dire qu'il n'y aura jamais de mariage mais à ce rythme ce n'est pas prêt d'arriver. En effet il s'ensuit la plupart du temps des grossesses non désirées. Personne ne peut dénombrer les grossesses non désirées tellement elles sont nombreuses. Le mariage n'est plus à la mode par ici. Et cela va de soi, comment peut on marchander une chose en y goûtant à chaque fois? On ne va jamais l'acheter [pour dire qu'on ne va jamais la marier].*

(Female, age 56, married)

Ultimately, these passages illustrate the strong disapproval among many men and women from older generations concerning the way in which newer marital unions are being formed in these communities. Such changes are arguably linked to the greater prevalence and importance being attached to money, as previously discussed. Additionally, in a number of cases one of the most common sentiments expressed is that many young people are simply not ready to be married. This is typically based on the observation that they behave in rather juvenile and irresponsible ways - particularly as it relates to sexual behaviour - this at an age formerly considered appropriate for marrying. Nonetheless, we argue that an idealization of the past among older generations is not something unique to this region. In looking at marriage in southern Malawi, researcher Amy Kaler (2001) argues that the discourses about marriage and change remain the same across time in that sense that criticisms and regrets regarding the past are expressed in much the same way today, as they were decades ago (in the case of her study, in 1999 as compared to 1946).

Based on the above passages and discussion, we argue that what can be seen in the above expressions among those of older generations is a sense of loss of power as traditions and beliefs, which they hold as important and core to the very functioning of society, are no longer as valued among those of younger generations. Consequently, as advocates of these,

their opinions and influence therefore also come to hold significantly less importance, leaving them with a diminished sense of purpose.

While we now have a better understanding of how migration has influenced the initiation of the marriage process in terms of timing, money and choice, we seek to further understand the impact of migration on the formation of conjugal unions in looking at its influence on the deeply rooted presence of polygyny within Kébémér.

### **c) Polygyny**

Prior to discussing the influence of migration on the practice of polygyny within Kébémér, it is first useful to briefly explain the meaning of this practice. Polygyny implies the practice, common in much of Africa, of a married man being in the possession of multiple wives and is typically found in patriarchal societies and often finds its legitimacy through favourable interpretation of Islamic doctrine (Hayase & Liaw, 1997). In the case of the communities studied in Kébémér, the primary reason given for engaging in polygamous unions is indeed the fact that it is supported by Islamic scripture which allows a man to take up to four wives. With regards to this, a common explanation given specifically by men for wanting additional wives is that it is done as a means to help increase the Muslim population and as was noted earlier, marriage is the only legitimate avenue to reproduction. Furthermore, it is subsequently assumed that being in the possession of multiple wives will allow for a greater number of children to be born. Note the way in which the 'religious reasoning' for practicing polygyny is explained in the passages below.

*I: Et êtes-vous pour la polygamie?*

*R: Oui.*

*I: Et quel est votre nombre idéal de femme?*

*R: Si Dieu me le permet, je voudrai avoir quatre femmes.*

*I: Pourquoi optez-vous pour quatre femmes?*

*R: L'Islam nous autorise à avoir jusqu'à quatre femmes. En plus de cela, je voudrai augmenter la communauté du prophète (les musulmans).*

(Male, age 19, single)

*R: Comme je t'ai dit, nous, nous n'avons pas d'idée à se faire sur cela, on est dans une religion qui établit tous ceux qui veulent deux, trois ou quatre femmes peuvent l'avoir. Donc on ne se fait pas d'idée là-dessus, on y croit comme on a embrassé la religion. On préfère la polygamie au fait d'avoir une femme et de pêcher.*

(Male, age 33, married)

In addition to its religious dimension, polygyny is also considered favourable by many as in having multiple wives, a man is able to provide his mother with greater support within the household in terms of cooking, cleaning and so on. This is assuming of course that he and his new wife follow the traditional patrilocal post-marital residence pattern characteristic of this region. Interestingly enough, this last motivation for entering into polygyny highlights quite well the expected roles of women within society - a topic that will be discussed at greater length in chapter three.

It is interesting to note that within some of literature, mention is often made that polygyny is experiencing a significant declination, even in Africa (Hayase & Liaw, 1997; Levan, 1999). In contrast to this however, in his study of polygyny within Mali, Marcoux (1997) notes the prevalence of this practice, not only in rural regions, but also within the urban setting. He further argues that while there have been noteworthy changes in the marriage process, such as in terms of increases in the age at first marriage as well as the percentage of those remaining single, polygyny maintains a stable presence. Such trends are also very much reflected within Senegal as is highlighted in Table 1.1. In terms of polygyny specifically, while there has been a decline, 40% of females remain part of a polygynous union, a significant number nonetheless and an indication the deep rooting of this practice within the country.

Looking at the link between migration, marriage and polygyny more specifically, it is interesting to note certain patterns which emerge from the data. As previously discussed, the marriage process has become more expensive in that bride price has substantially increased alongside increased migration. It follows therefore that polygyny may be thought to be on the decline as being able to afford even one wife seems to be a struggle for many men in the investigated communities. On the other hand, however, as the number of migrant men has substantially increased, the practice of polygyny seems to be particularly flourishing among these groups of individuals as they certainly possess the financial means needed to provide multiple bride prices. As Hayase and Liaw (1997) report in terms of the connection between polygyny and wealth in sub-Saharan Africa, "it seems to remain an attractive option for some males. The males who are well off enough to afford it may be more tempted to choose this option" (324). This particular trend is very much apparent in looking at our own data as,

while not always *directly* expressed by a large number of respondents, is often implied. One of the more direct references to this trend however, is illustrated in the passage below.

*I: Les migrants ont d'habitude combien de femmes?*

*R: Il y en a qui ont deux jusqu'à trois. Ils peuvent avoir même une seule femme. Tout dépend de leur choix. Mais la polygamie est la plus fréquente [on s'éclate en rire].*

*I: Donc les "modo modo" ont tous deux femmes?*

*R: Oui, ils en ont tous 2.*

(Female, age 25, married)

Yet while polygyny seems to currently be a practice that is overrepresented by migrant males, it must be stressed that the *desire* to possess multiple wives is still very much present among non-migrant men. In looking at the data we see expressions of frustration among these men in wanting to have more than one wife, yet lacking the financial means to do so due in large part to the increases in bride price. The passages below serve to illustrate the opinion of non-migrant men in terms of their desire and struggle to have multiple wives.

*I: Ce que je veux savoir c'est s'il serait facile pour toi d'aller prendre une deuxième femme ça l'a été pour ton premier mariage?*

*R: Non, c'est différent. Tu sais ici si tu n'es pas émigré où si tu n'as pas une certaine situation économique, il n'est même pas facile pour toi de trouver une copine. Ça c'est un méfait de l'émigration.*

(Male, non migrant, age 40, married)

*I: Comptes-tu prendre d'autres épouses?*

*R: Je t'ai dit que je suis musulman je peux prendre jusqu'à quatre femmes*

*I: Mais tu as la préférence?*

*R: C'est comme je dis à ma femme, je ne resterai pas monogame, je serai polygame, j'aurai 4 femmes si j'ai les possibilités.*

(Male, non-migrant, age 40, married)

As these passages serve to reinforce, many non-migrant males have a clear desire, and at times, even intent, to marry multiple wives.

Related to the above, what should lastly be noted is that, as observed by some of the interviewers themselves, while polygyny certainly seems to be more prevalent among migrant men, it is additionally the case that the practice of having multiple wives is *especially* prominent among migrants from older generations. As is reported by one interviewer:

*Cet entretien a d'avantage renforcé nos impressions sur le cadre de vie des premiers migrants de Kebemer. La deuxième impression qui tend à être caractéristique des*

*premiers migrants est relative à la polygamie presque systématiquement. En effet notre répondant a également 3 femmes vivant toutes dans la même maison.*

(Reported by interviewer after meeting with male respondent, age 54, married with 3 children)

Therefore, in looking at the data we see that migration is having a significant effect on the practice and prevalence of polygyny in the studied areas of Kébémér. With the increasing sums of money being given as bride price by migrants, many non-migrant men are facing monetary challenges in struggling to be able to afford more than one wife. Nonetheless, what remains evident is that despite such monetary challenges, the value placed on polygyny (particularly by men) remains strong as many seek to find innovative ways of carrying on this tradition.

Having presented our results, it is fitting to conclude by highlighting some of the key trends which have surfaced and to subsequently engage in a more critical discussion of these in light of more holistic observations.

## 2.5 DISCUSSION

Senegalese marriages are particularly unique in that such unions do not merely represent the joining of two individuals (the husband and wife that is), but are even more so viewed as an alliance between families. This trend is in fact prevalent among most African marriages. As Thiriart - who worked mainly on Togo – explains:

Traditional African marriage puts in place a double alliance. It is a total engagement between two affiliated groups at the end of a process of often long exchange; the union of the couple plays at most only one instrumental role in serving a double community objective: The reproduction of the group, and the search for an alliance (1998, 47, *my translation*).

This is especially true of endogamous marriages in which case familial bonds are deemed so significant that marriage is used as a means of strengthening already existing relationships and loyalties. Lastly, as is briefly mentioned by Thiriart in the above quote, as part of the marriage process, lengthy and in-depth negotiations typically take place between families and kin members in order to ensure that both sides are truly benefitting from the

union (Diop, 1985). Such negotiations can in fact go on for weeks and even months with the formal marriage ceremony not taking place until all conditions have been defined and agreed upon by both the bride and groom's side.

In light of the embeddedness and strong role played by family members within the marriage process, our results indicate that changes in this process create transformations which extend beyond just the conjugal couple. With regards to this, in answering our research question we highlighted that the increased prevalence of migration has influenced the process of spousal selection and along with it, the role of different family members therein. With the presence of greater sums of money as well as other indicators of wealth displayed to the community as a whole, it appears as though money has come to hold a greater influence over selecting a spouse. As one effect of this, we are seeing a shift in familial roles as marriage is slowly becoming somewhat more individualistic. This trend has subsequently contributed to a divide among generations in terms of the value of marriage. While many young people seem to eagerly adopt this new freedom (while still respecting the opinion of parents and other family members), those from older generations seem to view such shifts as being indicative of a loss of tradition leading them to seemingly experience feelings of loss of control and power. As such, not only has migration contributed to changing patterns in spousal selection, but it has, at the same time, contributed to a certain amount of intergenerational tension as the ushering in of new values and related opinions on the part of younger generations creates dissatisfaction and an idealization of the past among older members.

In addition to this, we found that migration has also played a role in affecting the practice of polygyny. What we observe with regards to this is a much greater prevalence of this custom among migrant men as they seem to be the only ways able to afford the now high bride prices (which, interestingly enough, have also come at least in part as a result of the increased wealth of migrants). Nonetheless, what is also noted is a continued importance placed on this practice by even non-migrants males, demonstrating the deep rooting of this tradition within Senegalese society. As was seen in looking at the DHS data, the practice of polygyny - though some men may struggle to afford multiple wives - still remains quite prevalent in Senegal at large, especially as compared to other regions of the world which have seen substantial declines in this practice (Caldwell et al., 1992; Hayase & Liaw, 1997;

Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006). What must ultimately be emphasized is that despite migrant men's exposure to Western lifestyles while working abroad, it appears as though they do not necessarily bring new views and practices back home with them but instead, seem even more eager to reproduce and maintain the traditional, conservative system characteristic of this region. As such, we argue that while migration is certainly a 'real' factor of change, the directions of such changes do not necessarily play out in the way one might initially suppose.

If we look at the literature concerning the migration-development link, we find key insights applicable to our region of study. On the whole, it is noted that migration can indeed foster development in that with remittances that are sent back, families are more likely to be able to afford healthcare, ensure food security, and also invest in education (Newland, 2003; Nyberg-Sorenson et al., 2002; Diatta and Mbow, 1999). In addition to this, migration also contributes to development in fostering change at the familial level. More specifically, in the absence of migrant males, familial relations based in tradition may experience significant changes (i.e. in terms of gender and intergenerational relations) which may then serve to promote change at the broader society level as well (Randall & Mondain, Forthcoming). Ultimately, this specific way of viewing development as being more than simply growth in a country's GDP is a growing trend within the literature and reflects a shift in focus towards more 'human' development (Pieterse, 2000). What must ultimately be remembered in light of these insights is that as Nyberg-Sorenson et al. (2002) observe, while the relationship between migration and development is multidimensional and can represent both a survival strategy on the part of migrants themselves as well as a useful tool for development, our knowledge of the full relationship between these two processes remains limited.

Yet while one half of the migration-marriage nexus has been discussed in considerable detail, the general effect of migration cannot be adequately understood without examining the other piece of the puzzle; that being the resulting conjugal union and lifestyle. As Kébémé is a region characterized by patrilocal post-marital residence, it is especially crucial to inquire as to how the emigration of married men is specifically impacting gender and intergenerational roles as well as conjugal lifestyles, particularly of the wives left behind. It is especially within the post-marital residence setting that we see 'development' occurring and as such, it is an area worthy of greater inquiry.

## Chapter 3: The Married Life: Dynamics & Behaviours in the Conjugal Home

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Following the previous chapter's discussion of the marriage process in Kébémér and our ensuing investigation into how it is being shaped by a strong pattern of outward migration, it is important to now look at a further aspect of this process in inquiring as to the impact of migration on left-behind wives and family members. This will be done in an effort to better understand the changing intra-household dynamics occurring as a result of such outward movements. In order to examine this, we will in part rely on comparing the situations faced by the wives and families of migrants to those of non-migrants in an attempt to identify the differences resulting specifically from the influence of migration.

To first clarify, when using the term *conjugal life* we are referring most generally to the everyday activities and decisions of husbands and wives within their married life. In focusing on African marriage, researcher Caroline Bledsoe (1990) employs this term in describing the different roles of husbands and wives within marriages and furthermore, in specifically discussing patterns of fertility, child-rearing, and so on. In a similar fashion, though focusing on the increased prevalence of cohabitation in Canada, author Céline Le Bourdais' (2004) usage of the term also closely relates to our own in that the author employs the concept as a means to characterize the broad host of activities and decisions made by both a husband and wife within a marriage.

In addition to the above, in order to discuss more specific and dynamic issues, we also employ the term *conjugal relationships* to address not only the relationship between a husband and his wife/wives within marriage, but also, in referring to other household relations that typically come along with a patrilocal post-marital residence pattern, such as that between a wife and her in-laws as well as co-wives (if any). While a majority of the studies examined within the literature seem to employ the term *conjugal relationships/relations* to refer exclusively to the rapport between a husband and wife

(Oppong, 1970; Kulik, 1996; Pribilsky, 2004) we wish to broaden the use of this concept in the way previously stated due to the very dynamic nature and organization of households within the studied setting. Furthermore, we will be examining these various relationships and dynamics in the context of gender. In doing so, we wish to understand how traditional gender roles and inequalities are manifested in the context of conjugal relationships and furthermore, if and how these are influenced by migration. In order to understand both conjugal life and conjugal relationships more, we now seek out a more comprehensive understanding of the makeup and functioning of the household within this setting.

As households sometimes comprise multiple individuals, forming a large extended family, the dynamics of these different relationships can have a significant influence on the husband-wife union (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1997). To make clear, *household* within the context of certain countries often refers to a group of individuals, typically residing under the same roof and comprising both family and non-family members (Pilon & Vignikin, 2006).

Understanding the composition and dynamics of the household is of utmost importance as it is within this setting that conjugal relations are principally formed (Findley, 1997). As Senegal specifically is known for its extended family structures, complex intra-household dynamics and patrilocal post-marital residence arrangements (Diop, 1985), the above characteristics fall very much in line with those present in our region of focus. We additionally wish to examine how changes in household composition and arrangement-potentially arising due to migration-may be seen to influence various dimensions of conjugal life such as gender roles and relations, relations with in-laws and lastly, husband-wife relations.

In terms of our reasoning for putting a large amount of emphasis on the household unit, it is useful to point out that as households in this setting are a very complex entity and imply a whole set of varying types of relationships, conflict is a prominent feature.

Ultimately, the gender and intergenerational relations between members of the Senegalese/African household can be seen as likely to lead to situations of conflict.

Shedding light on the particular notion of conflict is Olivier de Sardan who suggests that we can best understand conflict as occurring in what he terms the 'arena'. As the theorist himself explains in reference to this concept,

In an arena, heterogeneous strategic groups confront each other, driven by more or less compatible (material or symbolic) interests, the actors being endowed with a greater or lesser level of influence and power (2005, 186).

As such, the household in the studied regions of Kébémér- as in much of Sub-Saharan Africa-can itself be seen as a type of arena in which the interests and differing social positions of its different members often lead to conflict. As Sardan further elaborates as to the *dynamics* occurring within the arena,

...conflicts are indicative of a variety of social positions. Even very small societies and societies without institutionalized forms of `government` display rifts and cleavages. These are sustained by norms, moral rules, and conventions (which we could also refer to as cultural codes). Conflicts are therefore an expression of the interests linked to different social positions and are structured by culture (2005, 188).

Following this, much of the existing literature tells us that a number of power relationships are present within West African households as a whole- an observation we find particularly reflective of the Senegalese context more specifically. Not only is there a system of authority within households typically ascribed according to age (Sow, 1985), but furthermore, other identifiers such as gender and kin group serve to place individuals in particular positions within the household hierarchy (Diop, 1985). In addition, the household within the Senegalese setting is perhaps the most important and influential unit within an individual's life. It is inside this setting that labour is organized, finances are managed, and relationships are formed. Furthermore, as we noted in chapter two, marriage often represents an alliance between two families which in turn creates a very specific dynamic for household living arrangements. For these reasons, it is important for us to take a closer look at the household by specifically elaborating as to its composition and resulting dynamics.

We argue that the influence of migration can be suggested as adding another dimension to this 'arena' and perhaps as also creating further conflict as the absence of one member potentially changes the dynamics of the relations between those left behind. Lastly, if migration has potential implications at the household level in terms of fostering conflict and change, we further argue, in relying on the work of Dandurand (1992), that the

changes occurring within the family can have an impact in fostering changes within the broader society as these two units are deeply interwoven.

### **3.2 THE SENEGALESE HOUSEHOLD: A CLOSER LOOK**

It is important to realize that Senegal-as is the case for much of Sub-Saharan Africa- can be characterized as a *patriarchal society*. A term often employed in sociological and anthropological research, patriarchy refers to a noted presence of male dominance and authority, as compared to the subordinated position of females. Furthermore, however, it is argued that patriarchy goes beyond males control over women and is it in fact should be looked at as a much broader system of domination. As such, understanding this concept is of crucial importance to our research as it affects almost every facet of social life, bearing a particularly significant influence in terms of the structuring of gender relations. As Walby (1989) argues with regards to this concept, patriarchy is "...a system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (214). To shed light on this rather simplistic definition, we additionally refer to the work of Allan G. Johnson (1997). Johnson confirms Walby's assertion in stressing the fact that patriarchy is indeed a system and should be treated as such. As Johnson explains, "It's about how social life is and ought to be; about what's expected of people and how they feel" (84), and later goes on to elaborate further, noting that

Above all, patriarchal culture is about the core value of control and domination in almost every area of human existence. From the expression of emotion to economics to the natural environment, gaining and exercising control is a continuing goal of great importance (85).

