

Post-marital residence in urban Senegal : revelations about contemporary marital dynamics and conjugal life

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Paper prepared for fifth UAPS conference held in Arusha, 10-14
December 2007

1. Introduction

In recent demographic literature surprisingly little has been written on African marriage, and in particular on changing marriage dynamics. As Antoine's (2002a) excellent literature review on the topic suggests, this may be due to the methodological difficulties of studying marriage especially in Africa where marriage is the result of a complex process in which many actors are involved (Bledsoe & Cohen 1993). Furthermore, demographers' focus on mortality and fertility has led them to consider nuptiality primarily in relation to these issues, especially fertility via a proximate determinants approach: the impact of changing patterns of nuptiality childbearing and pre-marital sexual behaviour (Adjamagbo, Antoine & Delaunay 2004, Antoine & Nanitelamio 1995, Barbieri & Hertricht 2005, Eltigani 2000); the dynamics and fertility impact of polygyny (Ezeh 1997 Timaeus & Reynar 1998, Lardoux & van de Walle 2003), and the impact of polygyny on child mortality (Kiros & Kertzer 2000); much research on marriage and HIV/AIDS focusing on the roles of age at marriage, polygyny and extra-marital relationships in increasing or decreasing risk. Due to the methodological complexities of studying marriage, several studies discuss different ways of defining marriage in order to improve measurement and understanding of changing nuptiality trends (Meekers, 1992; van de Walle, 1996; Antoine, 2002a). However, as argued by Antoine (2002a), nuptiality should also be studied per se, as it both highlights gender relationships in a given society and changes in marital behaviour generally reflect important social transformations.

Much work on changing marital dynamics uses statistical analyses of evolving patterns of age at first marriage and how these patterns affect the different components of nuptiality: first marriage, age gap between spouses, and polygyny. Until recently African marriage was generally characterised by women's early age at first marriage and the important role played by the family in the process leading to a completed formal union: marriage in this regard is a family matter rather than an individual or couple decision process (Hertrich, 1996). Increasing ages at first marriage is accompanied by new types of consensual unions (Thiriat, 1999) and women's delayed entry into first union and to a lesser extent that of men, has been associated with characteristics of urban life: increased schooling for girls, greater female participation in the labour market, new attitudes to courtship and love relationships before marriage. For urban men economic difficulties tend to delay their first marriage, (Donadjé, 1992). Because of this simultaneous increase in age at first marriage for both sexes, the age gap between spouses remains large, allowing the continuation of polygyny which, despite predictions of decline in the 1970s and 1980s because of the westernisation of family life styles in cities, remains stable in many countries (Klissou, 1995; Marcoux, 1997; Timaeus and Reynar, 1998; Antoine and Nanitelamio, 1995). The unequal gender relations maintained and reinforced by polygyny contribute to women's ambivalence towards polygynous unions and there is a lack of clarity between evolving trends of polygyny, urbanisation, education and socio-economic status. Social networks often favour such unions putting first wives in a difficult negotiating position. Nevertheless in many societies where polygyny is widespread, unions tend to be unstable and divorce frequent, but this may not emerge in cross-sectional data because divorce is often quickly followed by remarriage and hence it is

difficult to get a clear idea of divorce trends across time in sub-Saharan Africa (Locoh and Thiriat, 1995; Antoine, 2002a; Antoine & Dial, 2005). These patterns were actually anticipated by Burnham in his classic “changing themes in the analysis of African marriage” (1987). What are the current themes in the study of African marriage? Or what should be examined today regarding marriage dynamics in African societies?

New directions and objectives

The fascinating biographical analysis by Antoine & Dial (2005) examining the structural determinants of divorce and remarriage offers one new direction for studies of African marriage. Antoine & Dial identify the marital residence as an important factor in risk of divorce in Dakar, with a fourfold increased risk of divorce if the couple have not achieved independent residence (Antoine & Dial 2005, p224). This finding suggests that how decisions are made about residence, the different constraints and dilemmas faced by couples and their wider kin groups, and the evolution of residence patterns over time and space can be an important aspect of understanding changing marriage dynamics. The causation is probably bi-directional with marriage processes influenced by residential constraints and union stability partially determined by residential patterns.

Several issues are at stake: different residence patterns may reflect a combination of economic constraints alongside socio-cultural dimensions such as the pressures for patrilocal residence where the traditional post-marital residential pattern involves cohabitation with the husband’s extended family. Such living arrangements imply substantial power inequalities and negotiation dynamics between different extended household members and hence women and men’s attitudes to post-marital residence may differ markedly. It is important to establish to what extent changing marriage values and behaviours affect the majority of the population, or just specific socio-demographic subgroups or people with particular personal characteristics or relationships that may not be easily measurable in a survey context. A further goal is to understand the extent to which African marriage has moved from an event oriented primarily around procreation and largely organised around the requirements and values of the larger kin-based institutions, towards the more individualistic and couple oriented institution observed in Europe and the West. Certainly it was hypothesised by some that the fertility transition was partially predicated on a nucleation or Westernisation of the family towards nuclear units (Caldwell 1976). To what extent is this actually happening?

Research questions and hypotheses

We will examine these issues in Senegal which is characterized by widespread polygyny and relatively traditional marriage patterns with substantial differences observed between rural and urban areas in the past decades. From the 2005 DHS about 32.2% married urban women aged 15-49 are in polygamous unions compared to 44.5 in rural areas (p101), declining to 28.8% in Dakar, with secondary educated women less likely to be in polygamous unions (although over a quarter were). Urban men and women are about 3 years older at first marriage than those in rural areas but this urban rural divide has increased for younger cohorts (Ndiaye & Mohamed 2006).

