

The populations of Dakar and Saint-Louis, Senegal are historically informed by African tradition, Muslim beliefs, and French colonialism. Preliminary research suggests that while men in Dakar are encouraged by all three historical epistemologies to be pronatalist, polygynous, or both, there is a high value placed on the virginity of women until marriage. This medical anthropological research will investigate the far reaching effects of these influences on the Dakarais and Saint-Louisien populations, and in particular how unmarried men in these communities are able to strike a balance in their moral and sexual behaviors as they pursue promiscuity for themselves while managing the “purity” of women. Furthermore, this research inquires as to how that negotiation affects women’s reproductive health, as well as the overall accessibility of reproductive technologies, from condoms to assisted reproduction.

As a field of study that concerns itself with human health and cultural nuance in global perspective, medical anthropology is uniquely suited to inform such research. The roles that men’s attitudes play are often neglected as subjects of inquiry in health, population, and development studies. By illuminating the ways that men perceive their own reproductive health in relation to the health of their sexual partners, the outcome of this research will contribute to the global discourse on the gendered biopolitical nature of knowledge of, accessibility to, and use of contraception and safe-sex practices, and will serve as a model of research in other locations. As ethnographic research on the sexual health of unmarried heterosexual men, this work will contribute to both medical anthropology and public health discourse and theory. Additionally, as this project focuses on some epistemological questions that are religious in nature, the findings will be particularly salient in the discussion of Islamic Studies, as well as the fields of African Studies and in non-Western philosophies.

It is my hypothesis that Senegalese men’s ideas about and roles in reproductive health are partly/largely responsible for mitigating risky sexual behavior, which has contributed to Senegal having the lowest prevalence of HIV in West Africa (0.7% in 2011) (World Bank 2013). If this hypothesis is supported, one broad societal impact of the research would be the deployment of components of successful Senegalese public health and sexual education campaigns in culturally similar areas around the world. Bringing these components to the attention of a broader public could result in their augmentation in ways that would bring the prevalence of sexually transmitted infections in Senegal even lower. This project will support similar research on men’s health in the United States and abroad by offering a global perspective on men, masculinities, and reproductive health. The findings of this project will inform policy-makers in both governmental and non-governmental public health agencies. Finally, the results of the research will be offered to a non-scientist audience by way of articles, public lectures, and social media in order to involve the publics, both American and Senegalese, in the broader discussion of gendered health and sexual behavior. The ongoing progress of the project will also be shared through various social media outlets as a method of engaging and educating the public in exciting ways on the daily activities and responsibilities associated with ethnographic fieldwork.

This endeavor will build on the field research I began in June-July 2013. It will require several summer months of ethnographic fieldwork in order to measure and document unmarried men’s and women’s attitudes about sexual behavior. Accounting for the negotiation between promiscuity of self and purity of others will call for a multi-component approach. Using the social networks established in my previous fieldwork, appropriate hosts in each community (i.e. within Dakar and Saint-Louis) will be the basis of snowball- or respondent driven-sampling. Much of the data will be gathered by participant-observation, but semi-structured interviews will complement the methodology in order to elucidate participants’ ideas about the behaviors in

question. In addition, contextualizing the findings of my research will require reaching out to social scientists at the *Institut de formation et de recherche en Population Développement et Santé de la reproduction* and *Institut fondamental d'Afrique noire* at *Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar*, as well as those at *Université Gaston Berger de Saint-Louis* for local scientific perspectives. In the case that a subsample of unmarried expectant fathers cannot be located in order to round out the sample, I intend to carry out research at a local clinic where sonograms are performed.

Previous ethnographic research has focused on the ways in which men manage the reproductive health of women within the context of the reproductive strategies of married couples, such as spacing births or using assisted reproductive technologies (Sargent 2006, Dudgeon and Inhorn 2009b, Inhorn and Wentzell 2011). A unique feature of the proposed project, however, is its emphasis on unmarried men. These are men who wish to one day become married and have children, but are content until that time to engage in premarital sex, and with multiple partners, while actively altering their behavior in order to avoid the conception of an illegitimate child and/or imperiling the virginity of a significant other. This research focuses on the ways in which unmarried men are able to reconcile their premarital and contraceptive sexual behavior with their religious and traditional belief systems that favor pronatalism. Having already carried out research in Dakar, Senegal in 2012 (on traditional medicine) and in 2013 (on men's reproductive health and sexual behavior), I have established a small social network of peers with which I can begin this research, building on my previous experience in ethnographic fieldwork methods and research design. I am an intermediate speaker of the official language, French, and I have a very basic but growing understanding of the most widely spoken of the national languages – Wolof, which I intend to develop through intensive study while in graduate school.

In closing, the results of this research will contribute scientific knowledge to men's health discourse in medical anthropology and public health, as well as engage the American and Senegalese publics in the discussion of men's roles and responsibilities with respect to reproductive health and sexual behavior. It will explore the cultural construction of virginity, and how that construction influences men's and women's health, adding to theories of gender and sexuality. It will, in addition, inform policy and decision-making in local, national, and international agencies through a variety of publication venues.