In addition to the influence of patriarchy in Senegal, throughout much of the country, and especially within rural areas, what we also seem to find is a strong rooting in tradition as well as the incorporation of many aspects of Islamic belief, especially as it relates to the gendered structuring of household tasks as well as with regards to the rules guiding interaction between men and women as well as individual from different generations (Sow, 1985; Diop, 1985). These specific characteristics of society can be seen as influencing patterns of post-marital residence and furthermore, the relations therein.

As we noted in chapter two, after a marriage has been consummated, a bride typically joins the household of her husband and his family as part of her conjugal duties, thus following a patrilocal post-marital residence custom. We now move on, however, from the stages of initiation of marriage, spousal selection and all of the steps leading up to the finalization of the union to look at what happens once cohabitation starts and to furthermore examine the specific characteristics of Senegalese households and how these are affected by migration. In terms of the patrilocal post-marital residence norm for example, Randall and Mondain elaborate on this in noting that,

In much of Senegal marriage is patrilocal, where the newly married wife leaves her natal home to join her husband's home where he usually lives with his relatives. At a minimum this entails his surviving parents, but also often encompasses other patrilineal family members such as unmarried siblings, married brothers, their wives and children. Co-resident co-wives are also frequent. In the traditional rural economy the new wife was perceived as coming to support her mother-in-law in the numerous domestic tasks (2007, 4).

To give the reader a better idea of the size of households in Senegal, it is reported in the 2005 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) that on average, households comprise 8.7 people in this country. The numbers for rural regions are typically higher than urban, comprising 9.5 and 7.8 people, respectively, in 2005 (Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006, 15-16). Included in this make-up are often the sons of a mother and father as well as their wife /wives and any children they might have; this in following with the tradition of patrilocal post- marital residence characteristics of the region. Pilon and Vignikin (2006) comment on the composition of such household in noting that

...in Africa, in a number of recent studied, the household appears most often defined as a system of individuals, both related and not related, sharing the same meals, recognizing the same authority of the individual names `chief of household and within which resources and expenses are generally shared (17, *my translation*).

Following this, in terms of the organization of households in this country, Harris et al. (2004) shed some light into this matter explaining that the majority of rural Senegalese families live in patrilocal extended households, most often headed by a senior male member. Falling under the subordination of this patriarch may be "...his wife/wives, their

unmarried children, married sons and occasionally brothers and their wives and children, and more rarely married grandsons with their wives and children” (Harris et al., 2004, 5).

Upon entering into her conjugal home, a new wife faces many new challenges as she must adjust to not only a new lifestyle, but must furthermore establish relationships with all of the different members of her new home (Sow, 1985). Of specific interest is the relationship between a new wife and her mother and father-in-law. These relations can prove especially difficult due to the fact that the new wife is in a subordinate position vis-à-vis her new parents who hold a substantially greater amount of power and authority within the household and who can therefore place substantial demands on the new wife (Sow, 1985; Diop, 1985). These pressures, along with the intervening opinion and control of a mother and father-in-law characteristic of Senegalese culture, can subsequently impact the relationship between a husband and wife, leading to tense relations between the conjugal couple (Diop, 1985).

Adding to the relations a wife must forge with her in-laws is the added dimension of co-wives. As a polygynous society, within Senegal, men are typically allowed to marry up to four wives. As such, not only must a wife learn to deal with her in-laws, but she must furthermore interact on an often daily-basis with her co-wives (Randall & Mondain, 2007). It should also be noted at this point, however, that the relations between a wife and her mother and father-in-law as well as with her co-wives do not only pose a challenge at the beginning of a wife’s entrance into the family household. On the contrary, these differing relationships can be seen as in constant need of work and negotiation throughout the entire period within which a wife lives within the conjugal household (Diop, 1985; Sow, 1985).

This then brings us to the way in which households function in terms of roles and responsibilities. Often referred to in Wolof as *kër*, the functioning of the household is largely dictated by tradition and furthermore follows the patriarchal order of Senegalese society. More specifically, there exist hierarchies of responsibilities, a gendered nature of the division of labour and interplay of religion and myth into relations of power and control (Zuo & Bian, 2005; Manser & Brown, 1980; Stuart, 1996; Chin-Oh et al., 2003). As Sow (1985) explains, “Relationships within the family are rigidly established according to a hierarchy based on rules defining roles and functions. Their criteria are age, sex, kinship ties, degree of alliance, marital status (e.g., marriage rank of wives), etc.” (564). For example, the eldest male

member typically fills the role of head of household with the eldest son also holding a certain amount of authority prestige. Following suit, the wives of sons are also often treated in accordance with their husband's place in the birth order, receiving greater or lesser respect and also given more or less responsibility according to this position. In addition, respect for older generations is deemed necessary and members of younger generations are furthermore expected to take on a greater share of the household work (Diop, 1985; Sow, 1985; Findley, 1997). In addition, the head-of household usually controls the majority of the land as well as any of its generated revenue. In terms of female roles, within the literature reviewed, common roles for women included cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children, though these are often shared with other women in the household (Sow, 1985; Diop, 1985; Beneria, 1979; van de Walle & Meekers, 1992).

Interestingly enough however, researcher Perry (2005) argues that patriarchy in rural Senegal appears to be undergoing a change, leading towards what might perhaps be greater independence and autonomy on the part of women. As the author explains, "...patriarchy in rural Wolofland is transforming, leading men to generate a second discourse-of impotence and frustration-...Offhand comments by both women and men reveal the extent to which patriarchal power is challenged. As one woman said, 'A husband is nothing now, he just tires you out.' Another woman announced, 'Men are of no use anymore, they can't do anything for you!' As a young man explained, 'The elders are lost. We've seen their ways and they have no vision of tomorrow.' Older men themselves bemoan a modernity in which 'women and kids think they own themselves now,' and assert that "life's been turned upside down" (Perry, 2005, 208-209). Yet while these patterns of changes described by Perry certainly seem plausible, their applicability to the studied regions is doubted knowing the deeply rooted and persistent traditions which characterize this area.

What we have ultimately seen is that living arrangements play a key role in shaping both conjugal life more generally, as well as specific conjugal relationships. In terms of migration, this then leads us to question the extent to which the fact that a husband is absent during long periods influences the relationship between he and his wife, knowing now that these relations are tightly related to the overarching dynamics of the household. For example, in terms of the control over resources, a migrant husbands input in the household (even from

afar) may modify the different power relationships between members of the household. But who is representing him for his wives, and who ultimately controls the money during his absence? In order to understand the possible influence of migration, however, as we noted in introducing this chapter, non-migrant households will also be looked at as a means of comparison. Let us now proceed then to our primary research question of the chapter.

### 3.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Because of the specificity of Senegalese household organization and the related marriage process (see chapter two), it is possible that migration does not bring the social change it is often hypothesized to carry. As such, in this third chapter we seek to understand to what extent, in such a context, migration affects the local household organization, taking as our element of analysis the conjugal unit. This ultimately leads us to consider three main dimensions:

1. Gender roles within the households: Male versus female roles and the possible influence of migration.
2. Relations with in laws (described at large) for wives of migrants versus wives of non-migrants.
3. Relations between migrant husbands and their wives versus non-migrant husbands and their wives.

Reflecting on the first of these dimensions, despite much of the literature which seems to show an increased agency experienced on the part of many left behind women/wives (Hanks & Liprie, 1993; Pessar & Mahler, 2003; Kandiyoti, 1988; Mahler & Pessar, 2001), based on what we have discussed, we instead question whether in the Senegalese context, due to the structure of and arrangements within households, there is in fact a greater emphasis on traditional rules and norms that come along with migration. With the combined stress of having little contact/relationship with ones husband on the one hand, and living within the household of often controlling and meddling in-laws on the other, we seek to investigate whether the situation of left-behind wives may be seen as in fact not fostering of greater autonomy and freedom on the part of wives, but rather, as serving to enforce the existing hierarchy and related power dynamics.

In terms of a wife's relations with in-laws, we suggest that this is heavily influenced by one's living situation. For example, while authors such as Perry (2005), Boserup (1970) and Hanks and Liprie (1993) suggest that, often times, in situations where men migrate for

lengthy periods of time, women acquire more autonomy and independence by taking on more traditional 'male' roles, others, such as Pessar & Mahler (2003) are apt to highlight the frequent re-imposition of the traditional gender order upon a migrant's return. As these last authors argue, "Finally, what happens to gender relations when migrants actually do return to their homelands? The literature that addresses this problematic is limited but still points to a recurring theme, *viz.*, the reimposition or reinforcement of patriarchy" (828). In addressing this hypothesis, however, we must first investigate existing post-marital residence patterns in order to determine whether married couples are in fact moving towards a more nuclear type of household.

Lastly, we question whether relations between a migrant wife and her husband may experience more strained as compared to those of a non-migrant couple due to the absence of the husband and the subsequent living arrangement of the left-behind wife. As was previously noted, a husband often fulfills the role of moderator between his wife and his family. However, as he is unable to effectively do so during his absence, he may return to hear a multitude of stories from both sides yet be more inclined to take the side of his family members due to the greater loyalty attached (Findley, 1997), subsequently fostering conflict in his relationship with his wife.

Prior to investigating these questions in greater depth, however, it is useful at this point to first briefly explain our underlying methodological approach for this chapter.

### **3.4 METHODOLOGY**

In order to effectively carry out our analysis of the conjugal life and relations of both married women and men, specific codes that were focused on include those centered around post-marital residence, prescribed female and male roles, relations with in-laws, relations between co-wives, husband-wife relations, household authority, sex life, wives of migrants and also, wives of non-migrants. More specifically, we sought to compare not only the experiences of migrant versus non-migrant couples in terms of gender roles, intergenerational relations, post-marital residence, and so on, but to also look at the discourses centered on these very issues as they too seemed to have much to reveal. In presenting our results, we will focus on our three proposed hypotheses which together, provide us with a greater understanding of both conjugal life and conjugal relations within

Senegal, specifically as they relate to the composition and functioning of the household. Further to this, however, we also hope engage in a more critical discussion as to the influence of migration on these complex dynamics.

### **3.5 RESULTS**

#### **3.5.1 Gender Relations & Migration**

As we have briefly discussed, it is argued within much of the literature that migration can be seen as playing a significant role in altering gender relations and more specifically, in giving women/wives greater autonomy and sense of empowerment (Hanks & Liprie, 1993). It is often suggested that in the absence of migrant males, wives acquire new roles and responsibilities and along with these, greater decision-making power and freedom. (Pessar and Mahler, 2003). Nonetheless, due to the very nature of Senegalese society and more specifically, the structure and functioning of its households, we instead suggest that existing gender norms and patterns in fact become reinforced and even exaggerated as a result of migration, showing little transition and change in terms of gender and intergenerational relations within the household. More specifically, we argue that left-behind wives are especially required to take on gendered household work as their contribution to the functioning of the household and are furthermore expected to act obediently and respectfully to both men (who occupy superior positions within the household) and to those of older generations.

In terms of the nature of existing gender relations in Senegal, these seem to consist of strong dominance of male authority within not only society at large, but also within the household and the conjugal union (Diop, 1985). As Findley notes with regards to an example of differing gender roles in the African setting more generally,

There is also subdivision with regards to household economic responsibilities, with men assigned cash-related obligations (for example major cereal grains, housing, medicines) and women responsibilities associated with child-rearing (for example school fees, clothing, supplemental food for their own children) (1997, 120-121).

As noted, in terms of female roles specifically, some of the most prevalent of these include care-taking and housekeeping. These roles are especially expected to be taken on by new young wives entering the household of her husband and additionally seem to become all the more important in households where one or more men are migrants as it serves as

assurance for these migrant men in knowing that, even during their absence, their parents and/or other elderly relatives are be cared for. When migration enters the picture, however, while we might expect to see a change in these assigned female roles, they appear to persist. Note the way in which one young wife of a migrant explains her daily routine:

*I: Comment organise tu la maison chaque jour ?*

*R: Chaque jour, si jamais c'est mon tour de faire la cuisine, je fais la cuisine et si ce n'est pas le cas je fais du tricot ; je fais des pagnes pour les vendre. Dans la maison, c'est moi et la femme de mon oncle qui fait tour à tour la cuisine.*

(Female, age 23, married to a migrant husband)

Further reinforcing these gender divisions amidst migration are the trends observed in terms of males roles. In reference to this, both women and men seem to note that primary household decisions remain in the hands of the eldest male member and furthermore emphasize the continued ‘male-centric’ control over money. Known in Wolof as the *boroom-kër*, which translates into ‘head of the family’, Diop (1985) explains the role of this particular male as being not only in charge of the family itself, but also tasked with representing the family within the larger community setting. As the author explains, “Il est le chef de la communauté, son représentant à l’extérieur. Il détient, (...), tous les pouvoirs dans les domaines économique et social...” (154). In terms of the control by males over money, this issue bears particular importance to our research in terms of incoming remittances from migrants and the way in which such funds are managed and allocated, specifically as it relates to the left-behind wives of migrants. This specific issue, however, will be discussed at greater length in chapter four.

In addition to the above, males are also most often seen as being the breadwinners of the family and as such, are expected to earn a living through some type of employment. Some of the most common of these in the region of Kébémér included selling and trading goods in the marketplace, construction and being a driver. In terms of migration, which for many men has become their primary occupation, it is interesting to note that when both men and women were asked about their opinion concerning female migration, it was commonly expressed that this was very much a male activity in that women were not ‘fit’ for this sort of

thing as it was deemed too difficult. As such, we see the emerging norm of migration as being a primarily male activity or occupation as becoming pervasive in this region.

The following passages demonstrate the common association of men with household authority as well as the perspective of both a male and a female concerning the gender norms associated with migration.

*I: Souhaites-tu émigrer ?*

*R: Je laisse cela aux hommes. Ils peuvent plus supporter les difficultés que les femmes. Si ça pouvait se faire j'aurais souhaité que cela soit mon mari ou mon grand frère et moi je les attendais. L'émigration des femmes est difficile.*

(Female, age 23, married with one son)

*I: Peut-savoir si vous êtes plus pour l'émigration féminine ou masculine ?*

*R: Je préférerais l'émigration masculine.*

*I: Pourquoi ?*

*R: Parce qu'elle toujours bénéfique pour la famille d'origine. Une femme dès qu'elle se marie ne va plus trop secourir la famille.*

(Male, age 19, unmarried)

In the first of these passages, we see the clear affirmation of males as being those in control of finances. While this may seem quite straight-forward, we must remember that along with the control of money comes a great amount of power. In addition, the second two passages note the reinforcement of typical male and female roles despite migration demonstrating that migration does not necessarily bring change in this area as with migration in the picture, this very public sphere and nature of work still remains very much a male-dominated movement. Additionally, what can also be noted in surveying the data is that in looking specifically at male roles, we do not see any mention of female supplementation of these in light of migration which again, counters some of the findings noted within the literature.

Lastly, despite the observed persistence of the traditional gender norms characteristics of small-town Senegal in the midst of migration, as noted earlier, post-marital residence arrangements are seeing some changes. While many migrants seemingly choose to stay in their extended family home during visits home and to furthermore have their wives stay in this location permanently, it appears as though more and more of these individuals are choosing to build their own separate residences, away from their extended family; thereby

reflecting a more nuclear family form. This noteworthy change in post-martial residence patterns is reflected in the passages below.

*I: A-t-il construit ici quelque chose depuis son départ ?*

*R: Oui il est en train de construire une maison.*

*I: Comment il fait pour réaliser cela pendant son absence ?*

*R: Quand il est ici il supervise lui-même les travaux et quand il retourne le chantier s'arrête jusqu'à ce qu'il revienne. Il supervise le chantier lui-même.*

(Male, age 68, married, father of migrant son)

*R: Oui, je vis avec les grands frères, les petits frères de mon mari, c'est une grande famille quoi. Mais la maison de mon mari est en construction. Si elle se termine j'irai là bas.*

(Female, age 29, wife of migrant)

*I: Quand tu es venue rejoindre le domicile conjugal, étais-tu seule ou avec tes belles-mères ?*

*R: Quand je suis venue, j'étais dans la grande famille. Je suis ici (dans la nouvelle maison) seulement depuis 2 ans. Mon mari a construit cette maison et je suis venue ici.*

(Female, age 43, wife of migrant)

Although the data we have on this issue is very limited, there is indication that this alternative, more nuclear type of living arrangement may be seen to influence traditional gender roles in, for example, fostering greater autonomy on the part of wives within the household. For example, in such living arrangement, during migrant absences it may be the wife/wives who must take on the responsibilities traditionally assigned to males and as such, may acquire greater autonomy and respect in the process. Nonetheless, as this new living arrangement is very much just beginning to appear in the studied region, more research on the change in the structure of the household itself as well as its subsequent influence on gender roles certainly requires further research.

Having now a better understanding of the role migration is having in terms of serving to further reinforce existing gender norms, we continue our investigation into the influence of migration on conjugal life by examining the dimension of a wife's relations with her in-laws.

### **3.5.2 Relations with In-laws**

In light of the persistence of gendered ideologies and norms of behaviour despite the influence of migration, it is equally, if not of greater importance, to also understand the very reinforcement of these norms which takes place primarily at the level of the household in terms of a wife's relations with her in-laws

As we have discussed, by and large the Senegalese view familial relationships as being the most important and significant bonds in a person's life. Not only are these relationships considered a necessity in terms of the emotional support they can offer, but they are also seen as being vitally important during times of economic need (Diop, 1985). Furthermore, as familial relations are primary, the conjugal bond typically comes second (Findley, 1997). This fact alone plays heavily into household dynamics and oftentimes serves to create conflict between a wife and her in-laws. Additionally, in much of Senegal, wives of both migrant and non-migrant men are expected to eat separately from men and additionally, due to their lower-status position in the household. In addition, however, a daughter-in-law in particular is also not to eat with her mother-in-law. In light of this norm, Diop (1985) argues that conversation between daughter-in-law and both her father-in-law and mother-in-law is often quite limited. As conflict is a key feature of most extended family households in Senegal, and as open dialogue is often required in terms of diffusing conflicts (Sardan, 2005), the separation of these individuals during times when discussion might be most appropriate and helpful can be seen to contribute to the sustaining of tense intra-household relations.