We use qualitative data to investigate the dynamics and diversity of both change and stability in urban post-marital residential behaviour and the inherent contradictions and conflicts within different dimensions of peoples' marital lives which they have to confront and negotiate. This qualitative approach allows us not only to observe the diversity and dynamics of complex marital residential behaviours and responses but also to examine how people make sense of these and the constraints and pressures they feel themselves to be under. We anticipate that whereas some men and women will situate themselves squarely either in traditional forms of marital behaviour, or in very individualistic nuclearised approaches, there will be many individuals and couples who are being pulled in different directions by the meeting of contradictory experiences and value systems in an economic and residential context which is far removed from the labour scarce subsistence or intensive semi-subsistence agricultural environment in which the marital traditions and values evolved.

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. Coresident 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. Whereas patrilocal residence remains widespread in rural areas it is increasingly questioned in urban settings where the diffusion of new norms, information and values is contributing to a constant redefinition of the structure of traditional social relationships. In some urban environments small housing units make it difficult for families to live together in the same place, but simultaneously, high rental costs and housing shortage may force people to co-reside (Antoine & Dial 2005). Because in Senegal marriage and conjugal life are strongly shaped by unequal gender and intergenerational power relationships, questioning patrilocal cohabitation reflects a profound transformation of these social dynamics. It is thus critical to take a gendered perspective and in this paper we examine women and men's perceptions of residential issues as they interact with new marriage dynamics. Urban areas reflect a diversity of socio-economic and cultural realities which may influence the marriage process taking place in these environments, and thus trends and behaviours cannot be summarized simplistically as urban versus rural. Our main aim here is to examine the expectations in terms of residence and the negotiations surrounding this issue in different urban contexts and for people with diverse socio-economic profiles.

2. Data, methods and context

In order to capture local differences in the changes affecting the marriage process and their relationships with the initiation of reproduction, two contrasting Wolof communities were studied, a small town, and two neighbourhoods in the capital city, Dakar. Data were collected in 1999 in these two different settings and also in a large village¹. In central Dakar two largely Wolof areas were sampled in order to exploit the variability in this socially and economically heterogeneous urban environment. The small town, is located

¹ Village data are not discussed in detail here : the same methods were used and when reference is made to rural areas we are drawing on our insights from this part of the research.

in the Senegalese peanut basin and mainly inhabited by Wolof most of whom belong to the Murid brotherhood. The original research project for which these data were collected was focused around reproductive decision making and the diverse influences of past experience, context, social networks and other factors. In the urban sites around 100 in-depth interviews with men and women of different ages, educational achievement and marital status focused on respondents' personal biographies including marital and reproductive histories as well as their reproductive goals and decision making. Background on childhood, education and professional trajectories was also collected. In addition 14 focus groups complemented the individual biographies and 9 interviews with couples (interviewed separately) in Dakar concentrated on couple dynamics and reproductive decision making. The two sites were chosen in order to understand how socio-economic conditions can shape attitudes and behaviours related to couple formation and reproductive goals. Interviews were conducted by Senegalese graduates, tape recorded and translated into French. All matched the sex of interviewer and interviewee. They were coded using NUDIST (now N6).

Both urban environments encompass wide-ranging patterns of geographical, social and occupational mobility. In such mobile contexts, we expect to observe changes in attitudes, norms and values regarding the traditional marriage process, yet in both marriage remains a major preoccupation for most people who are experiencing changes in nuptiality over which many feel they have little control. Marriage continues to be an essential stage in the lives of both men and women, and, as emphasised by Antoine and Dial (2005), « *all women recognise that marriage is necessary for a woman, that a husband completes a woman and that a woman needs a male support who should be her husband rather than her father or uncle* » (p216, our translation) In these Muslim populations, kin relationships and networks are a critical dimension of social organisation and support, and, as such, strongly shape marriage processes and subsequent conjugal life. Yet this very conjugal life also creates and reshapes the next generation of kinship networks and support. Some changes are nevertheless observed in urban areas although future trends are not clear. For example, traditional consanguineous marriages have decreased but not disappeared; polygamy is still widespread but with different patterns of wife acquisition according to the socio-economic context; kin support remains important and patrilocal residence still occurs but in different ways; barriers to inter-caste marriage are being broken down.

In both the small town and Dakar there was substantial diversity and instability in post marital residence, in contrast to the village where all marriages were patrilocal. In both urban environments some men and women reported living patrilocally whereas others were neolocal and some women remained with their own relatives for some months or years after marriage before moving in permanently with their husband. The context of each environment played an important role.

3. Post-marital residence in the small town

Here, the migration context strongly affected marriage patterns both at the individual and community levels. A substantial proportion of young and middle aged men had migrated to Italy to work in factories or the informal sector. This migration was temporary but long

term, with the migrants visiting home every 2 years or so. Italian migrants could offer very substantial sums of money as gifts, as bridewealth and to pay for festivities, leaving non-migrant men unable to compete with anticipated costs of marriage and generating a major barrier to marriage, leading to a deficit of males on the market.

Men, residence and new marriage dynamics

In the small town discourse among men about post-marital residence was relatively homogeneous, conservative and clearly favouring patrilocal residence, whereas that of women reflected much more diversity of opinion if not experience.

The majority of male respondents (or husbands of women) had local origins and thus patrilocal residence was usually a possibility. Amongst the interviewees a couple of exceptions to local patrilocality were two well educated civil servants. Both men had lived in various places around Senegal and for both, their kin continued to play important roles in different stages of their marriages. Although one respondent lived elsewhere his first wife had lived with his parents in St Louis.

I: When you got married where did you live with your wife?

*R: In my parents house because, you know, in St Louis we are lucky to have big houses which means that you don't need to go and look for a house somewhere else. On top of that my father worked for the ministry of public works and so we were pretty comfortable at home...what happened was that my wife came to see me where I was stayed with me for two or three months before going back to St Louis...I couldn't imagine living with her away from my parents' home because then I would have had to reduce the amount I gave my parents at the end of each month. We were together for about 8 years and it was always like that: either she was with my parents or she came to spend some time in the town where I was posted. **Male, secondary schooling, 44, divorced after several marriages***

The fact that well educated and spatially mobile civil servants still adhere to a patrilocal ideal indicates the extent to which it is the accepted norm. It was not uncommon, as observed here, for a man's loyalty to and support of his parents to take precedence over the couple cohabitation many women hoped from marriage.