Works Cited:

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Despite the fact that Cleveland State University's Anthropology program offers no Medical Anthropology track, I believe I am very well prepared for graduate work in Medical Anthropology. I have conducted fieldwork in the last two summers on health-related topics, and I was selected by the National Association of Student Anthropologists (in partnership with the Society for Medical Anthropology) for the Emerging Leader in Medical Anthropology award. I have attended several professional conferences, both national and regional, and I have presented posters at meetings of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), the Central States Anthropological Society (CSAS), and the Second City Anthropology Conference, as well as a paper at a meeting of the CSAS. I am due to present another poster at the AAA meeting in November 2013. I'm graduating from a four-field program which has given me a broad foundation to build upon; as a result, my interests span the full range of anthropological inquiry, from questions of theory to the latest procedures of archeological exploration. I have put my extracurricular time on campus into volunteering in our Archaeological Curation Facilities, teaching a geology course, tutoring biological anthropology, assisting in one professor's archaeological field school and in another's Visual Anthropology Center, serving as an officer of the Student Anthropology Association for almost four years (of which I am currently the President), and carrying a 3.96 cumulative GPA.

My work with this department has yielded opportunities that I never thought possible. In 2012, with support of the Benjamin A. Gilman International Scholarship and other scholarships, I studied abroad, taking courses in Conversational French and the History, Politics, and Culture of Senegal in Dakar and Saint-Louis, Senegal with a six-week program through Washington University. As a part of that program, I was required to do a research project. With the support of my advisors, and influenced by the ethnographic works of Ellen E. Foley and Duana Fullwiley, I surveyed local attitudes about biomedical and traditional health interventions. What I found was a mosaic of epistemologies resulting from multiple historical processes, embodied in one people. The combination of African tradition, Muslim belief, and French culture informs *Dakarois* healthcare decision-making as much as it does one's everyday life. While I was there I learned some interesting local ideas about reproductive health and sexual behavior that did not mesh with my own Western beliefs. Upon returning to the U.S., I was compelled to dig deeper into the emerging research on the anthropology of reproduction, such as that of Carolyn Sargent, Marcia Inhorn, and Claire Wendland. What I found was a constellation of topics – the roles of men and masculinity, biopower and the state, and ethnophysiology – that complemented my general interests in West Africa, Islam, and French colonial history.

After this formative experience in my academic path, I was determined to get back to Dakar in 2013 to focus on research along those lines. Supported by my advisor's grant from our University Provost's undergraduate summer research initiative, I was able to return to Dakar, where she had arranged for me to live immersed for five weeks with a family in the vibrant, working-class Medina neighborhood. Through participant-observation and semi-structured interviews, I studied aspects of *Dakarois* men's attitudes about reproductive health and decision-making, sexual behaviors, virginity, reproductive technologies, and fatherhood. I am currently in the process of writing a final paper on the results of my research for my senior project. During my graduate research, it is my intent to build on the contacts made and the data gathered over these last two years. Among other things, in the future I would like to pursue questions related to how the construct of virginity impacts sexual behavior in Dakar, as well as Senegalese fathers' thoughts on the visualization of ultrasounds and their roles in post-partum care.

I am pursuing a Ph.D. in Medical Anthropology with leaders in the anthropology of reproduction. I seek a structured path to significant dissertation research, founded upon a comprehensive education in theory, methodology, and application, along with courses in public health, African studies, Islamic thought, and training in Wolof; with full-funding and a stipend so that I might be concerned only with my academic objectives, and grant writing instruction as well, to enable future fieldwork; and a cohesive and resourceful department that encourages camaraderie and collaboration, not just among students, but among faculty, and even between departments. While I am engaged in my graduate studies, I will continue to seek out research opportunities and interdisciplinary collaborations, and present my ongoing research at professional conferences while publishing in scholarly journals. I believe that support from the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship will best foster the advancement of my personal growth, academic innovation, and holistic anthropological thought as I focus on my graduate work.

Following the completion of my PhD, I have three tightly interwoven goals: to teach, to contribute to our scientific understanding, and to engage the public in scientific ways of thought. First, the small amount of teaching that I have done has been one of the most fulfilling experiences that I have ever had. I consider formal education to be, fundamentally, the most important social institution because of its nature as a vehicle of the dissemination of knowledge. As a professor, I want the opportunity to reach into the future by teaching critical thinking, reasoning, and analytical skills. I want to impress upon my students the importance of the holistic anthropological perspective and I want to advise students with the same degree of engagement and encouragement from which I have benefited. Second, as a research assistant to two professors, I have experience working hands-on with various elements of scholarly pursuit. I have even had the opportunity to take those experiences and, with guidance, design my own field research projects which were both challenging and rewarding. There is much work to be done in the future within the anthropology of reproduction and I am eager to use my graduate training to make contributions to the corpus of anthropological knowledge. Finally, my third goal is to engage the public in two ways. First, I would like to make a difference by educating at-risk young men and women about their options with respect to reproductive health and sexual behavior. Second, I want to engage the public in discourse through the popular press and social media. Making scholarly information accessible, both intellectually and economically, is the key to promoting science education and scientific literacy. I believe that I can be a successful Graduate Fellow of the National Science Foundation as the expectations for NSF Fellows are the very same that I have of myself: to be a leader in research, education, and innovation.