Further to this, another trend within the data reveals that another role typically assigned to daughter-in-laws is the care taking of older household members. Not only does this reflect the gender norms of Senegalese society which place women in charge of much of the unpaid work that must take place, but it also again shows the subordinate status of these women within the conjugal home. This trend is found to be especially prominent within the data and is reflected in the passages below.

*I: Qui s'occupe de tes beaux parents qui sont tous âgés ?*

*R: Il ya une belle fille qui s'occupe d'eux. La femme du frère de mon mari est là-bas avec eux (geste en tapant les deux mains).*

(Female, age 24, married to migrant husband)

*I: Dans votre maison qui s'occupe de la personne âgée. Par exemple tes beaux-parents à Galla ?*

*R: C'est moi qui s'occupe d'eux. On les amène à manger. Tout ce qu'ils désirent je le fais pour eux. Ils envoient juste des enfants et lui ce qu'ils veulent. Surtout ma belle-mère.*

*I: Qui s'occupe des personnes âgées à Kébémér ?*

*R: "Gow yi" les belles filles. Elles s'occupent des beaux parents. En général elles partagent tout avec leurs beaux parents surtout quand il ya entente.*

(Female, age 42, married)

*I: Toi en tant que personne âgée qui s'occupe de toi dans cette maison ?*

*R: Ce sont mes belles filles qui s'occupent de moi, c'est la 1ère femme de mon fils qui fait tout pour moi. C'est elle qui lave mes habits, qui fait le linge, elle fait tout pour moi, le manger tout. L'autre femme c'est-à-dire la 2ème femme me donne aussi à manger mais c'est la 1ère qui fait tout pour moi.*

(Female, age 65, widowed- mother of migrant)

The above excerpts serve to illustrate how three women of different age and position- the wife of a migrant, the wife of a non-migrant, and lastly, the mother of a migrant son- all emphasize one of the primary duties of a young wife as being the care taking of elderly members of the conjugal household. What is interesting to note, however, is that in households where there are multiple married sons and hence, often multiple wives, it seems as though it is frequently the wife of the oldest son that is primary in taking on this particular responsibility, "c'est la 1ère femme de mon fils qui fait tout pour moi". While the reason for this remains somewhat unclear, one could perhaps hypothesize that as this particular wife may have been the first daughter-in-law to enter the conjugal household, she was the first to take on this duty and is hence the most trusted and experienced caretaker. In following this, in the case of a household where a man has multiple wives, it seems as though all of these women contribute to the care of their in-laws as a type of collaborative effort. As an interview with one older woman highlights:

*I: Qui s'occupe de toi dans cette maison ?*

*R: "Topato mak da fa bakh" [C'est bien de s'occuper de la personne âgée]. Toutes mes belles filles s'occupent de moi, tu as vu, j'habite presque dans ce salon, on le nettoie bien, on nettoie aussi ma chambre, on lave mon linge.*

(Female, age 65, widowed)

While we have noted some of the prominent trends found within the data concerning intergenerational relations, we are especially interested in examining the effect of migration on these norms as they particularly serve to demonstrate the reinforcement of existing gender and intergenerational norms during the absence of migrant husbands and the subsequent continued lack of autonomy and marginalization experienced by migrant wives.

Long absences of migrant men can be seen as influencing intergenerational relations within the household, and specifically those between a wife and her mother and father-in-law. Not only is this important in terms of the obvious effect that it has on intra-household dynamics, but it is further significant as ultimately, these relationships within the conjugal home can often lead to the ostracism of migrant wives and to the reinforcement of traditional rules governing their behaviour. While the reasons for the especially strained nature of these relations during a migrant's absence are not known in certainty, based on the collected data, we can certainly deduce a number of possibilities. For one, as we have noted, husbands often occupy the role of 'mediator' within the household- particularly between their wives and their natal family members. As such, with the absence of the migrant male, conflicts may carry on for longer than usual and have more severe repercussions. In building on this, as a husband is often his wife's primary advocate within the post-marital residence setting in Kébémér- especially in terms of her relations with members of older generations- his absence often leads to a young wife needing to represent and defend herself as well as to negotiate and work out her role as well as access to finances within the household without the support of her migrant husband.

In looking the data, we in fact see many expressions detailing the difficulties migrant wives experience in getting along with older- generation household members, particularly during the absence of a migrant husband.

**R:** *Si dans la famille il y a deux belles filles dont le mari est émigré, la troisième belle fille son mari est là. On décharge toutes les mauvaises choses, les mauvaises paroles sur le compte de la femme du non migrant.*

**R:** *...presque tous les émigrés vivent dans la maison de leurs parents. La nourriture c'est sa maman qui gère. Quand la femme se réveille c'est sa maman qui te donne la dépense quotidienne ou bien on confie l'argent au boutiquier qui sera chargé de donner tant de kilos de Riz, une quantité d'huile et de l'argent à la femme de l'émigré. A la fin du mois l'émigré n'enverra à sa femme que 5000FCFA ou 10 000FCFA à quoi ça va servir à la dame...*

**I:** *Est-ce qu'à travers un tel comportement il peut leur arriver quelque chose ?*

**R:** *Par exemple tu es femme d'émigré tu veux assister à une cérémonie. Ta belle mère ne t'a rien donné ou le boutiquier de la part de ton mari. Si tu croises un homme et qu'il te donne de l'argent ça peut mener à toute situation.*

(Female, age 56, married)

**R:** *...Pour la femme de migrant, toute la famille du mari se retrouve dans son domicile. Pour les neveux ils disent 'mon oncle a les moyens'. Et maintenant la femme va se retrouver dans des conditions difficiles...Toutes leurs familles se regroupent autour de la femme. Cette situation peut provoquer des conditions difficiles ou tu ne pourrais même pas t'occuper de toi.*

(Male, age 42, married)

As is evidenced in the above passages, wives of migrants face considerable challenges in living within the post-marital residence household. More specifically, we observe that mother-in-laws tend to treat daughter-in-laws with somewhat greater hostility during a migrants absence. Nonetheless, as the above excerpts are not directly from migrants wives themselves, we must be cautious so as to not interpret them as being necessarily factual, but must rather interpret them as the opinions of 'outsiders' which, while still informative, must be nuanced. With regards to this impact in particular, it might be proposed that this type of treatment is indicative of a mother's desire to protect the resources of the family, especially since migrants tend to generate greater revenue than workers back home (As we noted in chapter two, many women do in fact marry migrant men for the primary reason of monetary prosperity).

In following with the primacy of familial relationships, it should be noted that it is typically either the parents or the brother of a migrant to whom remittances are sent and managed. This trend is reflected in literature by Findley (1997) who notes that, "The weakness of the conjugal bond is reflected in the high proportion of spouses separated by

migration. When migrants send back money they usually send it to the lineage head, not to their wives” (123). The situation of left-behind wives in terms of control over finances will be discussed in greater depth in chapter 3.

In looking at the gender norms and intergenerational relations which characterize households in Kébémér, the complexity of these dynamics becomes evident. The difficult situation faced by a wife upon entering into the conjugal home also becomes clearer in understanding the relationships she must work out with different generational members of the household while continually holding a subordinate position. Most importantly, however, based on the collected data, we can say that the absence of a migrant husband in many ways amplifies relational difficulties and furthermore forces a wife to work out conflicts on her own without the representation of her husband. As such, not only is a migrant wife isolated in terms of having a very minimal conjugal life, so to speak, but she subsequently faces little freedom and flexibility in living under the rules of her in-laws. Furthermore, as these in-laws typically come from older generations, they are especially apt to reinforce traditional gender norms which as we have noted, promote the subordination of females and their subsequent assignment to household-related duties. Resultantly, without much control or say, the wife of a migrant is left to comply and may in fact see a decrease in her autonomy and decision-making power. As such, despite the literature which seems to suggest a greater independence and autonomy experienced on the part of migrant wives during their husbands’ absence, the organization and structure of Senegalese households seems to lead to an almost opposite effect, instead serving to reinforce and amplify existing gender norms.

While despite migration, the prevalence of traditional relations with in-laws appear to be commonplace in situations where a wife lives with her husband’s family, we question the extent to which this same pattern holds true in the context of the previously discussed movement among migrants towards more nuclear household living arrangements. With regards to this, what we seem to find within the data is the opinion that even if a migrant chooses to build a house at distance from his natal family, engrained customs and religious belief in the importance of familial ties seem to ensure ongoing contact and involvement between the two households. What should also be

mentioned is the fact that while many migrant men are indeed building their houses as separate dwelling places for their conjugal family, others are in fact constructing these houses with plans to move their entire natal family into these locations. As such, what we see in these cases is more of an attempted blending between tradition and modernity or rather, the embracing of change with a remaining grounding in belief and custom.

Nonetheless, it can also be argued that the decision of a migrant husband to live as a nuclear family, away from his extended family household, certainly has the potential to influence intergenerational relations. For example, without the daily monitoring of in-laws as well as the need to abide by their rules, wives living within a nuclear-type household may experience a greater amount of autonomy. Furthermore, in living at somewhat of a distance from one another, a migrant's wife and her in-laws may be less likely to engage in situations of conflict.

Though not always outright indicated by female respondents, what we notice within the data is a general feeling of favouritism towards the nuclear-type post-marital residence. Notice the way one young woman, married to a non-migrant man, describes her desire to live with her husband in a separate dwelling from her in-laws as is the case with an increasing number of migrant men:

*I: Qu'est ce que tu aurais préféré, vivre avec la famille de ton mari ou chez ton mari seule?*

*R: Je préfère vivre avec mon mari seule parce que vivre avec la famille de ton mari c'est difficile, avec la belle mère et les belles sœurs c'est difficile, à plus forte raison les grandes familles. Dans les grandes familles il y a des calomnies, de l'hypocrisie, des mesquineries. On essaie de te mettre à mal avec ton mari. En tout les cas moi je préfère rester ici. Si je n'étais pas partie là bas je n'aurais pas compris mais ce que j'ai vu là bas ce n'est pas bien.*

(Female, age 25, married)

The above response is perhaps not surprising knowing that within the typical post-marital residence setting, it is the wife that must adjust to not only living with her new husband, but also his entire family. Having said this, for the wife of a migrant, living separately from one's in-laws may also mean a greater amount of responsibility during a husband's absence and subsequently, a greater reliance on one's husband for both financial and emotional support which, as was discussed in chapter two, can often lead to feelings of

loneliness and abandonment. Nonetheless, as previously mentioned, what appears to largely be the case is that women are becoming especially attracted to the idea of living within a nuclear-type household without the presence of in-laws. In light of the previously discussed nature of these relations among wives of migrants and their in-laws, this emerging trend may indeed be seen in the future as removing at least some of this conflict.

Whatever the living arrangements of those living within Kébémér, whether with in-laws or as a nuclear-type family, it seems as though the relationship between the wife of a migrant and her husband is more strained as compared to that of a non-migrant wife, due primarily to the frequent and long absences of migrant men. As this issue certainly gives us a better understanding of the influence of migration on the husband-wife relationship, it is worth a closer look.

### **3.5.3 Husband-wife relations & the influence of migration**

As we have seen, the increased prevalence of migration is affecting union *formation* in rural Senegal (as discussed in chapter two). Following this, however, what we are attempting to demonstrate in this chapter is that it is also having an impact on the resulting conjugal relations, particularly between migrant husbands and their wives. In an effort to better understand the very impact of migration on this specific conjugal relationship however, it is useful for us to first briefly examine the different roles and responsibilities traditionally assigned to husbands and wives as a whole within the Senegalese setting.

Based on the patriarchal nature of Senegalese society, it follows that within the conjugal union itself, a husband is assigned the position of head authoritative figure with the wife/wives taking on the role (s) of supporter. As Diop (1985) explains, "...the husband holds authority over that women; she must in turn respect and obey him," (65- my translation). In addition to this, what should very much be stressed in terms of a wife's role within her relationship with her husband is her need to have patience. Interestingly enough, *Mougn*, the Wolof word for patience, came up in numerous interviews and was most often employed by women, almost as a type of acknowledgement that this is indeed a needed characteristic in all tasks. While this is especially true for a new wife living within the conjugal home, this particular attitude and demeanour is expected of women at all levels in all different living situations, reflecting the gendering of prescribed behaviours and attitudes. To further elaborate: After marriage, a woman arrives in a new place with different people

and specific relationships which have essentially been ‘coded’ by society in terms of what is expected. Nonetheless, despite these expectations, as previously discussed, it is very likely that there will be conflicts, most often between a wife and her husband, and/or with her in-laws and co-wives. In addition to this, we find that another feature of husband-wife relations among the Wolof is distance. As Diop (1985) explains, “Une distance apparaît dans les relations mari-femme favorisée par la séparation traditionnelle des sexes dans la vie quotidienne: travail, repas, causerie” (65). As such, the gendered division of labour within the household, as well as within the community more broadly, serves to further divide a husband and wife from one another as, owing to their differing roles and responsibilities, the majority of their day is spent apart.

In following the above discussion, the Wolof expression ‘mougn’ can be seen as summarizing quite well the attitude that a wife is expected to adopt within the conjugal home in the midst of conflicts of various sorts. In looking at the data, we note that this expression is one which comes up quite frequently and seems to indeed be a highly regarded female virtue within Senegalese society. Note the way in which one woman expresses her difficulties in living within the conjugal home in the passage below:

*I: Est-ce que dans votre belle famille, il y'avait le soutien, Explique moi les rapports avec la belle famille ?*

*R: Ce n'était pas le soutien comme il le fallait mais moi je n'avais pas de problèmes. Si ça ne dépend que de moi (sourire) on peut vivre sans qu'il y'ait d'histoires, de querelles. Moi on n'a pas éduqué pour faire des querelles, des histoires je n'ai jamais eu de problèmes dans ma belle famille. Mon mari n'avait pas les moyens mais je parvenais à supporter je faisais du "mougn"(faire preuve de patience).*

(Female, age 50, married)

In examining this passage we see evidence of the previously discussed issue of conflict within the conjugal home between a wife and her in-laws. What is also apparent, however, is that this particular woman claims to be actively trying to avoid such situations by employing the highly regarding value of patience. While the aforementioned conflict is not occurring directly between a husband and wife, we argue (having understood the complex dynamics occurring within the household) that it may very well come to affect this relationship through the spreading of rumours by in-laws, and the subsequent taking of sides on the part of the husband. While a husband may be bound to his wife through marriage, as we know, relations with kin take precedence, leaving wives in an especially vulnerable and

frustrating position, and potentially creating tension within the husband-wife relationship. As has been argued, the conjugal union between a husband and wife is affected by a number of factors. While the primary of these within the patrilocal post-martial residence pattern is the presence of in-laws and the subsequent intergenerational and gender relations which ensue, the presence of co-wives and the negotiations and that come with these relationships is also an equally influential factor.

When we add migration to the above picture, what we seem to find is not only an amplification of existing intergenerational and gender roles and their ensuing conflicts (as was previously discussed) but also a more strained relationship between a husband and wife. Having previously highlighted the complex nature of intra-household dynamics, let us begin by examining the impact of in-laws in contributing to greater spousal tension among migrant couples.

As wives most commonly live with their husband's family after the marriage ceremony, having an absent spouse in the midst of difficult relations with in-laws and co-wives can leave a wife feeling extremely lonely and unsatisfied in her marriage. Furthermore, family members of migrants are especially noted as spreading rumours and stories about a migrant's wife behaviour during a husband's absence. As a result of this, we see within the data indication that this often causes greater conflict between the absent husband and his wife- especially upon his return when he must decide which side to take, which often ends up being that of his kin members.

In addition, the mere influence and frustration of meddling in-laws and the subsequent inability to easily discuss issues and seek the consult and support of one's husband can be seen as leading to greater tension between a migrant husband and his wife. Note the way in which one woman- previously married to a migrant- expresses the especially difficult time she had in living with her in-laws during the absence of her husband at the time:

**R:** *Pendant ces deux années d'absence, il y'a une de ses sœurs qui est divorcée et qui est rentrée avec ses enfants dans mon domicile conjugal. Mais avant ça j'avais tout le temps des problèmes avec ma belle mère surtout quand je suis tombée enceinte. On avait tout le temps des problèmes elle me créait des histoires. Un jour je suis tombée malade, je me suis couchée en disant à la bonne de préparer le dîner. Elle a dit à la bonne de ne pas s'exécuter. Moi je n'ai rien dit, je me suis couchée parce que j'avais mal (nous sommes interrompus par une visiteuse)*

**I:** *On parlait de tes relations avec ta belle mère ?*

*R: Quand ma belle mère me fatiguait trop j'étais malade. Un jour je me suis rendue à l'hôpital c'est là bas que j'ai eu la confirmation de ma grossesse. Après je suis rentrée à la maison jusqu'à une période très avancée de ma grossesse. Mais je partais à mes rendez vous pour la consultation je m'arrangeais toujours à bien organiser la maison en collaboration avec ma bonne. Je lui demandais à faire le ménage, la cuisine etc. (Nous sommes encore interrompus)*

(Female, age 26, migrant ex-husband)

Though in the passage above the respondent does not make direct reference to the impact of the experienced conflict with her in-laws on her relationship with her husband, we gather from her indicated level of stress as well as from the fact that she is now divorced that this indeed produced a significant amount of conflict within her marital relationship.

Ultimately what must be stressed is that in fact, all the various dimensions can be seen as overlapping- relations with in-laws, conflicts with one's husband, and so on-leading to an especially troublesome situation for the left-behind wife.

In addition to the influence of in-laws, however, the presence of co-wives in being left-behind can also be seen as adding greater conflict to a husband-wife relationship. Prior to embarking on this discussion however, it is first necessary to briefly illustrate the nature these relations as they exist overall. When referring to co-wives it is first important to note that this umbrella term indeed refers to a few different relationships. The first way in which the term co-wives is often used is in reference to wives who share the same husband. Additionally however, `co-wives` also refers to the shared roles and responsibilities of the wives of brothers from the same family. Lastly, the term sometimes, though less often, refers to the shared gender roles of a wife and her husband's sister. As one respondent explains,

*Bon, au fait il y a deux sortes de coépouses: il y a des coépouses avec qui on partage le mari et il y a celles dont les maris sont frères*

(Female, age 23, married)

Thus while in some cases, co-wives may not be married to the same man, they frequently live within the same household and therefore interact on a daily basis. Therefore, in addition to a wife having to individually manage her relationships with a mother and father-in-law as well as additional older generation members of the household, many women also encounter the added complexity of co-wives of varying types.

With regards to the organization of co-wives (of all discussed types), Fisher et al. provide some insight as to the West African context in explaining that,

In polygynous households, the first wife organizes the household work and activity of her co-wives. Wives typically use a rotation system in which each wife takes responsibility for certain tasks such as meal preparation or laundry on specific days (2000, 206).