The general male attitude was that patrilocal residence was the normal and unquestioned post-marital residence, although their rationales varied. For some men, especially those with widowed mothers, co-residence was the natural conclusion of the necessity of helping and supporting their mothers, showing strong continuity with rural areas where the new wife as extra family labour, be it domestic or in the fields, was a crucial dimension of marriage (Randall & Mondain 2005). This could be the major motive for marriage.

I: You would marry her so that she looks after you or your mother?

*R: She would be my wife but its equally important thaa she can help my mother who is now nearly 50 and continues to do the cooking and everything. We've got to find some women who will look after her...I know that she wouldn't want someone to be with her for her personal care but it's necessary, she's too worn out now. At the moment my older sister helps her a bit, but she's married and she has to look after her husband and child. She's not going to be around for ever, soon she will move in to live with her husband and for that reason I want a wife to be nearby my mother, like my sister has been....a girl who is capable of helping her with the housework **Male, 20, unmarried, Lycee, furniture trader.***

The agenda was rather different for Italian migrants. These migrants had themselves often constructed a new family home, usually a luxury villa, in which they had installed members of their family such as parents and unmarried sisters bringing new meaning to the concept of patrilocality. These families did not require female labour, remittances paid for domestic labour; here the primary motivation behind co-residence from the male perspective, and from that of his family, was a continuation of tradition and also in order for the new wife to be supervised by her in-laws. Since migrant men were absent for a year or two at a time, their wives were considered as in need of constant surveillance. In most cases marriages were orchestrated in close collaboration between men and their mothers. Migrant men insisted that this family solidarity was a typical “Senegalese characteristic” that they did not observe among other migrant Africans in their travels: one 29 year old man told us that Senegalese always returned to their hometown unlike the “niaks” (a pejorative word referring to African migrants) who left and never came back.

In most other cases everyone just expected that the newly married couple would move into his family residence even though there was no need for her labour or for her to be supervised. In the small town such patrilocality was never expressly claimed to be because the couple could not afford their own accommodation. Men never challenged patrilocal residence; it remained internalised as the accepted form of behaviour.

Personally I don't expect to do it (laughs) [live apart from family] because me, I do what my father did. When he got married he didn't go and live somewhere else. He brought his wife here so that she could help my grandmother...It's not good to go and live somewhere else while your mother is here, nearby. I would never think of doing it. **Male, secondary school, single, 20.**

In fact men talked very little about the issue of post-marital residence. Patrilocal residence was so accepted that for one man it even formed part of his articulated family size and composition preferences of 3 boys and 2 girls.

...clearly the girls are not going to live with their parents for ever. Sooner or later they'll leave whereas the boys, even if they are married will always stay at home to look after their parents. Also everything that they will achieve will be for the family. **Male, 26, single, primary school.**

In a different lifecycle stage were wealthier non-migrant men whose recent marriages generally brought in second or third wives. The residence issue was less about patrilocality because the domestic cycle had usually progressed so that the man himself was the senior man in the household, and was more about co-wives sharing housing. Some co-wives co-resided whereas others had separate accommodation, especially if they had previously been married. In a couple of cases men had further wives in other towns. Men's attitudes towards polygyny and marital residence often reflected the family models they received from their own father. The rare men with monogamous fathers did not aspire to polygamy, whereas the majority who had grown up in polygamous households had no doubts about the merits of polygamy. Such attitudes did not reflect poor relationships with their first wife. This 27 year-old man kept talking about his current wife, how he loved her and appreciated her but for him it was clear that he would have a second wife sooner or later; to a question of his wife's reaction and her potential fear of losing him he replies:

... she won't lose me because she gets a co-wife As proof we all have polygamous parents and in our families this is not a cause of divorce. My parents were married for 35 years and they never complained. When we were born we discovered polygamy was already here, so what do you want us to do about it? Live like the whites and only have one wife? We will keep what our grandparents left us... you can only do what you know best and we know that polygamy has advantages that monogamy doesn't...

Divorced men tended to blame the divorce on their own failure to take the traditional marital trajectory and follow parental advice or guidance in choosing a spouse, thus reiterating the conservative approach of men to marriage and the family and the importance men attribute to the roles of kin and patrilocal residence. Small town men were happy with the status quo as regards marriage, polygamy, the family and gender relations but then men, in general, had the most advantageous position.

Women's perspectives on post marital residence and conjugal life

Compared to men, women's perceptions and representations of experience of patrilocal residence and polygamy were more varied and nuanced, probably because the issue was more traumatic and troublesome for them and reflect the increasing contradictions inherent in women's status in this conservative society situated in a world of changing education, aspirations and media influences.

Women's relationships with their family-in-law focused primarily on other women. Mothers-in-law, unmarried sisters-in-law, "co-wives by alliance" (husband's brothers' wives), and co-wives all play a key role in the way women experience their marital lives. This 30 year old woman fears the co-wife rather than polygamy per se:

I What do you think about polygamous marriages?

R Some succeed, others don't. Everything depends on the relationship between the co-wives. I'm less afraid of polygamy than of the mentality of a co-wife. Some co-wives hate each other and are always punching each other below the belt. Me, I'm not afraid of polygamy but what I do fear is the idea of having a co-wife who makes a fuss or who turns my husband against me.

Although most women accepted the inevitability of patrilocal residence, for some it was potentially problematic, for others it was relatively trouble free. Many, when probed, expressed a preference for independent living.

I What do you think about post-marital residence with your family-in-law?