In addition, as Oppong notes:

Most polygynous households are characterized by some kind of formal rotation of conjugal rights, both culinary and sexual, the two often being linked. Polygyny is associated with separate rooms for husbands and wives and separate eating arrangements (1992, 80).

Lastly, Gadio & Rakowski (1995) note in reference to the Sereer of rural Senegal, “Husbands apportion household responsibilities among co-wives and the most common pattern is one of strong solidarity and collaboration in sharing obligations” (433). Yet while this last statement certainly holds true in certain cases, within our own collected data specific to the regions of Kébémér and particularly among co-wives sharing the same husband, there were many expressions of frustration with regards to these relationships. Note the way in women of various marital situations express concerns in having to deal with the presence of co-wives.

*I: Quelles sont les raisons qui te poussent à ne pas accepter des coépouses*

*R: Tu peux avoir une coépouse et avoir des conséquences telles que ta coépouse va te rendre la vie difficile. Il y en a par exemple des coépouses qui se disputent entre elles, qui font du maraboutage ou qui mettent mal à l'aise l'autre. Tout ce que tu peux imaginer, tu peux le voir. Mais des fois tu peux avoir la chance de tomber sur des coépouses qui sont bonnes comme ma tante là (la coépouse de sa mère). Ma mère n'est plus là (elle est décédée) mais c'est elle qui s'est occupée de nous.*

(Female, age 21, single)

*R: Il y a de tout entre coépouses parce que ça dépend du type de relations que vous développez. Tu peux rencontrer de tout parce que toutes les femmes sont pareilles. Tu peux avoir la chance de rencontrer des coépouses qui peuvent te considérer comme une sœur. La 2ième femme qui a rejoint la lière, tu peux avoir la chance qu'elle te considère comme sa sœur. Vous pouvez vivre en paix, votre mari aussi. Pour certaines femmes ce n'est pas le cas, elles peuvent être jalouses, mauvaises. L'histoire de la coépouse, tout ce que l'on peut imaginer on peut le retrouver. Mais si deux femmes coépouses sont biens et saines d'esprit elles peuvent vivre dans une parfaite ambiance et il y'aura pas de problèmes parce que "woudje bokk werseuk" [quand on est coépouse on se partage la chance]. Mais certaines femmes pensent que c'est un lourd fardeau.*

(Female, age 24, married to migrant)

Based on these excerpts, we see that conflict among co-wives is a rather common occurrence. While relations of peace certainly exist between many of these women, they seem to require a more conscious effort on the part of both/all co-wives as they must strive to foster an agreeable atmosphere. This conflict is furthermore observed as often being fuelled by feelings and competition for attention. In addition, it can also be highlighted that wives who bear blood relation to their husbands are often treated with greater respect by other family members and as such, are sometimes looked upon with greater envy and jealousy by other co-wives. In addition, co-wives who find themselves as second, third, or even third wives, often feel deprived compared to the status often attributed to the first wife of a husband. In a situation where competition—whether formally acknowledged or not—is present, conflict is bound to exist and most certainly comes across as being very present in examining the collected interviews.

In terms of how migration, along with the presence of co-wives, might influence the relationship between a husband and wife, we have little direct insight from the data. Despite this however, based on the discourses above concerning the nature of these relations, it is feasible to suggest that during the absence of a husband, relations between co-wives (those sharing the same husband) are characterized by greater conflict as insecurities are heightened and communication with the migrant husband is lessened.

As a result of this, relations between each wife and the husband may suffer as complaints may increase and increasing pressure may be placed on the husband to resolve conflict. Furthermore, in a similar fashion to a left-behind wife's conflict with her in-laws, if the migrant husband takes the side of one particular wife, greater strain can expectantly be seen to characterize his relationship with the other (s). Lastly, competition over sexual rights upon a migrant's return can also be seen to influence husband-wife relations though this will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 3.

Lastly, the simple fact of being separated from one's husband is noted as causing greater strain within a marriage. As a means of highlighting the recognition of such difficulties on the part of 'outsiders, these two particular quotations come from interviews with non-migrant wives.

*I: Etant jeune fille, est-ce que tu rêvais d'un mari migrant ?*

**R:** *Tout ce que je désirais c'était un mari qui pouvait s'occuper de moi.*

**I:** *Pourquoi tu ne voulais pas d'un mari migrant ?*

**R:** *Ma mère, 2 de ses frères sont des migrants. Ils habitent Diamaguene. Mon frère est aussi un migrant. Mais moi, je veux un mari qui puisse satisfaire mes besoins, qui me donne la paix, même s'il ne me donne pas l'argent, qu'on vit en paix. Parce que l'argent peut disparaître. Il n'est pas éternel "Ngor gi mo fi dess" [seule la dignité compte] Chaque femme souhaiterait se marier avec un migrant mais la paix est fondamentale.*

(Female, age 30, married to non-migrant)

**I:** *Mais à Kébémér ?*

**R:** *"Hi" je ne m'engagerai plus dans un mariage avec un émigré. Les émigrés n'entretiennent personne, je veux parler de leurs femmes. Ils ne donnent rien à leurs femmes. Toutes mes copines ont des maris émigrés. Ils n'entretiennent personne, ils ne donnent rien à leurs femmes "Da gni Saagare rek" [ils essaient de sauver les apparences].*

**I:** *Donc les maris émigrés n'envoient pas de l'argent à leurs femmes ?*

**R:** *Ah ils sont comme ça [avec un air désolé] je crois que l'Italie est plus bon que le Sénégal pour eux [les émigrés - rire]. En tout cas "Dieukerou émigré yorouko" [un mari émigré ne fait pas l'affaire]. Toi je te le déconseille.*

**I:** *Pourquoi ?*

**R:** *J'en avais, j'ai vécu l'expérience.*

**I:** *C'est quoi ton expérience ?*

**R:** *Beaucoup de choses... les hommes en tout cas "Émigré yoro tougnoko" ; je pense que c'est mieux pour nous de se marier avec les non migrants "Na gnou yam thi gni nek fi". Qu'on s'en tienne à ceux qui sont ici à Kébémér. Les émigrés n'appellent pas, n'envoient pas et ne viennent pas fréquemment. [Elle l'a expliqué en ces termes : "dou gnou noté, dou gnou guem, dou gnou yaré" - rire]*

(Female, age 30, divorcée of migrant)

In the opinion of these women, being the wife of a migrant is perhaps not as desirable as one might initially perceive. Not only does it appear that some migrant men are not the most supportive husbands, but furthermore, it seems as though these marriages are often characterized by conflict, presumably amplified by tense intra-household relations among those left-behind. Adding to this, another issue which surfaces from the data concerns the notion that many left-behind wives simply do not have their needs met by their husbands. While this is discussed rather generally, one might hypothesize that this could refer to a number of things including sexual needs, emotional support, and as briefly mentioned, financial support.

Building on the above, in referring specifically to her felt lack of connectedness with her own migrant husband, the woman in the excerpt below attempts to shed light on the reason why many young women are becoming less inclined to marry migrant men:

*I: Quelles sont des changements de l'émigration sur le mariage de jeunes filles ?*

*R: Au temps les filles voulaient se marier avec des émigrés parce qu'auparavant si un homme n'avait pas émigré, on pensait que tu n'avais rien. C'est pourquoi les jeunes filles les préféraient comme mari. Maintenant les choses ont changés. Elles veulent se marier avec les non migrants qui sont au Sénégal.*

*I: Pourquoi ça ?*

*R: Ceux qui sont au Sénégal, la manière dont ils traitent leurs femmes, les émigrés ne peuvent pas faire ça. Dans le sens du traitement, soulagement, parce qu'y a certains émigrés qui restent 3 mois et qui rentrent, d'autres deux mois. Et y'en a qui ne durent pas comme nos maris, ils y vont pour l'été et reviennent. Mais il y'en ont qui restent 2 ans à l'étranger et 3 mois au Sénégal. Donc ils ne peuvent pas comprendre grand-chose de la vie de leurs femmes. Cette situation a révolté les jeunes filles, c'est pourquoi elles préfèrent les non migrants.*

(Female, age 24, married to migrant)

Ultimately what we see in the above passage is the expression of similar concerns as those raised by non-migrant wives yet with the additional point of a migrant husband's inability to understand the life situation of his left-behind wife. Furthermore, conflicts arising with in-laws are also often noted as causing significant emotional distress. It would thus appear that she is more concerned with the lack of emotional support experienced by migrant wives such as herself versus concerns over financial support. She furthermore jealously describes how husbands who remain in Senegal with their families are better able to tend to the needs of their wives. It is argued, therefore, that while the financial allure of marrying a migrant man may initially motivate certain women in rural Senegal to engage in such conjugal unions, the data examined indicates that in reality, these marriages often leave wives feeling alone and unfulfilled. This experience is not only the result of having an absent husband due to migration but also in response to the combined influence of in-laws and heightened intergenerational relations as well as greater tension often occurring between co-wives as competition for attention increases even further. While to others, wives of migrants sometimes appear to be content and even outright spoiled, many of these women boldly express a sense of regret in having married a migrant and furthermore, convey envy towards those women with present husbands, despite their sometimes 'less than ideal' financial situation.

Lastly, returning to the issue of post-marital residence and to the observed increasing trend among migrants to build their own places of residence, separated from the extended family household, we argue that in addition to potentially influencing both gender norms and relations with in-laws discussed in the previous sections, it also has the potential to impact the relationship between a migrant husband and his wife/wives which as we have noted, is particularly strained. As was noted in the previous section, in living as a nuclear household there is presumably a decrease in conflict between a wife and her in-laws. In light of this, as husbands typically play the role of ‘moderator’ in situations of intergenerational conflict and as was discussed earlier, may be inclined to chose the side of his family in regulating such issues while abroad, living in a nuclear household may reduce such forced sidedness. As a result of this, wives may feel better supported and cared for by their husbands and marriages may subsequently be seen to perhaps experience less strain than in cases where a wife is left by her migrant husband to live in the extended family household. Nonetheless, as this trend is seemingly only just beginning to emerge in the studied region, more follow-up research on such issues is needed.

### **3.6 DISCUSSION**

If we return to look at our original research question of the chapter- *What are the dynamics of conjugal relationships in Kébémér and how are these influenced by the important male out-migration to Italy*- it can be said that we have answered this enquiry by looking at three different dimensions: Firstly, we argued and provided evidence that, in contrast to what is noted within the literature as an increasing autonomy experienced by the wives of migrants during their husband’s absence, the scenario in Kébémér is much different as the firm rooting of gender and intergenerational norms guiding household dynamics in fact seem to become amplified as result of migration, thus leading to the further entrenching of the traditional norms and values. Secondly, in following the idea of household structure and relations as being key factors of influence on behaviour, we argued that in light of what appears to be a gradual yet increasing prevalence of a more nuclear-type household among migrants, many wives are expressing a greater desire to live in such an arrangement as they observe the often increased freedom and generally greater sense of well-being experienced by wives living in such situations. Finally, in this third chapter we also presented and

discussed evidence showing that the relationship between a migrant husband and his wife can be seen as experiencing greater strain than that of non-migrant couples and furthermore argued that this trend is in fact closely related to the presence and influence of in-laws and co-wives within the household.

Nonetheless, while we feel confident in having addressed these three critical aspects of our research, we are very much aware that a more in-depth investigation is needed in few key areas. Firstly, while we observed the tendency of some migrants to build their own homes as separate dwellings from their extended kin members, we have yet to have a clear picture of the effect of this on the family at large, as well as on the husband-wife relationship more specifically. Ultimately, though many women seem to show favouritism towards this arrangement, we remain unsure of its details and level of prevalence. Furthermore, it is unclear whether or not such living arrangements are exclusively the result of migration and the subsequent increase in monetary wealth or rather, if generational change is also playing a part. Understanding this will be especially important if we are to acquire a better understanding of the more long-term specific consequences of migration as well as their different areas of manifestation. Secondly, the affirmations found within the data concerning the greater presence of conflict in relations between migrant husbands and their wives as compared to non-migrant couples is in need of greater investigation. While we have some evidence concerning the often compounding stressors of in-laws and co-wives on this relationship, we lack sufficient concrete examples of this trend and thus have a more limited understanding of their influence on the husband-wife relationship.

It is fair to assert that migration appears to be greatly influencing the domain of conjugal life within Kébémér. What is also evident, however, is that such changing relations are being shaped at the same time by broader household dynamics which are also responding to the changes brought about by migration. Relationships between migrant husbands and their wives are being tested as the ability of left-behind wives to effectively manage relations with in-laws and co-wives push some to the point of divorce.

But what about the effect of all of this on a wife's reproductive norms and child-rearing abilities? If migration is indeed influencing the conjugal union as we have seen in this chapter, than would this not also impact the domain of sexual behaviour and fertility? Furthermore, in understanding the dynamic nature of many households within Kébémér,

what role or added influence might in-laws and the presence of co-wives play in this particular realm of conjugal life? It is these issues that we seek to address in our fourth and final chapter.

## Chapter 4: The influence of migration on sexual behaviour, fertility & family planning, and child-rearing

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Up until this point, we have focused our attention on the changing marriage process in small-town Senegal and have subsequently examined the impact of migration on the marriage process and conjugal union itself, including post-marital residence patterns. What is still lacking however, is a deeper understanding of how the absence of a migrant husband truly affects the life of his wife (ves), specifically in terms of sexual behaviour, fertility patterns, and lastly, child-rearing. As such, the following question guides our investigation in this chapter: What repercussions exist when a migrant husband leaves his wife/wives behind? More specifically, what differences are present in the sexual behaviour, fertility/planning family patterns and child rearing practices of wives married to migrants as compared to the wives of non-migrants?

Understanding these trends is an important final step in our research as it allows for us to have a more complete picture of the way in which migration is affecting marriage in Kébémér from the very initiation of the process, to the way it is acted out in everyday life and finally, to the difference having a migrant husband makes in the behaviour and decisions of left-behind wives. In following with the issues addressed in chapter three, the three areas in which we see migration affecting the aforementioned dimensions of conjugal life include the marriage process itself, the social relations within the conjugal union occurring as a result of the specificities of Senegalese households, and lastly, the lives and activities of left-behind wives themselves.

In terms of sexual behaviour, as a migrant wife typically lives in the same household as her in-laws, her behaviour is closely monitored by a host of individuals, thus leaving little room for sexual relations outside of marriage, let alone within the marriage itself (Oppong, 1992). Despite such observed trends, however, in focusing on the regions of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, Hanks and Liprie (1993) argue that due to the often long absences of husbands, infidelity among wives of migrants was found to be quite prevalent and

furthermore, led to a greater frequency of divorce. Further to this, what is also apparent within the literature is that sometimes, a wife's in-laws fabricate stories about her sexual behaviour in an effort to create conflict within the marriage (Diop, 1985). Lastly, in terms of fertility and family planning, the literature seems to suggest that migration may indeed play a role (Madhavan et al., 2001; Massey & Mullan, 1984). Though focusing on migrants from Guadalupe living in the United States, the trends noted by Massey & Mullen (1984) support those found within our own data - notably, the effect of physical separation and attitudinal change among migrants as contributing to lower levels of fertility- even among women of prime child-bearing age: "Migration's effects are especially pronounced for wives of legal migrants, who are absent more regularly than illegal migrants. As one would expect, reductions in fertility increase the longer a couple is separated..." (514). The degree to which these same patterns hold true in the case of our own data will be addressed throughout this chapter.

## 4.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In light of the aforementioned patterns noted within the literature, our first research questions concerns investigating whether wives of migrants are thought to be more likely to engage in acts of sexual infidelity due to the absence of their migrant husbands. It is important that we emphasize the word *thought* here as [as we expect that the respondents will not address this issue directly] we will indeed be looking at the discourses surrounding the sexual behaviour of migrant wives as opposed to their actual patterns of behaviour. Interestingly enough, on the other side of this picture are the migrant men who, in many cases within the examined literature, are found to not only engage in acts of sexual infidelity while abroad (Hirsch et al., 2009; Anarfi, 1993; Hirsch et al., 2002), but furthermore, to engage in risky sexual practices with a higher likelihood of contracting HIV (Viadro & Earp, 2000, Pison et al., 1993; Lalou & Piché, 2004). As Hirsch et al. note with regards to the case of Mexican migrants,

Unaccompanied migrant men's sexual behaviour is characterized by high levels of sexual risk, both in comparison with the level of risk found among men whose wives migrate with them and in comparison with the level of risk found among similar men in the Mexican communities of origin. (2009, 24).

The degree to which such patterns, on the part of both husbands and wives, are found to be reflective of the Kébémér setting remains to be seen in looking at our own data.

Related to the above, in examining the discourses surrounding sexual behaviour it will be especially important to take note of the power dimensions embedded therein. Shedding significant insight on the embedding of power relations within ‘discourse’ as he viewed it is social theorist Michel Foucault. According to Foucault, discourse - seen as a system of representation - is regulated by “rules and practices that produce[d] meaningful statements...” (Hall, 1997). He ultimately argues that discourse itself is what creates the topic and additionally serves to control the way in which it is and can be talked about. Lastly, the theorist suggests that power relations are heavily at play in the distinct separation between the producers and monitors of discourse, as compared to its subjects (Hall, 1997; Nola, 1998). Relating back to the topic of sexuality within the studied region therefore, we question whether those creating and sustaining the discourse surrounding the sexual behaviour of migrant wives may not in fact be doing so as a tactical means of remaining in power by ensuring that it is the subordinated female group that remains the primary focus of related conversations.

In following our exploration into influence of migration on sexual behaviour, we additionally question to what extent migration affects family building preferences. Not only does this include desired number of children, but also actual fertility rates. In the 2005 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) report for Senegal, ideal family size is understood as a husband’s and/or wife’s preference for desiring a specific amount of children and is furthermore argued as impacting a woman’s reproductive behaviour. In the 2005 report it is noted that generally, males seem to desire significantly more children than females<sup>7</sup>. In addition to this, Randall and LeGrand (2003) and LeGrand et al. (2003) in focusing themselves on the Senegalese context, observed changes in fertility patterns. These authors argue that, although seldom directly acknowledged, in the urban setting, people tend to prefer smaller families due to economic constraints (although reasons given outright tend to focus more on the ‘will of God’). In comparison, within smaller towns the situation is

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<sup>7</sup>On average, males (both single and married) indicated a preference for 7.2 children as compared to 5.3 on the part of married and single women combined. Married males alone are noted as desiring 8.3 children as compared to the 5.7 average desired by married women (Gaye, 2005).

similar as people are also confronted by economic constraints but are subsequently influenced by the smaller village mentality where traditional behaviours remain vivid.

In terms of the influence of migration on the realm of reproduction, the literature seems to suggest that wives of migrants in fact show lower fertility levels. With regards to this, Massey & Mullan (1984) argue that the mere physical separation of a migrant husband and his wife makes for conditions which favour lower fertility. As these authors further point out, not surprisingly, fertility levels are lessened the longer a migrant husband is absent which they argue is most commonly the case among legal migrants (Massey & Mullan, 1984). In addition to this, these authors also argue that the cultural norms and values of the host country can play a role in affecting a migrant's perception concerning desired amount of children and also, the practice of fertility control (Massey & Mullan, 1984). In addition to this, Madhavan et al. (2001) draw our attention to the more general fact that the social context in which a wife lives can also affect fertility rates. As these authors argue,

In understanding fertility dynamics and fertility transition in the developing world, it has become increasingly clear that fertility decisions occur within specified social contexts (Bongaarts and Watkins, 1996). Far from being the straightforward outcome of individual or even couple decisions, fertility-related behaviour such as spacing, stopping and use of contraception must be understood in the broader context of a woman's social world (Madhavan et al., 2001).

In looking at the above quote, what is said is greatly reflective of what was discussed in chapter three. Ultimately, the environment of left-behind wives is not only highly complex but also, very much regulated. In light of this, left-behind wives in many ways face pressure from both their husbands and their in-laws in terms of their decision to have or not have children as well as decisions made with regards to child-rearing. In this sense, they lack substantial decision-making power which is reflective of both the gender and intergenerational inequalities characteristic of the studied region (as discussed in chapter three).

This brings us to our final research question of this chapter: While wives of migrants are in many ways required to be more actively involved in the rearing of their children (both financially and also in terms of exercising authority), we ask whether they may also face both greater monetary and social barriers to doing so, as compared to wives of non-migrant men. As was discussed in chapter three, childcare is generally considered a female role

within Senegalese society - a reflection the gendered division of labour characteristic of this area (Diop, 1985). In light of this, when the wife of a migrant is left without a present husband due to migration, child-rearing does not presumably come as a surprising role but perhaps more accurately, leads to an increase in responsibilities due to the lack of assistance from one's husband. Along with such added responsibilities, however, come significant struggles. As a wife depends on her husband financially for all kinds of decisions, one must therefore ask, what happens when her husband is not there and her in-laws are left in control of the resources? This becomes especially difficult in light of the fact that, as discussed in chapter three, wives of migrants must submit to the authority of the head-of-household and must furthermore attempt to meet the needs and wants of their in-laws with whom conflict is often a common occurrence (Diop, 1985; Sow, 1985). Lastly, amplifying these difficulties is the fact that when a migrant husband is absent, he cannot easily speak on behalf of his wife nor does he particularly understand the nature of household relations during his absence (Findley, 1997), thus leaving the wife in a very precarious situation.

Ultimately, our primary objective in seeking out a better understanding of the matters noted above is to provide the reader with an illustration of marriage in the context of steady outward migration from small-town Senegal. It should additionally be noted that to answer the aforementioned questions set out for this chapter, codes focusing on the sexual and reproductive behaviours of both migrants and their wives as well as non-migrants and their wives were heavily utilized. In addition, other codes also given substantial attention include those referring to family preferences, education, childrearing and fertility. Let us therefore examine the results in order establish observed patterns and to subsequently seek out answers to our aforementioned research questions.

### **4.3 RESULTS**

In presenting our results we will first focus more generally on the situation experienced by left-behind wives. We will then move on to discuss more specifically the discourses surrounding the sexual behaviour of wives of migrants as well as migrants themselves. We will then take a closer look at the beliefs and practices surrounding fertility and family planning followed by an investigation into the influence of migration on these

areas. Finally, we will conclude our results section by focusing on child-rearing and the consequent difficulties faced by wives of migrants in attempting to acquire autonomy and secure resources in the absence of their spouse.

#### **4.3.1 Left-behind wives: Anxieties & injustices**

In chapter three we discovered that the household dynamics of migrant homes can be especially chaotic and can subsequently place wives of migrants in particularly difficult circumstances, having little autonomy and decision-making power. Building on this idea, in surveying the data for this fourth chapter we find a number of patterns emerge which relate specifically to the anxieties experienced by left-behind wives and the felt injustices of these individuals. It is important to note that many of the observed trends relate to our discussions in chapter three concerning marriage patterns. More specifically, we see that many women are in fact reluctant to marry migrant men due to the difficulties they have observed occurring as a result of the distance. One young woman expresses this:

*I: Donc tu ne veux pas d'un mari qui voyage beaucoup?*

*R: Non je ne veux pas d'un mari émigré ou bien je préfère le rejoindre. Je ne veux pas que mon mari me laisse ici pendant deux ans, je ne veux pas.*

*I: Pourquoi tu ne veux pas que ton mari reste longtemps sans te voir?*

*R: Mais parce que c'est dur, tu vois les femmes d'émigrés dont les maris restent 4 ans ou 5 ans. Seulement ils communiquent par téléphone, ils ne pourront pas vivre ensemble.*

(Female, age 23, single)

In looking at more specific trends, we firstly find that many of the respondents interviewed- including both migrant and non-migrant wives- note the difficulty experienced by wives of migrants in '*faire du mougn*' (see chapter three) during their husband's absence; both physically and emotionally. This is especially the case when a migrant's date of return is not known and may in fact be as far down the road as ten years. In light of this, insecurities run high as do anxieties due to the many unknowns of the situation. While this appears to be a critical issue within our data, it is disappointing to find that little has been written on this topic within the literature as most of the work seems to not focus on those left-behind, but instead on the behaviour and decisions of the migrants themselves (Anarfi, 1993; Hirsch et al., 2002; Riccio, 2001; Organista et al., 1997). Where information does exist on the behaviour of wives left-behind by migrant husbands, results seem to center on more general

issues such as marital satisfaction, relations with extended family members and psychological stress (Salgado De Snyder, 1993).

In addition to this, many of the respondents interviewed seem to comment specifically on the anxieties of migrant wives concerning the sexual behaviour/faithfulness of their husbands living abroad. This issue relates more broadly to a double-standard present in both the literature and our own data: Ultimately, while the behaviour of left-behind wives is closely monitored by in-laws and neighbouring kin, the migrant himself can be seen to experience substantially greater freedom as he is typically not under such close scrutiny (also a reflection of him being a male). While this issue will be discussed at greater length later on in the chapter, note the way in which one woman, previously married to a migrant herself, expresses her opinion regarding having a migrant husband.

*I: À ton avis comment tu vois l'émigration, l'émigré?*

*R: hum .....mauvais*

*I: Pourquoi c'est mauvais?*

*R: Parce que moi je te dis on me disait après mon divorce que mon mari était un grand coureur de jupon. Mais moi je n'ai jamais prêté attention à ça et je n'ai jamais vérifié en plus mes problèmes avec sa belle famille constituaient une grande préoccupation...*

(Female, age 26, divorcée of a migrant)

Further to this, as it is exemplified in the passage below, this gender inequity with regards to sexual behaviour is articulated by a younger male respondent as he clearly suggests that migrant men can indeed be 'deviant' while their wives cannot.

*I: Tout à l'heure tu me parlais des avantages de l'émigration et ce qu'il n'y a pas d'inconvénients?*

*R: Il y a plusieurs inconvénients en commençant par l'émigré qui laisse ici sa femme, imagine que tu maries une jeune fille de 18 ans que tu laisses ici après 1 mois de consommation de mariage pour rester à l'extérieur pendant 6 mois, 1 an ou 2 ans. Cette fille-là si elle n'a pas l'aide de Dieu, elle sera déviante.*

(Male, age 23, single)

Based on the above passages, we argue that in many cases, wives of migrants experience heightened anxiety and in some cases, what are perceived by some respondents as

injustices that are not seen as frequently among wives of non-migrants. This, coupled with the intense household dynamics discussed in chapter three, will be seen to impact the sexual behaviour, fertility patterns and child-rearing of migrant wives. What is particularly interesting regarding the aforementioned trends found among the data however, is that they are often mentioned in conjunction with an expressed need for a migrant wife to demonstrate patience, or to *'faire du mougn'*. Thus while a wife's wearisome situation is acknowledged by many respondents, in many cases, interviewees still express an expectation of sorts by implying that despite these issues, a wife must remain strong and still be subservient to her husband's wishes. This pattern falls very much in line with the gender roles and norms characteristic of Senegalese society which place women in a subordinate position to men with expectations of not only compliance, but especially patience (Diop, 1985; Antoine, 2002).

Having now a better understanding of some of the 'mental burdens' carried by migrant wives, it is useful for us to delve further into the data in search of emerging trends that shed light on the lifestyles of women married to migrant men. Let us begin by looking at the sexual behaviour of not only migrant women, but also of their migrant husbands.

#### **4.3.2 Sexual Behaviour**

What kind of impact might a migrant husband's absence have on the sexual behaviour of his wife? What about on his very own sexual activities within the host country? Finally, what do the discourses centered on these issues reveal to us about the social dynamics within Kébémér? Looking at the regulations surrounding the sexual behaviour of both migrant men and their left-behind wives is particularly pertinent as this issue serves as a proxy from which to show gender imbalances as expressed by both women and men and to furthermore demonstrate differences in both opinion and power between generations. Let us therefore begin by taking a closer look at the dialogue of respondents surrounding the sexual practices of left-behind migrant wives.

As was discussed in chapter three and also emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, the majority of left-behind wives live within the household of their in-laws and are typically under close watch, subsequently lacking considerable opportunity to engage in acts of sexual deviance and promiscuity (Mahler, 2001). Furthermore, infidelity within marriage is not only strongly frowned upon by Senegalese society at large, but it is furthermore

enforced as being wrong within Islamic doctrine (Sow, 1985; Diop, 1985), though even more so in accordance with the social rules of society. As Sow explains, "The Black African society allows for intra-or extramarital sexual relations...The transgression of sexual prohibitions upset the social order more than the divine order..." (1985, 570). As such, we see that on the whole, women have little opportunity to engage in sexual acts outside of marriage. Yet despite the acknowledged existence of such strong prohibitions as well as the 'means of surveillance', so to speak, in looking at the data we seem to find an abundance of not only assumptions of sexual deviance among migrant wives, but also a host of stories to go along with them. Not only are migrant wives thought to be engaging in sexual acts outside of marriage, but it is also expressed that some are in fact becoming pregnant as a result. Examining these discourses is particularly relevant as they serve to demonstrate the clear presence of gender differences within society as generally, it is women as opposed to men who are accused of sexual infidelity.

The real question, however, is whether or not there is any truth behind the aforementioned assumptions encountered so frequently within the data. As the researchers involved in collecting the data did not interview any women who admittedly engaged in sexually deviant acts outside of marriage, it is impossible for us to say with certainty whether or not the latter postulations are at all accurate. Instead, we are left with suppositions and stories coming predominantly from non-migrant wives and though less so, also from non-migrant men which seem to oppose traditional gender norms and furthermore, knowing the post-marital setting and dynamics, seemingly appear implausible. While we are not completely discounting the idea that sexual deviance may in fact be more prevalent among wives of migrants, we do propose that one possible explanation for the multitude of stories regarding such behaviour is jealousy. The primary basis for this argument is that those reporting such acts are in more difficult economic circumstances and may as such be envious of the greater prosperity of families and wives of migrants who often display signs of their wealth in very public ways such as through the wearing of jewellery or the purchase of expensive cars.

In terms of the assumptions themselves, what we especially find within the data are respondents who seem to caution as to the *potential* for sexual deviance among wives of migrants in light of their situation. As an example of this, the passage below is from an

interview with a young non-migrant man who directly places the blame of this type of behaviour on the choice of a husband to migrate immediately following marriage:

*...C'est comme ça, à y réfléchir on sait que ce n'est pas de la faute des femmes mais de leurs maris. Tu ne peux pas marier une fille, lui faire découvrir le plaisir sexuel et la laisser ici pendant deux ans. C'est dur autant l'emmener avec toi. Les femmes ont des besoins. Une femme peut tout supporter tout le manque de moyens, tout sauf le manque de rapports sexuels.*

(Male, age 27, single)

In terms of marital fidelity, it is furthermore expressed within many of the interviews that the character of a wife plays a key role in her likelihood to engage in acts of sexual promiscuity. Interestingly enough, in the passage below it is the wife of migrant herself who expresses this very opinion:

*Des longues absences ça peut arriver mais certaines femmes supportent, pour d'autres ce n'est pas le cas. Les femmes ne sont pas tous pareilles...Moi je pense que les êtres humains ne sont pas pareils. Dans la vie chaque jour c'est des leçons et des situations de femmes qui tombent enceintes; qui ont des amants peuvent exister.*

(Female, age 35, married)

Following this, as was already briefly noted, many wives of migrants are reported as sometimes becoming pregnant as a result of affairs taking place during their husband's time abroad. One non-migrant wife tells of such occurrences in the passage below:

**I:** *Peux-tu m'expliquer ces femmes qui tombent enceinte qu'on surprend avec des hommes?*

**R:** *On les rencontre plus dans les femmes de migrants. Les femmes de non migrant n'ont pas d'amants. Tu les rencontres dans des femmes de migrants.*

**I:** *Peux-tu me donner un exemple sans citer le nom.*

**R:** *Il y en a ici à Mbaabou, si son mari avait migré et elle est tombée enceinte. Il y a un autre cas qui trompe son mari. On les a surpris, c'était difficile de les séparer. (C'est une pratique mystique) La femme du migrant et son amant sont restés accolés jusqu'à ce que le mari téléphone depuis l'étranger pour lui demander de chercher le talisman dans son armoire. En ce moment tout le monde savait qu'ils avaient fauté. C'est la pratique mystique qui les a séparés. Kébémér ici il n'y a que les femmes de migrants qui font ces actes. Ce n'est pas le cas chez les femmes non migrantes.*

(Female, age 42, married)

Similarly, another respondent notes the repercussions of marital affairs in the below excerpt:

*I: Est-ce qu'il y'a des cas de divorces?*

*R: "Am na fi" [il y en a]. Il y a certaines femmes, leurs maris restent longtemps à l'étranger et leurs femmes ont des amants. Y a des femmes qui sont tombés enceintes, dont leurs maris les ont trouvés enceintes.*

*I: Dans quel quartier? Ne cite pas de nom.*

*R: (rire) même dans ce quartier y'en a qui avait un amant et qui est tombé enceinte. Après ils ont divorcé. Tout ça existe dans ce quartier de Diamaguene.*

*I: Après que s'est-il passé?*

*R: Les parents du mari lui on demandé de divorcer parce que le mari ne voulait pas le divorce parce qu'il aimait sa femme. Mais ce sont les parents qui l'ont poussé au divorce.*

(Female, age 24, married)

While the above passages may hold some degree of truth, we must read and interpret them with the greatest amount of caution in realizing that there is no way to know for certainty the accurateness of the stories told, or the motivations and experiences of those telling them. With regards with the first passage in particular, this excerpt demonstrates the mystic beliefs surrounding the sexual deviance of migrant wives and in this sense, serves to render the whole situation even more implausible. Ultimately, we can acknowledge the possibility that extra-marital affairs among migrant wives *may* indeed take place, yet must remain aware that due in large part to the social norms and household composition characteristic of the studied regions, (as discussed in chapter three), such occurrences are highly unlikely.

Yet while we have now discussed the assumptions surrounding the sexual behaviour of migrant wives, what has not yet been addressed is the other side of this picture: That being the conjectures regarding the sexual activities and faithfulness of migrant husbands themselves.

In chapter three we noted the greater freedom and flexibility experienced by males within the post-marital setting and furthermore, the authority that husbands hold over their wives even while living and working abroad. We now add to this the fact that migrant men (in general) are under a considerably less amount of surveillance as compared to their left-behind wives and are furthermore exposed to different norms and values surrounding sexual behaviour within their host country (Anarfi, 1993; Viadro & Earp, 2000). As a result of this,

we find within the literature the argument that migrant men are much more likely than their wives to engage in acts of sexual promiscuity (Anarfi, 1993; Pison et al., 1993; Hirsch et al., 2002). The degree to which this same assertion holds true in our own region of interest, however, is questionable and therefore worth a closer look.

As we have argued, while the wife of a migrant most often lives with her in-laws and is therefore under the watchful eye of these kin members during her husband's absence, the migrant man living in a different country is typically not faced with the same sort of accountability, thereby suggesting that engaging in acts of marital infidelity may in fact be a lot easier. Ultimately, while living abroad, migrant men can rest assured due to the control under which their wives remain within the household setting, while the same cannot be said of the reverse. In addition to this, while Mahler's (2001) research focuses on the case of El Salvadorians who have migrated to New York, her observed trends show similarities to those encountered within our own research in the Senegalese context. As the author argues, "...If the men discover infidelity, they can take revenge by withholding remittances, among other strategies; the women lack such leverage..." (Mahler, 2001, 585).

In following the above, we find additional information within the literature suggesting that sexual promiscuity is indeed a common practice among married migrant men. As Anarfi writes in reference to Ghanaian migration trends more generally, "The majority of the migrant respondents (59% of males and 55% of females) reported that they had sexual relations with members of the opposite sex in their destination in the last month" (1993, 18). In addition to this, however, Anarfi further stresses the greater sexual appetite of male migrants (even married ones) and the subsequent likelihood of these individuals to engage in particularly risky sexual behaviour while abroad:

The impersonality of prostitution makes it particularly suited to strangers. The man away from home, away from his wife or the circle of girls that he knows, cannot in a short time count on seducing a respectable woman in the place where he happens to be. The prostitute's involvement with multiple sex partners is where the risk lies for the migrant (Anarfi, 1993, 3).

This trend is further reflected in the work of Viadro and Earp who note that,

Studies in sub-Saharan Africa, where there is significant labor migration between rural and urban areas both within and between countries, have shown that migrants are more likely than non-migrants to engage in behaviours such as having multiple sexual partners without using condoms (2000, 724).

Related to this, within the literature we also find that many of these behaviours are often risky sexual acts which increase their likelihood of contracting various sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), particularly HIV (Hirsch et al., 2002; Pison et al., 1993; Lalou and Piché, 2004). In their study of seasonal Senegalese migrants, Pison et al. observed that, “The high frequency of STDs among HIV-infected men strongly suggests that they engage in high-risk sexual activities while away from home” (1993, 200).

Yet while much of the literature seems to indicate an overall trend of greater sexual promiscuity on the part of migrant husbands, this same pattern is not found to be reflected within our own data. Furthermore, in his research on Senegalese migrant in Italy, author Bruno Riccio (2004) provides significant insight into the actual lives and patterns of behaviour characterizing these particular migrants. In general, Riccio argues that while living in Italy, migrant males in fact engage in a very strict and conservative way of life which in no way condones immoral sexual behaviour. On the contrary, he further argues that among Mouride migrants especially (which in fact characterizes the majority of migrant men from Kébémér), belonging to the brotherhood “...helps in respecting the rules of the receiving context and prevents migrants from ‘doing bad things like drinking, getting involved with immoral or unlawful situations’. This is even noted by Italians who spend time with Senegalese migrants” and additionally writes that, “Mouride transnational connections facilitate the control over potentially deviant behaviour” (Riccio, 2004, 935).