*R In my opinion it's not a problem. If you think of your father-in-law or your mother-in-law as your own parents who brought you into this world, then you shouldn't have any problems in adapting to them. My husband's mother died when he was very young and he barely knew her. He's only got vague memories of her. So only my father-in-law was here when I moved into my marital home but I would have liked to have had a mother-in-law. Truly, it would have been a pleasure because you can't say that you love a man and you hate his mother. **Female, 22 married, secondary, Husband migrant.***

However despite this original expression of solidarity, when pushed about whether she'd prefer to live on her own or with her in-laws she goes on to say *Aah, well, you know that every woman would like to have her own household, in her own house, but there's no problems in living with the family-in-law. If you want to live in your own house it's because it's less restricting and you're free to live your life as you want, without worrying about what others think or say about you, because you're at home, you'd have no problems (laughs).*

In the small town where many marriages are between kin or neighbours, to an extent there is a blurring of the different residential compounds and many young women knew their marital household very well before their marriage, thus reducing the tension.

At the moment I'm living in my marital household but my natal household is just behind. When I was born my father's neighbours were already there including my husband's mother. I just left my parents house to move next door to join my family-in-law. My parents-in-law have excellent neighbourly relations with my parents; they have lived together, peacefully, for a long time – really in the end we're all like kin. Female, 33, illiterate

Age effects

Despite the ubiquity of patrilocality many younger women expressed a wish for their own households

...because you're not always free to move about. They always want to control you, whether consciously or unconsciously. They criticise you, which causes problems and often the wife doesn't get on with her sisters-in-law especially if they live in the same house. There's often tension or friction between them. What would be best would be to get married and live with your husband in your own house and not with the in-laws, because there's too many problems, misunderstandings which can even lead to divorce. It's especially the emigrants who are like that. Female, 19, unmarried, middle school, runs small shop and dreams of emigrating to Italy to join her brother.

Older women were well aware of younger women's desire for separate living and some tended to exaggerate the changes implying that patrilocal residence had been largely abandoned by the younger generation, which was not the case in reality. What was still largely a dream and something to be imagined by younger women was somehow consolidated by older respondents into a reality which they feared, partly because it undermined their values and, possibly also their own security and status in acquiring a resident daughter-in-law. Yet older women were ambivalent about the whole issue for two reasons. Firstly they reflected on the difficulties they had faced in their own personal experience. Secondly, as well as being mothers of sons who would bring in daughters-in-law they were also mothers of daughters and many did not want their daughters to suffer in their residential arrangements.

I: Can you describe the young woman's life in her in-laws' home?

R: It's a tough ordeal because the young married woman has to behave properly whilst with her family-in-law. She should think of her parents-in-law like her own parents – what I mean is that she must obey them. In fact men get married so that their wives can look after their parents.

This sympathetic approach contrasts with that of an older, uneducated women

I: can the young wife express her opinion about the choice of a marital home?

R: the woman has no choice to make. As soon as she marries her job is to move in with her husband wherever he wants. Female, 45, uneducated, 4th wife in polygamous union

Other older women however not only recognise the changes that are going on but can also talk about the resident daughter-in-law from the other side of receiving young women into their household on whom they may become increasingly dependent.

I: Do today's young women like living with their in-laws?

R: That depends on the daughter-in-law. Mine looks after me well and always asks my advice about what she should cook. These days young women would not choose to live with their in-

laws. They would rather live alone with their husband to seduce him. There are some mothers-in-law who mistreat their daughters-in-law. Female, 71, uneducated.

Gender issues reflected by post-residential situations

These experiences and ambivalent discourses – very normative in most cases, but often ending in expressing a wish for change – reflect the unequal gender relations and women's lack of autonomy in negotiating their future life conditions as wives. However it is not clear which processes are underlying these new aspirations. Although women of all ages recognise the difficulties faced by young women in their marital home, the majority still lived patrilocally although the possibilities of different living arrangements were certainly discussed and within the bounds of possibility. One older woman said that she would encourage her daughters to fight for their own house and there was a general recognition that younger women are demanding more independence and a different relationship with their husband and his family. It is not clear to what extent this is generated by girls' schooling, exposure to new ideas through media, especially television or just a changing economic climate.

Most of the younger women interviewed had had some schooling, and what was somewhat surprising was the degree of deference which many showed to their husbands' wishes in many domains. Much of each interview was spent exploring childbearing expectations, desires and aspirations. Although most young women had fairly clear ideas about their ideal family size (usually 4 or 5 children) few had discussed the matter with their husbands, few knew their husbands' desires and many, when asked what they would do if their husband wanted more children than themselves said that it was their role to acquiesce with his demands. The same seems to hold for post-marital residence. Because male agendas have not changed, and because post-marital residence is really not an issue open for discussion for most small town men, the gender based power relations mean that patrilocal marriage continues, although the problems inherent in living with other women with different agendas are present in many women's minds. It must also be recognised that the newly married woman is not in a powerful position. She is young, she either does not have the status of being a mother, or, if she is an unmarried mother, the shame minimises her status and her negotiating power with both her kin and her marital household. A young woman needs to get married to be a full participating adult in society and to fulfil the expected social roles of woman and mother and it is only having gone through this stage that she can begin to negotiate residence arrangements. However small town women in their mid marital career did not move out of the patrilocal residence but often the household domestic cycle had evolved rendering such movement no longer necessary. By then she was the dominant or co-dominant woman in the household, with the mother in law dead and the husbands' sisters married elsewhere. Nevertheless co-habitation of married women remained either through the wives of two brothers continuing to live in the men's family compound, or through the addition of co-wives which produced the next wave of residential conflicts.

Spatial and economic context are important. The general impression in the small town was of spaciousness with large compounds in which new couples could be accommodated. Some families had taken over entire corners of town – so the boundaries between living in an independent household and living with kin might, at times be

blurred. Many men were not particularly economically successful but patrilocal residence was never articulated primarily as an economic strategy or decision but as socially expected and accepted behaviour. It was behaviour which no men saw reason to, and few women were able to, challenge and which could be justified through the expectations of intergenerational contract of care, support and loyalty in one direction and maintenance of the integrity of the larger patrilineal family in the other. Despite increasing levels of education few of the women interviewed in the small town had any dependable economic activity and therefore any realistic independence from their husbands. Among the women, those with more education or those who were active in some ways seemed to have a more critical attitude to the established rules of patrilocal residence and kin marriage. On the other hand it is striking how the vocabulary used by women married to migrants reflect the way they have internalised the fact that they must accept their situation: *you must endure, you must put up with*².