What *is* frequently commented on by respondents in our own region of study, however, is the greater *ability* and *freedom* on the part of migrant husbands to engage in such acts (in stark contrast to their left-behind wives), yet not necessarily the affirmation that this does in fact occur. Note the way in which one young unmarried man expresses related sentiments in the statement below:

*... L'homme qui est à l'extérieur peut avoir des aventures mais celle qui est mariée, il lui est difficile de faire certaines choses et puis ça c'est de l'adultère, que Dieu nous en préserve*

(Male, age 23, single)

Arguable, where we ultimately see the appearance of a double-standard is in terms of the control and suspicion surrounding migrant wives' sexual behaviour. Despite the fact that it is the *men* who are migrating, the majority of the discourse seems to be centered on the behaviour of the wives that are left behind. This ultimately serves to highlight the stronger status of men within society, again reflecting the pervasiveness of gender inequalities within this setting.

As was argued in chapters one and two, and is again reinforced in this fourth chapter, migration is having an influence on marriages in Kébémér; from the way they are formed, to the relationship that results, change appears to be common place. Yet one element of such changing dynamics that has not yet been discussed concerns women's fertility patterns within their marriage and furthermore, the perspective of both women and men concerning practices of family planning. It is therefore fitting to more closely examine these issues in an attempt to provide a more complete view of the effect of migration on families' within Kébémér. Firstly, however, it is necessary to look at the beliefs and practices among those in Kébémér with regards to reproduction and family planning in order to understand the degree to which migration may be having an impact in this particular realm of conjugal relationships.

#### **4.3.3 Beliefs & practices regarding fertility & family planning**

Two related areas of interest within our research are fertility patterns as well as the beliefs and practices surrounding family planning. In the context of our research, fertility refers to the ability to conceive and bear children (LeGrand et al., 2003). Family planning, on the other hand, is used to describe the practice of using some form of birth control in order to manage the amount of children conceived (Bongarts & Bruce, 1995). While numerous agencies and organizations have attempted to promote family planning methods in much of West Africa, based on the prevalence of relatively high fertility rates within countries such as Senegal, we can conclude that such efforts have on the whole been rather unsuccessful [especially in rural areas] (Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006). In terms of possible explanations for such behaviours, we suggest several possibilities: First of all, engaging in practices of family

which require taking birth control may simply be too expensive. Additionally, people may be limited by geographical access (particularly in rural areas). Lastly, and perhaps most applicably to our region of study, there may very well be the presence of social barriers such as taboos associated with the control of reproduction (Randall & LeGrand, 2003; LeGrand, 2003; Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006).

In looking at our data, one of the dominant themes arising during discussions surrounding the topic of family planning is that of religion. What we must again reiterate at this point, however, is the fact that religion is often used as a means to support what are in fact social practices, or rather, the norms of society and which are subsequently deemed as needing to appear legitimate (Sow, 1985).

In terms of the use of religious reasoning in explaining the non-use of contraceptives, among many of the collected interviews within our own data, respondents do indeed express that the number of children one will have is something that is and should be decided by God. In a sense, this appears to be an effective way of removing pressure and responsibility off of oneself by essentially relying on what is believed to be the will of God. As result of this belief, many of the women in the studied regions do not practice any method of birth control in fear that this would be taking matters into one's own hands and essentially showing a lack of faith and obedience to God. The passages below serve to illustrate this particular belief, as well as its subsequent impact on family planning.

*I: Tu fais le planning?*

*R: Non, je n'en fais pas. Je prie seulement sur le Bon Dieu*

*I: Tu penses qu'avec cette méthode tu peux échapper à une grossesse?*

*R: le bon Dieu va m'aider que je fasse une grossesse un peu plus tard. Et je pense que je peux échapper à une grossesse. Pourtant je veux bien faire le planning mais, je ne sais pas. Peut-être que ces temps je vais faire.*

(Female, age 25, married with 2 children)

Also worth noting is the fact that many males hold similar opinions. As one husband expresses:

*I: Donc, pour toi, qu'est-ce que la planification familiale?*

*R: Planification familiale, ça moi je ne connais même pas parce que si tu fais cela c'est comme si tu calculais les enfants que tu dois avoir. En tout cas, j'en ai jamais*

*parlé à mes épouses parce que quelque soit la taille de ton jaboot Dieu t'aidera à l'entretenir.*

(Male, age 58, married)

Despite such beliefs, however, many of those interviewed often still express a desire for certain amount of children, many justifying such preferences as being the result of difficult economic circumstances. Note the following excerpt taken from an interview with a married woman of 19 years of age:

*I: toi tu souhaites avoir combien d'enfants?*

*R: ça je n'en sais rien, seul Dieu sait. Tout ce que le Bon Dieu décidera....*

*I: donc tu veux avoir plusieurs enfants? Par exemple 20 au 30*

*R: si le Bon Dieu en décide ainsi mais je ne veux pas avoir 20*

*I: donc tu veux en avoir combien?*

*R: (rire) je veux avoir 4 (2 garçons et 2 filles)*

*I: pourquoi tu veux avoir 4 enfants?*

*R: parce que je pense que ... (elle resta pendant quelques secondes) si tu as 20 enfants alors que tu n'as pas de boulot, tu n'as pas les moyens de les entretenir tu vas te fatiguer. La vie est dure présentement mieux vaut demander au Bon Dieu de te donner 4 enfants*

*I: donc si tu n'utilises pas le planning et que tu mets au monde comme tu veux, tu penses te limiter à 4 enfants?*

*R: non non (rire) je ne peux pas être capable de ça mais c'est juste qu'il faut s'en remettre à Dieu*

*I: donc tu ne vas jamais faire de planning? Qu'est ce qu'en pense ton mari?*

*R: non non je ne vais pas en faire, mon mari et moi nous n'avons jamais discuté de ça, du planning. Pour le moment ou n'en parle pas.*

(Female, age 19, married)

As this and other passages within the data reveal, there exists somewhat of a contradiction within the discourse of many respondents: While a maximum number of children may be desired, many remain unwilling to use preventative methods to ensure that this goal becomes a reality, leaving it instead in the hands of the supernatural<sup>8</sup>. This trend is further reflected in the literature. For example, in looking at the data on 12 DHS countries (including some within Sub-Saharan Africa), Bongarts and Bruce (1995) identify religion as being one reason for non-use of birth control methods among women. Again in consistency with our own data, however, they further highlight that this was not the main reason given by women in terms of their lack of engaging in certain forms of family planning. What was in

<sup>8</sup> This is often especially stressed by male respondents who seem to use religion as a strategy to legitimate certain behaviours and/or points of view that might otherwise be seen as unacceptable or strange.

fact listed as the primary reasons for non-use was first a general lack of knowledge, closely followed by health concerns (Bongarts and Bruce, 1995). This trend is again reflected in our own data and is therefore worth a closer look.

In following the above, within the literature we find that in addition to the expression of religious belief as being a deterrent to using methods of birth control, a great majority of women also seem to possess misconceptions or rather, false assumptions, about the preventative methods used in family planning- particularly the pill and injections (Anderson and Cleland, 1984; Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987; Bongarts and Bruce, 1995; van de Walle & Meekers, 1992; Randall & LeGrand, 2003). In looking at our own data we find similarities to those mentioned above as many women seem to explain their decision to avoid using certain birth control methods as being based on the belief that these may in fact be harmful to their health and well-being. For example, one of the most common concerns noted within the interviews (predominantly among women respondents) is the opinion that methods of birth control such as the pill can lead to infertility. Others additionally argue that the pill or injections can lead to various illnesses and as such, are reluctant to use them. As one married woman explains with regards to her concerns about the pill's interference with fertility,

*R: Le planning y'en a qui l'utilisent mais moi pas*

*I: Est-ce que si tu devais mettre au monde jusqu'à présent tu allais le faire?*

*R: Non Non parce que je ne l'ai jamais utilisé. En plus on a dit que le planning ce n'est pas bon. Ce que j'ai entendu sur le planning c'est que la femme a des problèmes pour mettre au monde en l'utilisant. Le planning peut même mener à la mort en l'utilisant entre deux grossesses parce que ça provoque des maladies. Moi je pense qu'on doit l'utiliser le planning quand on choisit de cesser de mettre au monde. Donc la femme doit mettre au monde quand elle en a assez, elle peut faire le planning maintenant. Parce que beaucoup de femmes disent que le planning te permet d'avoir des jumeaux, d'avoir des maladies*

(Female, age 50, married)

Similarly, another younger married woman (age 23) notes,

*Il y en a qui font le planning familial mais moi je ne compte pas le faire parce que ce n'est pas bien. Les comprimés que l'on donne et les injections que l'on fait, ce n'est pas bien. J'envisagerai d'utiliser la méthode par ovulation et j'en discuterai avec mon mari. Cette méthode me semble plus intéressante que d'aller à l'hôpital. Je pense que prendre des comprimés ou des injections sont dangereuses pour la santé. J'ai*

*l'exemple d'une voisine qui avait utilisé le planning et qui ne peut plus avoir d'enfants alors qu'elle en désire. Elle a une fille et veut avoir un autre enfant mais elle n'arrive plus à en avoir.*

(Female, age 23, married)

As these passages show, the belief that certain methods of birth control are dangerous has led many women to avoid using such means of family planning.

One last point to note concerning the decision to adopt family planning methods is the influence that husbands often have in such matters. Within the literature we find that a husband's opinion is a strong influencing factor in whether or not women engage in using preventative methods (Bongarts & Bruce, 1995; Ezeh, 1993; Caldwell & Caldwell, 1987). Author Alex Chi Ezeh (1993), specifically puts forth the argument that a husband's educational level is also a strong factor in determining whether or not his wife will use birth control suggesting that the higher a husband's level of education, the more likely his wife is to engage in practices of family. The issue of women's agency in using family planning (specifically in societies where they possess little power in terms of the decision making process) is extensively studied within the literature (Randall & LeGrand, 2003) and furthermore represents yet another issue characterizing the region of Kébémér.

With regards to this, as we know from the very patriarchal nature of the studied region, a husband's decision typically wins over the opinion of his wife/wives. As such, we argue that Ezeh's and other's finding are both relevant and reflective of our own data. This observed trend is particularly evident in the interview excerpts below.

*...Moi je ne le fait pas, en plus mon mari ne l'aime pas.*

(Female, age 35, married)

*...Parce que mon mari s'y oppose et en plus je crois que ça va empirer mon état, ça va me rendre encore plus malade.*

(Female, age 37, married)

Yet while we know have a better understanding of the fertility patterns and family planning practices in Kébémér, as well as the beliefs and reasoning's behind such decisions, what we further seek to understand is the influence of migration on these critical aspects of conjugal life.

#### **4.3.4 The Influence of Migration**

As we have noted above, many residents of Kébémér do indeed express reluctance in using various forms of birth control. Nonetheless, what is also evident in examining the collected data is that usage of differing forms of contraception such as the pill or injections is gaining in popularity, particularly as economic difficulties intensify and as the cost of living continues to rise. This particular trend is reflected in the word of van de Walle and Meekers (1992) who note with regards to Sub-Saharan Africa at large, "... it has sometimes been speculated that recent economic difficulties may lead to a revision downward of the number of wanted children. There has been much speculation on 'crisis-led fertility declines'" (11). Related to this, within our own data we find that practice of family planning is especially prominent, and certainly more widely accepted, among those younger members of society; perhaps a reflection of generational change.

What is of greatest interest to us, however, is attempting to understand how both fertility levels and family planning may be altered by significant emigration. As such, it is useful for us to compare the dialogues of migrant wives to those of non-migrant wives in an effort to better understand how migration may be playing a role. To begin, we first examine the issue of fertility.

#### **Migrant wives**

In speaking on her desired number of children:

*R: Pas beaucoup quand même, parce que s'il faudra penser à la difficulté de la vie - la vie ça coute chère, il faudra l'éducation, la nourriture, ça ça coute chère, donc...il ne faut pas faire des enfants et après leurs faires souffrir. Il faudra tout calculer...et bon*

*I: Et vous avez envie d'avoir quel nombre d'enfants ou vous n'avez pas encore décider?*

*R: Bon, disons s'il faut....maximum peut-être quatre.*

(Female, age 33, married)

*Quand ils sont grands (les enfants) leur éducation demande beaucoup de moyens, parce que les enfants d'aujourd'hui sont têtues. C'est ce qui m'a poussée à ne pas avoir beaucoup d'enfants. Des enfants réduits pour s'occuper d'eux. Mais quand j'étais petite je pensais autrement (beaucoup d'enfants). Je voulais 6, 5, 10 enfants, maintenant j'en suis consciente, seulement 4 enfants.*

(Female, age 23, married)

### **Non-migrant wives**

*I: toi tu souhaites avoir combien d'enfants?*

*R: ça je n'en sais rien, seul Dieu sait. Tout ce que le Bon Dieu décidera....*

*I: donc tu veux avoir plusieurs enfants? Par exemple 20 au 30*

*R: si le Bon Dieu en décide ainsi mais je ne veux pas avoir 20*

*I: donc tu veux en avoir combien?*

*R: (rire) je veux avoir 4 (2 garçons et 2 filles)*

*I: pourquoi tu veux avoir 4 enfants?*

*R: parce que je pense que ... (elle resta pendant quelques secondes) si tu as 20 enfants alors que tu n'as pas de boulot, tu n'as pas les moyens de les entretenir tu vas te fatiguer. La vie est dure présentement mieux vaut demander au Bon Dieu de te donner 4 enfants*

(Female, age 19, married, no children)

*I: Combien d'enfants souhaiterais tu avoir quand tu étais jeune?*

*R: Quand j'étais jeune je voulais avoir 2 enfants (rire)*

*I: Comment tu en as déjà (deux) tu ne vas plus en avoir?*

*R: (Rire) Tout dépend de Dieu je ne peux rien dire (Rire). Si je dépasse les deux je saurai que c'est le Bon Dieu qui en a décidé ainsi.*

(Female, age 23, married with two children)

In looking at the discourses of migrant wives as compared to non-migrant wives on the topic of fertility patterns, a few notable patterns seem to emerge. Firstly, a similarity between the two groups of women appears to be a general trend towards wanting to have fewer children. The primary reasoning for this appears to be the economic strain children place on a family's resources which are seen as especially burdensome in the midst of current economic difficulties. In addition, however, as all of the above respondents are fairly young in age, the trend toward lower fertility may also be seen as a generational shift and also largely led by economic constraint. Lastly, it is also observed among the interviews as a whole that the older a woman becomes having few to no children, the less likely she will be

to use contraceptive means as she most will likely feel increasing pressure to have children in what is considered the her prime child-bearing age<sup>9</sup>.

In terms of differences, what we seem to find in looking more holistically at the discourses of migrant versus non-migrant wives is that migrant wives express greater outright concern in terms of limiting the number of children they will have. Non-migrant wives, on the other hand, are often more apt to note that this is left in the hands of God and as such seem to express less of a need to tightly control numbers. This finding can be seen as relating to what we discussed in chapter three concerning the 'loneliness' experienced by these women. Ultimately, we argue that wives of migrants may not want to end up with large families (many children) as they are well aware that their husbands will not be there to support them on a daily basis and may additionally lack control over resources; in other words, they are placed into greater vulnerability.

In addition to this, as was noted at the beginning of this section, within the literature we find the further argument that the simple fact of the greater physical separation between a migrant husband and his wife may strongly contribute to a drop in a woman's fertility patterns (Madhavan et al., 2001; Massey & Mullen, 1984). This trend can also be seen as reflected within our own data as on the whole, wives of migrants (especially those from younger generations) seem to be having fewer children as compared to non-migrant wives. Nonetheless, we must stress that the real issue here centers on migrant women *desiring* to have less children as it is certainly reflective of the vulnerable social situation in which they are placed.

Lastly, referring again to household dynamics, as was discussed in chapter 2, within polygynous marriages there is often competition between co-wives and furthermore, this competition can in many cases become heightened during a husband's migration. However, not only does competition pertain to household duties and relations with in-laws (as discussed in chapter 2), but it also relates to sexual encounters with one's husband. As Oppong (1992) tells us, many polygynous households seem to be characterized by not only the rotation of wives in terms of household duties, but also of sexual rights. Related to this, as we know from Madhavan et al. (2001), context plays a key role in establishing patterns of

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<sup>9</sup> In the Senegalese context, this is period is typically viewed as being between the ages of 15- 29 (Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006).

fertility. When we look at the influence of migration in terms of the physical separation it engenders between a husband and wife and combine this with a polygynous marital arrangement, fertility will certainly decline.

Related to fertility is the issue of family planning. With regards to this, we question how migration may also be seen as an influential factor in altering existing beliefs and practices. As the result of outward movements and the subsequent exposure of migrants to Western norms, some suggest that we should expect to see gravitation towards these on the part of migrants themselves (Levitt, 1998). In this case, therefore, we might expect to see migrants and their wives engaging in family planning practices to a greater extent than non-migrant men and their wives. As Levitt (1998) argues, “More contact with the host society means greater exposure to its different features, more reflection on existing practices, and a greater potential for incorporating new routines” (930-931). Nonetheless, if we look at our own data, we in fact find that this is not the case within Kébémér. Instead, what can be seen within the data is a tendency for migrant men to remain ever more conservative on matters concerning family planning. Let us therefore compare the discourses of migrant wives with those of non-migrant wives in an attempt to understand the influence migration may or may not be having on family planning.