Why are men so conservative in the small town whether they are born there or not? The vast majority clearly favours patrilocality meaning that they will do everything to ensure that their wives live with their parents even if it means spousal separation or some domestic conflict. Could this be an effect of muridism? The small town is shaped by the influence of this brotherhood and most of the men interviewed mention their coranic education. It is close to Touba which is the most important pilgrim destination for Senegalese Muslims belonging to the Murid brotherhood many of whom migrate to Italy (Riccio, 2001 and 2006). According to one respondent (26 year old) who lives in Dakar and works for his brother who is a migrant: migrants all follow the same trajectory: grow up in coranic schools (darra), become traders in weekly local markets before starting to migrate. Other men told similar stories. The young man concludes by saying that with such a life trajectory despite their money and travels, migrant men “know nothing in life” which explains their conservative attitudes, especially towards women and their wives.

4. Post-marital residence in Dakar

In 1999 when these data were collected, Dakar had experienced years of economic crisis and increasing unemployment. There was a housing shortage and housing was relatively expensive. Over the same time period there had been substantial increase in female education and an increase in age at first marriage (Antoine & Dial 2005) along with improved media coverage, especially television with its ability to expose people to a whole range of new ideas about lifestyle and relationships.

In Dakar there was, predictably, much more diversity in post-marital residence and also in the attitudes and expressed motives for different residential options. Women expressed three distinct perspectives on patrilocality: a determination never to do it; a reluctant acceptance; those who claimed to like living with their in-laws. The latter two groups included those for whom patrilocal residence was an accepted aspect of Senegalese marriage and not to be challenged and, on the other hand, women who felt coerced into entering such residential arrangements somewhat against their will, and often perceived it as a temporary evil. Although there were no clear boundaries or characteristics of the different groups, those opposed to patrilocal residence tended to be

² “tu dois endurer, supporter...”

better educated women with white collar salaried occupations whereas those who accepted it without question usually had less education. The several interviewees who had a pre-marital birth before marrying the father of the child all moved in with their in-laws on marriage, some reluctantly, some with pleasure. Despite the apparently inauspicious start to their married life, conflict appeared to be no more common for this group than for those who married and then gave birth. Of all the women who actually experienced living with their family-in-law there were no obvious correlates of harmony or discord; it all seemed to boil down to individual characters and relationships.

Men's attitudes to patrilocal residence

Whereas most men in the small town assumed without question that married life was patrilocal, men in Dakar showed more mixed attitudes. Although some still expected patrilocal residence, for others it was impossible because their families lived elsewhere. A further group wanted their own lodging and an independent existence. The irony was that although many wanted separate accommodation, this state was often difficult to achieve because of the cost and frequent unemployment.. Some were willing to compromise early years of marriage living with their parents in order to save to buy or build their own house. Thus many Dakar men lived with their natal family when they knew their wives would prefer to be independent although it was not always clear that couples communicated the stresses they felt. This couple who had been building a house since they married 5 years previously was still with his family

I: Between you and me, aren't there any difficulties living with your wife in your parents' home?

R: It's a bit difficult...I don't say that I couldn't have had a flat but I said to myself there's space here and here in my family, luckily there are no problems. Instead of going to look for a flat, of taking some money out of our house [which he has been building for 5 years] better to put the money in the house.

His wife, interviewed separately, clearly agreed with the rationale for staying with his family whilst they built their house, and throughout the interview she tried to be very positive. However right at the end, after the interview had officially finished she blurted out. *It's very difficult to look after your parents-in-law. It's really very difficult... You have to get the meals, serve them, sometimes you cook a good meal, sometimes it's less good, but, you know, mothers..., truly it's hard.*

Within Senegalese marriage men's primary role is the economic provider and it is unsurprising that their reflections on post marital residence always encompass an economic dimension. In the context of rising prices, expensive housing and difficulties in supporting both wife and children the economies made by living with his family are clearly paramount.

I: Why did you choose to bring your wife to your father's home?

R: I didn't really choose to, it's part of our tradition to live with one's parents when you are married. And as for her, she has her aunt just next door. It's to my advantage because I don't pay any rent.

I: what are the living conditions like?

R: It's peaceful. I live with my brothers and their wives. We share the same meals, and the women cook in turn **Male, 44, secondary, married 3 years, 1 child, white collar worker**

In the rare cases where a couple lived independently right from the outset, or when cohabitation was explicitly temporary to save money for their own flat or house, the

husband, and sometimes his wife, had secure, well paid, professional employment and could afford to be independent. These were usually couples where one or both had higher education. Ideal family size was generally small, two or three children and they epitomised the image of a modern, nuclear family.

I: How did you choose where to live after you married?

R: It was a function of our budget (laughs), a degree of organization...finding someone who would rent us a flat at a reasonable rate because he knew our relatives. I must confess that we didn't want to live too close to our parents.

I: Why didn't you stay with your parents?

*R: I preferred to come here (...) because as a couple we got together abroad. We could have stayed with my family, saved some money, perhaps built a house, but the truth is I don't think you save much living with your parents, that's the first thing, and secondly I preferred coming here.... Sometimes I go...when we have problems we sort them out between ourselves, far from the family. It's no one else's business. **39, monogamous marriage, 2 children, further education.***

This couple were even more unusual in that they had delayed childbearing for two years after marriage specifically because they wanted to live as a couple

Women and post-marital residence

Women talked much more than men about residential issues; every single interview with a married woman included some material on the topic, and even unmarried women mentioned it. As those who felt they suffered from patrilocal residence this is hardly surprising. Unlike men, women often brought up the subject spontaneously and since this was not the primary aim of the original research project, much of our understanding of men's attitudes is vicariously through their wives which may be unreliable. The couple interviews provide evidence that couples did not always communicate about many key issues related to reproduction and the family and there were times when each was convinced that the other thought differently to what actually transpired³. For this reason care is taken in interpreting wives' representations of their husbands' attitudes.

As well as the three main responses to patrilocal residence outlined above, a fourth residential pattern includes those women who have yet to move in with their husband or have returned to their natal home for some reason.

Successful rejection

Of the 27 married women interviewed, very few lived alone with their husband from the beginning of their marriage. Of those who did, one had a Malian husband and another lived in Congo so neither family-in-law was available for co-residence. Two succeeded in moving into their own accommodation after a few years of marriage, one after living with her in-laws, the other having remained with her parents. Only two women had moved straight into their own marital household as a couple. Both were teachers, monogamously married to professional men. Both used contraception and their lives and their houses were carefully organized and planned. One had never wanted to live with her husband's parents and would have objected had he requested it. These couples were the

³ A woman said she wanted 4 children. When asked what her husband wanted she said she didn't know but it was probably 4 or 5. She was emphatic that he would not want more than 5 and when asked what she would do if he wanted 7, she replied that there was no chance he would ever want 7. He said he wanted between 5 and 8 children.

archetypal image of a modern nuclear family with planning, substantial investment in children and financial security. However they were a very small minority.

Patrilocal post-marital residence

The vast majority of women interviewed in Dakar began their married life living with their husband's family. Most women who were living patrilocally wanted to move out but felt unable to force their husbands to do so. They recognised that men were faced with dilemmas and diverse constraints including managing limited economic resources but also fulfilling the expected respect and filial behaviour to their own parents.

...there was no choice and I was already an unmarried mother (long silence and a sigh of regret) since then I've been in this house but I hope we'll have our own one day.

I : who does this house belong to?

*R : It was his father's, but he's dead. He left two wives who live here now and a third who lives elsewhere. You know, the stories of inheritance are very complicated. I have only just arrived but I know that it's complicated because (a long silence which allowed her to count up the number of children) here there are 14 children, 6 girls and 8 boys and none of them work. They're all here. My father-in-law was a university professor. **Female, 19 Married 7 months after giving birth to child, some education, both husband and wife unemployed.***

I : don't you have any problems living with your in-laws?

R : You know, living in your own small household amongst your in-laws is not much fun, but we have to endure it.

I : would you rather live in your own house?

R : Yes

I : so why did you agree to live here?

R : If you can't have what you want, you have to be happy with what you have, what God gives you....

I : so how do you see the fact that you're here in this house?

R : You know, everyone prays to God that they can move house if their situation improves.

Woman, 34, secondary school, 2 children, married > 10 years, Husband works after period of unemployment

Women were confronted with a range of difficulties however. Not only were they the ones who had to live with their female in-laws, they had to negotiate with husbands who were often both authoritarian and subject to their own father's authority about maintaining proper behaviour (ie patrilocal residence) and concern about their mother.

R : I know it's what their father demands, whether they want it or not. They respect their father's word and that's why, I think, they accepted it. So if he (her husband) comes to me and says that's what pleases me, I'm going to accept it.

I : and if it was you who had to decide? If your husband asked for your opinion and told you you could do what you wanted. What would you do?

R : I would leave straightaway! Because that would be best for me.

I why?

*R : because I would have more space to stay with my children and to be able to bring them up. If it was me that's what I'd do. **Woman, 28, bac, married.***

Both poverty and powerlessness were recurrent themes in women's discussions of post-marital residential arrangements. By failing to adhere to the socially accepted role of economic provider, the impoverished husband was already subject to criticism by his

wife and her family. The fact that this same poverty also forced them to live with his family often exacerbated spousal tensions. Husbands were unemployed or had very little income, reducing their power within the marital household. Thus there was frequently a chain reaction whereby those who suffered most from patrilocal co-habitation were the least able to oppose it.

Women's content with patrilocal residence

Not all women were unhappy at living with their in-laws although it is difficult to judge the extent to which they were dissimulating in front of the interviewer. Some did express more doubts as the interview progressed and rapport developed but others maintained their stance that patrilocality was not an issue and that they had excellent relations with their mother and sisters in law.

I : what is your relationship like with your in-laws?

R : Good, very good. My parents-in-law are very nice. I have no problem with them. My mother-in-law treats me like her daughter. She is even kinder to me than she is with her own children. She talks to me, jokes, tells me certain things that she doesn't tell her children. She thinks of me as her daughter and I think of her as my mother. 19, got married after premarital birth. Primary education

...sadly I'm going to have to leave her when our house is finished because it is squashed here. I would have liked to have had my parents-in-law at my side so I could look after them woman, 32 Works in cake shop, monogamous married, secondary, 2 children

I came to live with my husband here with my father and mother-in-law. There was no problem because my parents-in-law appreciated our bridewealth free marriage under the purity of Islamic rules. All my husband's family live here, his brothers and sisters and that doesn't worry me....my mother-in-law advises me about everything because she knows I am young in this world. But that's fine, I have no problem here. Woman, married, 1 son, housewife, coranic school.

In this case however it is important to understand the context. This woman had had an unhappy childhood and her father, an imam, only sent the boys to modern school. Her father had arranged the marriage and she had not known her husband beforehand. At the end of the interview she pleaded with the interviewer to find her work "[I will do anything] it doesn't matter what provided I can earn my living. I don't do anything without my husband's permission because that's what Islam recommends

Patrilocal residence was seen to have certain advantages. Given the importance of kinship networks in surviving and succeeding in Dakar, one of the merits was seen as the consolidation of such networks and allowing the children to know their father's family well. Another benefit was that the in-laws, especially the mother-in-law could mediate in marital disputes, which, were they to occur in private, could escalate. The general consensus over disputes and quarrels however was more frequently that co-residence with in-laws increased potential conflict and could even lead to separation and divorce because the husband sided with his sisters or his mother. The idea that these people could be peacemakers was certainly a minority view.