#### **Migrant wives**

*I: Pour les différences d'âge avec tes enfants. Est-ce que tu utilises le planning?*

*R: Non, non. Je ne le fais pas. Je n'aime pas*

*I: Pourquoi tu n'aimes pas le planning?*

*R: Non, non.*

(Female, age 35, married with 2 children)

*I: Pourquoi ne fais-tu pas de planning?*

*R: Parce que mon mari s'y oppose et en plus je crois que ça va empirer mon état, ça va me rendre encore plus malade.*

(Female, age 37, married with 7 children)

#### **Non-migrant wives**

*I: Quel est ton avis sur le planning familial?*

*R: Ça aide la femme parce que ce n'est pas bien pour une femme d'avoir beaucoup d'enfants. Par exemple si ton mari n'a pas les moyens c'est pourquoi moi je l'utilisais.*

*Je sais que mon mari ne pouvait pas supporter plusieurs charges de l'enfant parce que jusqu'à présent je me prends en charge.*

*I: Quel a été l'avis de ton mari sur le planning?*

*R: Non non mon mari n'avait pas de problèmes. On en a discuté à propos du planning. Même quand ma fille cadette est née, il est venu à la maternité pour me dire qu'on doit arrêter. Je lui ai dit que je peux prendre des pilules parce qu'après la pilule j'ai pris l'appareil.*

(Female, age 56, married with 4 children)

*I: Qu'est ce que tu penses du planning?*

*R: Ça permet à la femme de se reposer. Moi j'étais fatiguée quand j'étais enceinte. J'étais malade pendant toute la grossesse, mon dernier enfant j'avais trop mal, c'était dur. Après l'accouchement j'avais une infection par la suite on m'a opérée c'est comme ça que j'ai fait le planning...*

*I: Est-ce que quand tu as utilisé le planning tu en as parlé à ton mari?*

*R: Oui oui il était d'accord sur le principe. En plus avec mon dernier enfant j'ai eu beaucoup de problèmes jusqu'à ce que je sois opérée.*

(Female, age 50, married with 9 children)

In looking at the above excerpts we observe that wives of migrants appear to be less likely to engage in practices of family planning which furthermore, often seems to be the result of opposition on the part of their husbands. This pattern confirms earlier observations that migrant men remain especially conservative despite the influence of the host country, relying instead on existing traditions and beliefs to guide their decisions and behaviour.

On the other hand, in terms of non-migrant wives, it seems as though these women are at least more open to the idea of family planning if not already engaging in preventative methods. Additionally, non-migrant husbands seem to also be somewhat more open to the idea. In regards to this, we lastly argue that quite simply, non-migrant husbands and their wives may in fact have more of a need to practice family planning in order to prevent a large number of pregnancies as they are certainly in more frequent contact with one another than are migrant husbands and their wives who may in fact rely on distance as a form of birth control in and of itself.

In terms of fertility patterns and family planning practices most generally, what must be remembered is that post-marital residence plays a key role in such matters. More specifically, the multitude of dynamics, including the varying gender and intergenerational

power relations at play within the household (discussed in Chapter 2), serve to reinforce certain expected norms of fertility and family planning. In light of this, we argue that the increased prevalence of migration in the studied regions of Kébémér has additionally led to decreased freedom in women's decision-making abilities regarding reproduction as surveillance and suspicion on the part of other members of the family, and the community more broadly, have increased. Furthermore, similarly to our findings regarding sexual behaviour, we find that, despite exposure to what might be seen as more 'liberal' behaviours within their host country, migrant men seem to remain rooted in tradition, consequently insisting on conservative behaviours and practices on the part of their wives. While migrant wives seem to express a desire for a smaller, more controlled number of children, birth control is typically not viewed as an option among these couples with the women relying instead on distance as a means of avoiding a large number of pregnancies.

In following the above discussion, we further seek to know how, in the cases where the wife of a migrant becomes pregnant and gives birth to a child/children, having an absent husband due to migration and living with one's in-laws, influences the upbringing of the child, specifically as it relates to the degree of power and authority of the wife during her migrant husband's absence.

#### **4.3.5 Child Rearing**

Without a doubt, wives of migrants face significant challenges in raising their children without the assistance of a physically present husband. The situation becomes even more complex when we take into account the added dimension of in-laws and the subsequent control which they often have over incoming remittances. Furthermore, as we learned in the last chapter, a husband's role in the household is often to be a mediator between his wife and his natal family (Diop, 1985; Antoine, 2002; Dial, 2007). As such, one can see how this absence may be especially felt by the wife of a migrant in trying to fight for the needs and desires of her child/children. Let us first begin, however, by addressing the issue of control over resources as it is this topic that seems to surface the most within the collected interviews. Following this, we will discuss the position of left-behind wives within the household in the context of how this may impact their ability to effectively raise their children.

**a) Control over resources**

While one may at first presume that during a migrant husband's absence, his wife might acquire more autonomy and control due to his absence, we now know that in the studied regions of Kébémér, this is not typically the case. As we discussed in chapter 2, during the absence of migrant husbands the established hierarchy within the household is fact becomes somewhat intensified leading to more pronounced intergenerational and gender-related inequalities, often resulting in greater conflict between its members. Among such dynamics we find that issues surrounding the control over remittances sent back by migrants are particularly troublesome according to migrant wives.

In chapter three we also noted the greater importance and value placed on family ties as compared to conjugal relationships. With this system of loyalty in place, it is most common to find that remittances are left in the control of migrants' kin members as opposed to his wife (Findley, 1997). This also falls in accordance with the traditional gender division of labour within much of Africa as men are usually placed in charge of the management of finances (Locoh, 2007). Lastly, with a lack of representation due to the absence of one's migrant husbands, wives are put in a less-than-ideal bargaining position vis-à-vis their in-laws. With these factors combined, a lack of independence is felt on the part of migrant wives. In the passage below, the wife of a migrant expresses some of her difficulties in terms of financial control:

*I: Quand tu étais dans la famille de ton mari, à qui remettait-il la dépense? A toi ou à sa famille?*

*R: L'argent allait d'abord à ma belle famille et ensuite on me donnait ma part.*

*I: Y avait-il des inconvénients par rapport à ça?*

*R: Oui parce qu'on ne savait pas comment ça se passait. Tu ne recevais que ce que l'on voulait bien te donner et on ne pouvait pas se plaindre pour ne pas amener d'histoires.*

(Female, age 43, married)

Adding to the above, as the families of migrant men are often rather protective of incoming funds and furthermore have a tendency to be quite suspicious and/or jealous of their migrant sons' wife/wives, we find that mother-in-laws in particular [and in general] are often reluctant to give substantial funding to their daughter-in-law. Note the way in which one young woman explains the situation:

*Les belles mères sont jalouses de leurs belles filles. Il y a des rivalités à cause de la richesse du mari. Je pense que c'est parce que les migrants partent à l'étranger pour revenir avec de l'argent...*

(Female, age 25, married to non-migrant husband)

Further to this, the passage below serves to illustrate more broadly the difficulties faced by wives of migrants in terms of access to resources in the post-marital setting:

*...Presque tous les émigrés vivent dans la maison de leurs parents. La nourriture c'est sa maman qui gère. Quand la femme se réveille c'est sa maman qui te donne la dépense quotidienne ou bien on confie l'argent au boutiquier qui sera chargé de donner tant de kilos de Riz, une quantité d'huile et de l'argent à la femme de l'émigré. A la fin du mois l'émigré n'enverra à sa femme que 5000FCFA ou 10000FCFA à quoi ça va servir à la dame c'est pourquoi leurs femmes adoptent des comportements déviants. Ecris ça (elle s'adressait à moi), les femmes d'émigrés passent leurs temps à tendre la main.*

(Female, age 56, married to non-migrant husband)

As the above excerpts demonstrate, a sense of dependency may be experienced by many wives of migrants as well as a lack of autonomy in terms of not having the ability to make one's own decisions. In addition, we see a link between the issue of control over resources and our previous discussion concerning the sexual behaviour of migrant wives. Nonetheless, we must be nuanced in our interpretation of the above passages as they are indeed the expressions of the opinions of non-migrant wives rather than the actual personal experiences of migrant wives themselves. As such, while they may indeed reflect a certain reality, we must remain aware that they are the opinion of 'outsiders', so to speak.

While we now have a better understanding of the impact that migration is having on a wife's control over resources, we more specifically desire to know how this subordinate position within the household affects the rearing of her child/children.

#### **b) Position within household**

First and foremost, if the wife of a migrant has difficulty accessing resources within the household, we can presumably argue that her children will experience the repercussions of this to a certain degree. For example, in not having direct access to the financial resources

of the family, the wife of a migrant must ask her in-laws for everything needed or desired for her children. This becomes not only tiresome, but also, in light of her often subordinate position within the household, such requests are not always met. As one migrant wife laments,

*Mes enfants sont là, le neveu de mon mari ne s'occupe pas très bien de nous. Mes enfants sont obligées de se débrouiller seuls, il ne leur donne jamais de quoi acheter des friandises.*

(Female, married, age 37)

Further to this, the lesser status of the wife of a migrant is often also projected onto her children who subsequently are asked to perform more chores. In speaking about her children the same woman as in the above passage further goes on to explain,

*Quand il rentre le soir, quand les enfants doivent se reposer, il leur demande de balayer, alors que quand elles se réveillent elles nettoient tout proprement. Quand il rentre il (le neveu) veut frapper les enfants pour rien de tout. Tout ça parce qu'il ne me respect pas.*

(Female, age 37, married)

Despite the pervasive trend of dependency on the part of migrant wives, some migrant men express that, in fact, they leave their wives with a significant amount of authority in the household, particularly as it relates to child-rearing. Note the way one migrant husband explains:

**R:** *Moi ma femme quand elle a eu des enfants et que je n'étais pas là c'est elle qui me représente ici, elle entretient mes enfants parce qu'elles [ses deux filles] sont à nous deux. C'est elle quand je téléphone qui me dit ce qui manque pour que je lui donne. Le prophète disait que celui qui a une famille doit l'entretenir [sa femme nous coupe pour lui demander un téléphone portable qu'il lui a amené d'Italie].*

**I:** *On parlait de ta famille.*

**R:** *Ah, oui, donc quand je ne suis pas là je téléphone pour demander à ma femme de les éduquer comme je le veux, dans notre religion, parce que l'enfant ne devient que ce qu'on a fait de lui [sa femme revient pour lui demander de l'argent pour acheter un meuble de coin qu'un vendeur venait de lui montrer].*

(Migrant male, age 30-49, married)

While this particular individual argues that his wife has a considerable amount of household authority during his absence, we must recognize that the situation is expressed from *his* perspective and as such, we question whether the reality is indeed so nice. Furthermore, as the respondent notes in the latter part of the above excerpt, he asks his wife to instruct their children the way *he* wishes, thereby alluding more accurately to the continued gender hierarchy which seems to persist even during migrant absences.

Related to this, as education is in many ways considered a privilege in the studied regions of Kébémér and furthermore, a substantial amount of funding is required to put a child through school, it is particularly in this domain that we see the consequences of resource inaccessibility play out in terms a migrant wife's child rearing. As was highlighted earlier, the wife of a migrant must ask her in-laws for money for everything, including the schooling of her children. This fact alone puts her in an extremely vulnerable position as her children's ability to obtain a decent education is essentially dependent on her having good relations with her in-laws.

Therefore, we argue that if financial decision-making rests in the hands of a wife's in-laws, to a large extent, they also are in control of the rearing of her child/children. As we have discovered in looking at the data, these in-laws can chose to not provide the finances needed for a child to attend school and can furthermore place increased burdens on the son or daughter of a migrant wife by having them perform a larger share of the household chores giving their mother only so much authority and decision-making power in raising them. On the other hand, however, when the wife of a migrant either lives separately from her in-laws or is of kin relation to them, she is typically given a greater amount of flexibility and control over the finances and is subsequently able to be more actively involved in the raising of her children.

In addition to the above what we also observe in looking at the data is the strong prevalence of opinion concerning doubts as to the ability of the wife of a migrant to adequately raise her child/children. For example, one of the most common anxieties raised in the interviews, particularly among male respondents, concerns the ability of a migrant wife to ensure a good education for her children. Setting aside the barriers previously discussed which largely remain out of a wife's hands, certain respondents seem to question a wife's

capacity to adequately monitor her children's educational needs and progress. As one young male respondent expresses,

**I:** *Le départ des migrants change-t-il quelque chose dans l'éducation de leurs enfants?*

**R:** *Si, ça joue sur cela. Si tu as une fille ou même un garçon qui tu laisses ici cela peut gêner son éducation il ne fera que ce qui lui plaît, surtout pour une fille. Si leurs mères sont négligentes, alors ça craint.*

(Male, age 19, single)

Similarly, another male respondent argues:

**R:** *Ça c'est pas bon (...), tes enfants ne te connaîtront pas assez de même que tes parents [dans le sens large du terme]. Et puis tes enfants ne seront pas éduqués comme tu le voudrais parce que tu n'es pas stable. Ils [les émigrés] ne peuvent pas se passer du voyage mais revenir pour travailler ici c'est ce que j'aurais fait moi.*

**I:** *Que peut il arriver si les enfants ne connaissent pas leur père assez?*

**R:** *C'est un danger parce que l'éducation peut donner un homme est différente de celle des femmes. Un enfant a plus peur de son père que de sa mère. C'est ça le danger alors que l'éducation est fondamentale.*

(Male, age 68, married)

The above excerpt highlights that the absence of a father is thought to be a particular drawback with regards to a child's upbringing, particularly as it relates to their education. This opinion serves as additional evidence as to the higher status accorded to men within society and perceived inability of women to serve as adequate parents on their own. As a result of this, what we also observe is that while direct child fostering may not be directly expressed as taking place among migrant families, we do seem to find (in cases when a migrant wife is left with her children in the house of her in-laws) that sometimes there is greater involvement-or at least greater interference by family members in certain aspects of child-rearing. Nonetheless, what appears as prominent among the data is an expression among migrant wives as to a lack of help and understanding from conjugal family members:

**I:** *Est-ce qu'il y a des avantages ou des inconvénients à ce que ton mari soit à l'étranger?*

**R:** *Tu vas avoir des difficultés, de grandes difficultés même. Quand tu es là et que ton mari n'est pas là tu vas avoir des difficultés parce qu'il y a des choses qu'il ne pourra*

*pas régler. Des fois, quand tu l'appelles au téléphone il ne peut pas régler tes problèmes comme ça alors que s'il était là il allait simplifier les choses.*

**I:** *Quels genres de difficultés? [Interviewer herself said that she found it difficult to understand what these difficulties were - it was never clear despite probing]*

**R:** *C'est-à-dire tes envies. Ici au Sénégal on a beaucoup de besoins. Quand tu élèves tes enfants (...)*

(Female, age 29, married with 5 children)

In looking at the above interview excerpts, what we must take note of is that such opinions are typically found among male respondents and are subsequently reflective of the gender roles within Kébémér and the related status of men who are presumed to be more authoritative in raising their children and thus better able to ensure compliance with regards to education.

Related to the above, what we also find in looking at the data is that a frequent lack of education on the part of many wives is especially seen as a point of weakness in its believed influence of their child-rearing abilities. It furthermore puts them in an even greater subordinate position to their husbands as well as to certain other household members. In surveying the data it is indeed found that many women, and especially those who marry young, abandon their education at the time of marriage. Note the way in which one migrant wife expresses her regret at abandoning her education:

**I:** *Qu'est ce que tu regrettes? Pourquoi veux-tu que tes enfants soient scolarisés*

**R:** *Parce que la scolarisation est fondamentale. Aujourd'hui si j'étais scolarisé j'allais lire ce papier [elle parle du formulaire de consentement] et tout ce que ce papier comporte.*

(Female, age 35, married with two sons)

A similar story is shared by an older woman:

**R:** *Je n'ai fait ni l'école française, ni l'école coranique. Quand je me suis mariée j'étais jeune, tout ce que je faisais c'étaient les travaux ménagers et après je restais chez moi. C'est pourquoi je ne connais pas grand-chose dans la vie parce que si tu ne bouges pas dans la vie tu ne connais pas grand-chose dans la vie.*

(Female, age 65, widow, 9 children)

Related to the above, amidst concerns on the part of males as to a woman's ability to adequately raise her children and ensure that they receive a good education, both married and

single women alike are observed as stressing the importance of education for their children (whether present or future). This is observed pattern is exemplified in the passage below:

**I:** *Comme tu n'es pas scolarisé, en serait-il le cas pour tes enfants?*

**R:** *Non, mes enfants seront scolarisés, parce que mon manque de scolarisation m'a affecté. Même je regrette de ne pas poursuivre l'école coranique.*

**I:** *Et l'école française?*

**R:** *Je regrette aussi mais ce n'était pas la même chose. Avant il n'y avait pas autant d'école française. IL n'y avait même pas à grand Kebe. IL y avait des gens qui venaient jusqu'à Kébémér pour étudier, mais ils n'étaient pas nombreux. Mais il y a une école française à Grand Kebe maintenant.*

(Female, age 35, married with two children)

**I:** *Tu vas scolariser ton fils?*

**R:** *Trop. Mon fils je vais le mettre à l'école coranique puis à l'école française jusqu'à avoir le bac. Avoir un bon boulot.*

(Female, age 23, married with one child)

Thus, while some members of the studied communities (particularly males) seem to question a woman's ability to ensure her children are well educated during a husband's absence, we in fact note in looking at the data that most women place a high value on educating their children. In light of this, the observed discrepancy between the opinion put forth by males versus that of wives (or future wives) themselves, serves to illustrate the persistent gender inequalities within society as the aforementioned opinions are created and circulated through discourse as a means of ensuring that women remain in a subordinate position, quite similarly to the discourse surrounding the sexual behaviour of migrant wives discussed earlier on.

On the whole, what we can say is that in terms the raising of children, wives of migrants face many barriers which are more or less exceptional among those with present husbands. Not only do they seem to encounter greater difficulties in terms of being able to secure and control the financial resources needed to raise a child, but they furthermore meet barriers of a status and authority as issues of familial dynamics and gender roles come into play in the realm of child-rearing as well. Furthermore, as a consequence of the household dynamics discussed in chapter three, we argue here that issues of control and authority among household members can be seen as leading to conflict, specifically as it relates to the rearing of children. Yet as we do not have considerable amount of data concerning the role of

in-laws in the raising of the children of migrants and the subsequent resulting dynamics, we suggest that this is an area in need of further research.

#### 4.4 DISCUSSION

In the previous chapters, we argued that migration plays a role in terms of the way in which marriages come to take place as well as on the conjugal life that results. More specifically, in chapter three we stressed that context plays a critical role in shaping the relationship between a husband and wife, and in the Kébémér setting, this is typically characterized by a patrilocal post-marital residence setting (for other settings in Senegal: Sow, 1985). As such, for a wife, this also means that she is surrounded by numerous relatives which, with differing household positions and levels of authority, can often lead to situations of conflict (Diop, 1985; Sow, 1985; Locoh, 2007; Antoine, 2002; Locoh & Thiriat, 1995). Furthermore, the absence of a migrant husband sometimes leaves a wife in a vulnerable position with her in-laws and furthermore, often feeling very alone (Salgado de Snyder, 1993). In this chapter, we have additionally seen the way in which the very influence of migration on the two aforementioned realms further affect the patterns of sexual behaviour, fertility, and child-rearing of certain wives of migrants, thereby demonstrating a type of ripple effect: As relationships change, so to do the behaviours and decisions of the parties involved- but not, of course, without conflict and in addition, not necessarily in the direction one might expect.