Motivations for separate residence in Dakar

In the small town the general justification for separate residence was to avoid conflict between the wife and her female in-laws and for the woman to enjoy the general freedom from observation and interference that such independent living would bring. Equally important in Dakar was child-raising where bringing up children properly was seen to be difficult and expensive (Randall & LeGrand 2004) because of all the potential bad influences and temptations around. It was a major pre-occupation and parents often bemoaned their lack of control and the time that it took to supervise children. This was never discussed in the small town and many Dakar respondents thought childrearing was easier away from large cities. The time and cost of bringing children up well in the city was a major stimulus to fertility control.

I: Why have you used Norplan for 8 years? Do you intend to stop planning?

R: I live with my in-laws whose house is very cramped. I only have one room in the compound. I want to look after my children and ensure they have a good upbringing. It's better to have one well-brought up child than 10 that you can't look after properly.

I: do you ever discuss where you are going to live with your husband?

R: Oh yes, of course. Our aim is to leave here, even if we can only get a single room. It would be good for bringing up our child, and ourselves. Our ideal would be to live in town and leave Medina where it's very unhealthy.

I: So the conditions aren't very good?

R: Men shouldn't be looking for an easy life. The man must face up to difficulties. Living with your father, keeping your bedroom and not paying rent – that's very easy. If a man loses his mother it's best that he find a roof elsewhere. That's the direction a man should go in.

Woman 29, secondary education, 1 child born before marriage, then married the father

Many women felt that co-residence with the husbands' family meant that their children inevitably mixed with cousins, half-cousins and other kin whose upbringing was inadequate, but given co-residence parents could not stop their children mixing with these less desirable members of the wider kin group. Serious overcrowding was a further problem. Hence independent living was part of a constellation of factors predisposing to more nuclear families in terms of residence and daily contact, more parentally demanding childrearing practices – in terms of both finance and time, and smaller family sizes because of these perceived time and financial costs.

Woman's natal residence

Married women's family of origin played a substantial role in accommodating women and also in providing them with a degree of security in Dakar. In the small town, this was generally when the marriage process was ongoing. Moving into the 'conjugal household' is an independent part of the process and there is no shame attendant upon a girl remaining at home for some time after she sees herself as married. Often girls remained at home after marriage to help look after their own mothers, until their brothers brought in wives.

We are not related. My husband is from St Louis and he came to live in Dakar. When I presented him to my aunt she agreed and we celebrated our marriage. At the beginning we lived with my aunt. It was after the birth of my 4th child that we went to live somewhere else.

Women, 50, first wife, uneducated, 9 children

The woman's natal home took on much more significance in Dakar where marital situations were often complex and frequently involved conflict. Over a quarter of respondents had spent some part, and often a substantial part, of their married life living in their natal household.

At that time my husband was building a house. He decided to rent somewhere to live but I told him that the money which we used for the rent would be better used finishing off the building. That's why I came back to my parents and I left the children with them until I had to fetch them back because problems and other disputes flared up between my husband and my children's grandmother. **Woman, 40, secondary, housewife, monogamous marriage**

Married women lived in their parental home (or with close kin such as an aunt) under three principal types of circumstances: at the beginning of marriage where often they would not move to live with their new husband for several months or even years; if conditions in the husband's home became intolerable or if he could really not afford to keep her; as a refuge when there were major disputes either as a cooling off period or as a prelude to divorce. Given women's vulnerable position at the beginning of marriage it is clearly very important to be able to feel she could retreat back to her parents, although after several years of marriage such a retreat is seen as shameful and humiliating. The husband himself never came to live with the woman in her natal household. In general when a woman returns home after spending some time in her husband's house a sense of failure and problems runs through the interviews. In most cases these are accounts of poverty, financial hardship, major disputes and often combined with polygamy.

I: Your husband accepted that you returned to your parents.

R: I told you there were two of us. When we met I presented him to my parents and he did all that was necessary: we were married....then we went, my husband and I to Medina. But his first wife reacted badly because she was with her parents-in-law and 8 children. She took my husband to the tribunal and he lost the case. So they cut most of his salary. That's why my parents told me to return home. He said nothing because in fact, he had nothing. So I stayed there to help my husband. And my children because I had two others. **Woman, 43 married as second wife, 6 children (4 with husband), secondary school**

I: what were relations like with your in-laws?

R: I lived with my sister-in-law and my husband's brother's wife. There were often conflicts between family members. There came a time when I had to return to my mother because the atmosphere in my marital home was unbearable. I was fighting with my husband – he took the side of his brothers and sisters against me. We separated. After our divorce he came to visit me from time to time. Later I remarried him but I stayed for a year at my home. **Woman 27, secretary, 3 children 1st child born before marriage, married, divorced remarried same man**

Going back home is really felt as a last solution for difficult economic situations. *My husband and I are in very difficult conditions. We have to put up with it because we hope that he will get some work. If not I will be forced to return to my parents. I get on well with my mother-in-law...she helps us a lot but our life as a couple can't develop without some resources.* **Woman, 19, married after premarital pregnancy,**

From these interviews of 27 ever married women selected at random in Dakar levels of marital discord and problems seem to be extremely high in the city. Several described severe domestic conflict with three women mentioning that their husband beat them; two husbands had grossly misled their wives about their lack of income and employment; men who took a second wife when they could not afford to maintain the first; husbands who refused or were unable to support their wife. This along the general background of conflict and tension inherent in many of the patrilocal marriages meant that the woman's natal residence was a well used safety net in the whole marital residence context.