More specifically, in terms of our first question concerning the sexual behaviour of migrant husbands as well as their wives, we have shown that although there are many assumptions among respondents concerning sexually deviant behaviour among migrant wives, these accusations may be largely unfounded. We furthermore argued although it is the migrant men who are leaving, it is the behaviour of their left-behind wives that remains the prevalent discourse within Kébémér society; this indicative of the persistent gender inequalities characterizing the regions of study.

In terms of our second question, we argued that migrant wives appear to express an overall desire for lesser children and were subsequently more likely to show - or at least allude to having lower fertility levels. However, what we also noted was that the trend of

wanting a lesser number of children was also found to be quite prevalent among the younger generation as a whole, thereby signalling what might also be a factor of generational change. In terms of family planning, we observed that migrant men and their wives remain significantly more traditional in terms of showing greater opposition as compared to non-migrants and their wives.

Lastly, in better understanding the context within which many migrant wives are left-behind, we proposed that these women have a substantially more difficult time rearing their children, due especially to the fact that they most likely have little control over financial resources. This question was answered in looking at our data: migrant wives were seen to face not only the barrier of financial dependence, but to also experience significant challenges in terms of their thought ability to adequately educate and raise their children, despite other indicators of the contrary.

Within this final chapter we proposed that migration does indeed play a role in influencing the aforementioned behaviours, but not in a progressive way. Conversely, it is argued that migration can be seen as serving to reinforce traditional/conservative attitudes and power relations present within society. What would have been useful in attempting to compare the perspectives of migrant husbands and their wives on many of the issues addressed in this chapter would have been the conducting of couple interviews. In interviewing a husband and wife (though separately of course) we may have been better able to identify gender-related differences in opinion which also may have been useful in identifying the power structures present in then studied region. Nonetheless, based on our discoveries within this chapter, we argue that if there is going to be a change in society [especially in terms of gender and intergenerational power relationships], it will be on the part of women as they are the ones most directly affected by migration and furthermore, those put in the most difficult situations as a result. As such, they are the ones who are certainly most motivated to see change occur and of course, in a direction which works to their benefit.

The above noted observations regarding the influence of migration in reinforcing certain conservative norms and behaviours ultimately leads us to question the assumptions implicit within classical development theories, especially as they relate to the development potential of migration. On the whole, among traditional economic and demographic

modernization theories such as Rostow's stages of growth (1960), Lewis' Structural-Change Theory (1954), Thompson's Demographic Transition Theory (1929) and so on, development is argued as occurring in a linear fashion and furthermore, as coinciding with the adoption of certain characteristics which prevail within most Western societies (i.e. liberalism, industrialization, lower birth rates etc.). Within these theories, it is wrongly presumed that progress is the inevitable result of development and furthermore, that progress occurs in the same manner everywhere. What these models further fail to provide is an *understanding* of how and by which factors development should come. On the whole, they do not take into account the complexity nor the diversity of development as a multifaceted phenomenon, implying changes of different types for different regions and groups of people.

More specifically, if we look at the ideas that have been put forth within the literature concerning the connection between migration and development, these seem to suggest that migration inevitably serves as a factor of change in promoting transformations in both the economic and social level within the source country. This is assumed to take place, for example, through the channelling of remittances as well as through the presumed return of skilled migrants (Macmillen, 1982; Russell, 1986; Olesen, 2002; Nyberg-Sorensen et al., 2002; Newland, 2003). Despite such strong assertions however, the same patterns are not to be found within our own data and as such, cause us to question the legitimacy and accurateness of the fundamental assertions grounding such theories. In light of this we suggest that a great deal more research is needed in order to investigate this marked discrepancy as well as to discover and suggest alternative understandings.

## CONCLUSION

### **5.1 FINDINGS IN REVIEW**

Throughout the course of this research our overarching goal has been to critically examine the influence of migration on the marriage process as well as on the resulting conjugal life. In an effort to refine our investigation, we questioned whether migration would be seen to influence both the process of marriage as well as the resulting conjugal life by altering the multiplicity of gendered and intergenerational relationships involved therein. We furthermore felt, however, that based on the strong rootedness of the studied region in tradition, changes would perhaps be observed as being neither drastic nor necessarily all-encompassing but rather, as forming a type of merger between elements of both the 'old' and the 'new'.

In examining the degree to which the above assertions proved true within the data, we discovered that the impact of migration in fact reaches far beyond these realms in also deeply affecting both the family and the community as a whole, demonstrating a complex interweaving of different facets of social life within the studied region. It was additionally noted that although migrant men are the ones who leave to live abroad, it is the behaviour of their left-behind wives that remains the topic of discussions within the studied region; an indication as to the persistence of gender inequalities within small-town Senegal. Furthermore, while our primary area of investigation centred on families and wives left behind by migrants, it was found that the community as a whole was affected by such outward movements, especially with regards to changes occurring in the marriage process as these seemed to promote the redefinition of roles and responsibilities, and in some cases, the adoption of new values and norms. Yet while eagerly adopted by those of younger generations, these changes were often seen to be experienced as a loss of power among those of older ages and were subsequently met with great resistance and pessimism among this particular group within society.

Despite the observed changes, however, it was also found that in many cases, migration served as a type of reinforcement of existing patriarchal norms. In light of this, we questioned the validity of traditional theories of modernization and development (especially

those linked to migration), which tend to view 'development' as being something inherently progressive. Let us now review the major findings of each chapter in an effort to highlight the key insights and discoveries acquired.

In chapter two we looked at how migration may affect the marriage process and focused mainly on the initiation of marriage, spousal selection and bride price due to the primacy of these stages within the marriage process in Kébémér. We additionally looked at the two main forms of unions: monogamy and polygyny, as the latter is a near universal practice within the studied region. At all levels, we looked at how the implication of the family members was also affected. We found that in terms of the process of marriage, changes occurring in this area are felt most deeply at the familial level as roles become redefined. More specifically, it was found that migration has influenced the process of spousal selection and along with it, the role and power of parents as in many cases; the final decision no longer rests in their hands. Additionally, with the presence of greater sums of money as well as other indicators of wealth displayed to the community as a whole, it appears as though money has come to hold a greater influence over selecting a spouse and subsequently causing many non-migrant men to experience greater difficulty in finding a spouse due to the large amounts of bride price now expected. Further to this, such changes are not only affecting the decisions made by young women in terms of who to select as a spouse but furthermore, many parents are also showing a significant desire to share in the wealth of migrants and their families by encouraging their daughters to marry these men. In terms of the influence of migration on polygyny, it was observed that this practice is significantly more pervasive among migrant men, perhaps owing in part to their ability to afford the climbing bride price characterizing the region. Interestingly enough however, within both our own data as well as the results from previous Demographic Health Surveys (Ndiaye, Sarr, Ayad, 1988; Ndiaye, Diouf, Ayad, 1994; Ndiaye, Ayad & Gaye, 1997; Ndiaye & Ayad, 2006), the practice of polygyny appears to be remaining strong despite the increasing monetary strain being placed on potential husbands. This trend is particularly significant in light of a strong decline in polygyny observed in other lesser-developed regions of the world (Caldwell et al., 1992; Hayase & Liaw, 1997; LeVan, 1999). Finally, it was found that despite migrant men's exposure to Western lifestyles while living and working abroad, they do not necessarily bring back different views and practices in returning home

but rather seem especially more grounded in and committed to reproducing the patriarchal conservative way of life characterizing this region. This can perhaps be attributed to what Riccio (2001) notes as tendency among Senegalese men to remain rather isolated when living within the host country. On the whole therefore, we concluded by arguing that while migration is certainly a 'real' factor of change, the direction of such changes do not necessarily play out in the way one might initially suppose. While traditional development theories often assume change to be synonymous with progress- and progress according to Western standards (Rostow, 1960; Macmillen, 1982; Russell, 1986; Olesen, 2002)- in the case of Kébémér, this was not found to be the case thereby signalling a flaw within the traditional development discourse.

In chapter three, we focused on the different dynamics at play in the post-marital setting due to the patrilocal arrangements characteristics of this region and the subsequent changes occurring within the household due to the influence of migration. With regards to this, it was discerned that the complexity of intra-household dynamics during migrant absences places significant strain both on a wife's relationship with her in-laws and co-wives, as well as with her husband (the two being very much linked with one another) and furthermore seems to foster greater conflict among household members as the competition for resources increases, and the absence of a migrant male makes conflict resolution all the more difficult. Furthermore, in contrast to what was noted in the literature as being an increased autonomy experienced by wives of migrants during migrant husband's absence, the scenario in the studied region was found to be much different as the firm rooting of gender and intergenerational norms guiding household dynamics in fact seemed to become amplified as result of migration, thus leading to a lack of access to resources among left-behind wives. Lastly, in following the idea of the post-marital residence setting as being a key factors of influence on the behaviour of migrant wives, we argued that in light of what appeared to be a gradual yet increasing prevalence of a nuclear-type household arrangements among migrants, many wives expressed a greater desire to live in such an arrangement as they seemed to observe the increased freedom and on the whole greater sense of well-being experienced by wives already living in such situations. Overall, the monitoring of migrant wives by in-laws seemed to lead to significant strain being placed on the marriages of

migrant men which we further observed as contributing to a greater instability of marriage among such couples.

In our final core chapter (chapter four), we examined the way in which migration's influence on the marriage process as well as on intra-household dynamics (especially in terms of gender and intergenerational roles) might further be seen to affect patterns of sexual behaviour, fertility, and child rearing. In looking at these different dimensions, it was firstly found that as the process of marriage as well as intra-household dynamics experience transformations, so to do the aforementioned realms. In terms of sexual behaviour, for example, we observed that although there were many suspicions among respondents concerning sexual deviance among migrant wives, these were deemed as being largely unfounded. Looking at fertility, we noted that migrant wives express a desire to have fewer children and related to this, were also more likely to show (or at least allude to) having lower fertility levels. With regards to this, we found this to largely be the case due firstly to being physically separated from ones husband and secondly, the desire to have less children was attributed to the lack of access to resources experienced within the conjugal household as discovered and discussed in chapter 3. Nonetheless, we also observed that the trend of wanting to have a lesser number of children was quite prevalent among the younger generation as a whole, thereby signalling what was perceivably also an influence of generational change. Furthermore, we noted that in terms of family planning, migrant men and their wives remain significantly more traditional in terms of showing a greater opposition to such practices as compared to non-migrants and their wives. In acquiring a more comprehensive understanding of the context within which many migrant wives are left-behind by their husbands, we proposed that these women in particular experience significantly greater difficulty in rearing their children, due especially to the fact that they have little control over financial resources owing to the control of a migrant's kin over this realm. On the whole, we concluded by arguing that while migration certainly plays a role in influencing the areas of sexual behaviour, fertility and family planning, and child rearing, it does not do so in a progressive way but instead, served to reinforce and reinvent traditional/conservative attitudes and power relations present within the household.

In looking at the core findings of this thesis, we must now question their significance as well as examine how they compare to the existing body of research. Lastly, and perhaps

also most importantly, we must additionally seek to identify what new knowledge has been generated through our research and observations and what questions remain to be answered.

## **5.2 SIGNIFICANCE**

The results of our research affirms marriage and conjugal life as being excellent proxies from which to study social change as these are at the core of family dynamics, which, as we have discovered, are, themselves seen to shape social relationships at all levels. Further to this, based on our findings we see that circular migration has specific links to local development in fostering not only increased wealth among some community members, but in also in contributing to changes in behaviours and values. Transversal to both of these aspects is the dimension of power relationships. With regards to this, although such relations are modified through the migration phenomena, they continue to reinforce existing gender and intergenerational equalities, signalling the deep embedding of tradition within the studied region. This research has furthermore enabled us to better understand and explain how changes in the domain of marriage often imply broader societal change. This was found to be especially true in the region of study due to the central role played by the family in both the marriage process as well as conjugal life. Additionally, the impact that migration was found to have on the daily lives of those left behind (especially wives) gives credence to not only the impact of globalization on society as a whole, but also on social relationships occurring at the micro level. In bringing changes to gender and intergenerational relationships, we have observed how migration subsequently shapes daily living conditions.

Within our research we have seen evidence suggesting that there is indeed a link between migration and social change. With regards to this, the chosen themes of this thesis can be seen as especially enlightening and relevant as social change was observed to be occurring in each of these realms, although to different extents: Within the marriage process, in the patrilocal post-marital residence setting, and finally, in the area of family planning, fertility and child-rearing among left-behind wives. Despite these observations however, we must be conscious so as to nuance the association between social change and migration. The reason for this is that while social change does indeed appear to be taking place in the setting of our research, as has been noted, there is also strong evidence as to the equally visible lack of change in many fundamental behaviours and beliefs. As Portes (2008) notes with regards

to this pattern more generally, “Under certain conditions, cyclical movements may *reinforce* the existing social structures rather than change them” (16). The same author later goes on to again express that, “...in a number of instances these flows may actually strengthen or stabilize the existing socio-political order rather than transform it” (24). In fact, this is largely what we find to be true in the case of Kébémér: While changes are taking place, they are not particularly of a transformational nature and in many cases; they are not necessarily seen as positive changes by all members of society. As such, we must be careful in our understanding of the relationship between migration and social change as in many ways it is much more complex than is often acknowledged.

On the whole, in understanding both the changes brought about by migration as well as those elements that seem to remain relatively constant, we are provided with a greater understanding as to how traditions evolve and socio-economic logics change in the context of developing countries. As such, our research builds on the general reflection of these issues found in the work of authors such as van de Walle (1993); Pison, Cohen & Foote (1997), Thiriat, 1998, Riccio (2001; 2004) and Tiemoko (2004), and furthermore provides new insight into the factors which seem to precede such changes within developing countries.

### **5.3 LIMITATIONS AND NEW DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

While our research has certainly generated new insights and ideas, we acknowledge that as with most academic undertakings of this nature, it faces certain limitations and shortcomings. Despite these however, we firmly believe that our results nonetheless provide fruitful avenues for future research.

In terms of limitations, while our findings are representative of the studied region of Kébémér, the application of these to other regions and countries remains limited due to our focus on one specific `case` so to speak. In addition to this, while we discovered that, despite European exposure and influence, migrant men tend to remain especially conservative, we lacked sufficient information needed to determine the precise reasoning for this. We question for example, whether migrant men perhaps express more conservative behaviours and beliefs due to feeling threatened by the different norms and values encountered while abroad. This issue is especially relevant in light of the large numbers of migrants coming out of West Africa and as such, we suggest it as one possible avenue for

future research. Furthermore, the persistence of these existing norms despite migration has led many left-behind wives feeling extremely unsatisfied within the conjugal household, subsequently fostering greater marital instability among migrant couples. As such, future research is needed to determine whether migration, in the long run, will be seen to negatively impact marriage as indications of this trend seem to be already appearing.

Furthermore, while it was noted that post-marital residence arrangements comprise one particularly evolving area in the studied region, our understanding of the full scale and significance of the movement toward a more nuclear-type household among younger generations remains limited as few respondents expanded on this changing trend and little probing was done on the part of interviewers (both of which are presumably a result of this being a very recent change). As this alternative living arrangement represents a significant break with tradition, and could furthermore be seen to instigate major changes within the family and also in conjugal life, we propose that further research also be carried out on this topic, specifically as it relates to the issues surrounding women's power and autonomy.

Adding to the above, despite the influence migration, it was observed that gender relations in the region of study continue to favour greater power and control on the part of men. In addition, in light of these persistent inequalities, women appear to remain relatively compliant, arguably owing in large part to their dependent status. As such, little change was observed in terms of women's roles, responsibilities and degree of freedom. Nevertheless, the discourses do reveal that there *is* a potential for change. In the research conducted within this same region in the previously discussed 1999 study, almost all of the women expressed a keen desire to marry a migrant. In contrast with this, our present findings on the same region show movement away from this trend signaling that these women have other expectations and obviously feel relatively free to say that these men are not necessarily worth waiting for. Furthermore, within our own study, women additionally expressed a sense of regret in terms of abandoning their educating, and in many cases noted their resulting commitment to ensuring that their own children (especially daughters) continue on in their education. As such, although many of the interviewed women express a sense of defeat and sacrifice, they seem to have greater hope and a strong desire for change for the younger generations of women.

Finally, while this research has certainly touched on the relationship between migration and development, we have questioned the applicability of classic approaches to development within underdeveloped regions of the world such as Sub-Saharan Africa. In light of this, we argue that it would be beneficial for future researchers to take a more systematic look at the complex interconnection between migration and development. In doing so, researchers could focus, for example, on exploring the different elements involved in this link with a particular focus on the local setting. Whereas a more macro-level approach has been applied thus far within much of the existing literature on this topic, understanding how decision-making processes work at both the familial and community level (especially with regards to the use of remittances), could, for example, provide policy makers with valuable information as to how to best help foster meaningful development in underdeveloped regions. Furthermore, demographers, economists and so forth could incorporate variables enabling them to link individuals with their migration network into surveys and overall research approaches. For example, in household surveys, questions regarding the relationships between household members and migrants- in terms of the nature of these relations and what the each member stands to gain or lose from them- could be incorporated in a more systematic fashion. This would certainly provide us with a more accurate picture of people's living arrangements and general sense of well-being. This overall approach is echoed in the work of Kimberly Hamilton (2003) of the Migration Policy Institute, who aptly argues, "It seems, at best, a distant hope that remittances could help families, communities and countries remain permanently out of poverty. The enduring challenge is to link individual and family decision-making related to remittance expenditures and investments to broader development goals" (Retrieved online 03/06/09).

On the whole, in this work we have gone beyond just looking at the economic effect of out- migration on a community as we have shown have fruitful it is to use the family and conjugal units to explore changes potentially brought about by migration. This is primarily due to the fact that we have considered power relationships as being at the core of social dynamics and have furthermore stressed their importance in understanding other types of changes, including economic. Different members of a migrant's family, including his wives, evidenced this, for example, in the changing control over resources. In addition, we have demonstrated how migration dynamics can also affect non-migrant men who may either

desire to migrate or on the contrary, may work harder to stay within their home country, but who nonetheless, experience greater financial strain in finding a spouse due to the increases in bride price ushered in by migrants.

Migration in small-town Senegal has certainly created change in the domain of marriage and conjugal life. The direction and nature of such change, however, requires further investigation, as does the need for developing alternative understandings of 'development and progress'. The establishment of such an alternative approach is especially needed in light of what appears to be a persisting pattern of outward migration from many developing to developed countries (Zezeza, 2002; Gillo & Riccio, 2004). Without such an understanding, our knowledge as to the influence of migration will remain largely restricted to the realm of the economic and will subsequently fail to reveal the many transformations occurring at the equally important micro-level of the family and community.

APPENDIX A:  
MAP OF SENEGAL WITH KÉBÉMER IDENTIFIED



Source (original map): [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/senegal\\_rel\\_1989.pdf](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/africa/senegal_rel_1989.pdf)

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