The general acceptance that married women and their children could return to their natal home offered both security and flexibility in the rather precarious economic environment of Dakar. However whereas delay in moving in with the husband after marriage was seen as perfectly normal, for a woman who returned home after failing to maintain her marriage elsewhere, her status in her natal home was often extremely stressful. A couple of women were given a small room, no furniture and had to sleep on the floor with their children. So they had a refuge but it was certainly far from what they aspired to. This demonstrates the lack of autonomy and control over their lives experiences by many women in Dakar. They want to marry because that is seen as the principal aspiration for women, but marriage itself often lets them down, partially through the problems of residence. If the marriage breaks down, most cannot live independently and they are then dependent on a different set of people – their own kin. The kinship networks are of critical importance to women and for their own security they have to maintain these networks and encourage their children to be able to consolidate all their potential networks – with both paternal and maternal kin and for this reason women may be pulled in different directions, being forced to endure difficult residential conditions for the sake of their children's future security and survival.

Discussion

Marital residence in urban Senegal is enormously flexible both in its forms but also in the trajectories women take over their marital lifetimes. The diversity is, at present, less marked in the small town although there are indications of a movement towards the diversity observed in Dakar where women move from one household to another but few achieve the independent life as a nuclear family that many dream of. We can observe how the widespread patrilocal residence in Dakar is being eroded and manipulated particularly among white collar workers with secure employment for whom it is only a temporary stage before the creation of an independent nuclear family. In contrast in the small town and among the less economically secure in Dakar, patrilocal residence is often the first stage in a domestic cycle that evolves over time within the same residence. Past high fertility coupled with unemployment and financial crisis means that it is difficult to envisage how these huge extended households will develop; households where there are large numbers of unemployed or underemployed young adult men and women and which are unable to physically accommodate their spouses and children.

Dakar men were persistently worried about housing and accounts of marriages where couples co-habited with the husband's parents echoed with conflict and dissatisfaction suggesting that the preoccupation with finding separate accommodation was sensible

despite leading many couples to start a sexual relationship before they were officially married. However, pre-marital sexual activity is not just a function of a difficult housing scenario – men expect girlfriends to sleep with them but only some of these relationships proceeded to marriage.

The study communities exemplify a major evolution in the expectations of marriage which is occurring in urban Senegal. Although all men and women saw marriage as a natural and inevitable progression in life and talked in terms of wanting to marry someone they loved, expectations of spousal behaviour remained preoccupied with production of offspring, labour and appropriate filial behaviour. In the small town conservative men never contemplated separate living arrangements and most women adopted an attitude of submission to their destiny as married women: living and dealing with their family-in-law and co-wives. Many men (and some women) had constructed a discourse based on religious or “cultural” (African or Senegalese) values emphasising the solidarity of the extended Senegalese family. Economic insecurity is driving both change (such as postponement of marriage) but also an entrenchment of traditional values and pressure towards patrilocality. Men are expected to be the economic support for their family but often cannot achieve this because of economic crisis. They are highly aware of the need to maintain their extended kinship networks to be able to call in favours and help when needed, whether this is accommodation, loans or access to employment. All the interviews were littered with reference to favours provided by kin. So the difficult economic context is, to an extent contributing to behaviours which reinforce the traditional values of solidarity. Only the highly successful professional men could risk alienating their parents by imposing a separate lifestyle right from the beginning of a marriage.

In Dakar educated, younger women rejected the idea of living with their husband’s family although in practice, most women ended up doing so, both due to the economic constraints and pressures in Dakar and the weight of traditional behaviour pressurising men. The negotiations surrounding post marital residence reflect different aspects of current marriage and family dynamics. Both men and women have substantial emotional and economic expectations from marriage but these expectations are contributing both to delays in marriage and to increased marital mobility and breakdown, although clearly this is related to the wider context of the financial stresses of living in the city and the contributing problems of unemployment and housing shortage. Although we observe few significant new types of unions (unlike in Lomé, Thiriat 1999), it is possible to get a glimpse of potential changes based on both discourses and experiences. Gender and intergenerational roles are evolving and there is evidence (primarily stimulated by higher education, stable employment and possibly media inspired ideas) of different future marriage dynamics with women being in a stronger position to negotiate where they want to live and the husband being able to negotiate such choices with his own family.

Is it possible to predict which couples will have a successful marriage and fulfil some of their aspirations? From the interviews it seems that women, more than men, aspire to a nuclear family and independent residence and that few actually attain this in the early years of marriage. The exceptions occur when men too share these aspirations and this

seems to be very closely related to men's experience of higher education, travel overseas and professional employment. Thus whereas demography tends to focus primarily on women's education as a determinant of demographic change, in a context such as Dakar where women are still seen as dependent on and answerable to a man, be it first a father or brother and later a husband, it is probably men's educational and professional success that is the key factor. Of course since there is a high degree of assortative mating (Antoine & Djire 1998) it is these educated women with successful husbands who tend to achieve the aspired for independent residence.

This study highlights the importance of qualifying the traditional rural-urban dichotomy. It is not new that urban settings are highly heterogeneous but we must also consider the diversity between urban areas. This diversity may not only be a question of size but also has to do with a complex and subtle mix of various social and cultural components. In the small town it is likely that close ties with the Murid brotherhood and the migration networks attached to it (Riccio, 2001) shape attitudes to family life and marriage whether migrant or not. In Dakar, life histories are more diverse, but it may be interesting to look more closely at differences between neighbourhoods and try to characterise the various social and cultural aspects that influence people's attitudes to marriage and conjugal relationships.

Overall in Senegal various studies and surveys have shown substantial changes in nuptiality mainly through postponement of marriage and potential increases in proportion never marrying. The narratives in the two communities confirmed these trends. However, by focusing in different settings on the discussions and negotiations surrounding different phases of the marriage process, in particular the decision to cohabit or not with the family in-law, we have shown that to understand why nuptiality – and fertility – are changing it is essential to take a local as well as a national perspective.

Acknowledgements

The data for this paper were collected as part of a project grant held by Kenneth Hill and Thomas LeGrand funded by the Rockefeller Foundation with support for fieldwork also provided by the Mellon Foundation, the Canadian International Development Agency and Johns Hopkins University. We would like to thank all the Senegalese interviewers who worked so well to generate these excellent in-depth interview transcripts and all the respondents who gave up their time to talk.

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