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# Peacemaking Embodied: Dance as a Connecting Thread Weaving Senegalese Ethnicities

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*SIT Study Abroad*

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*Peacemaking Embodied:  
Dance as a Connecting Thread Weaving Senegalese Ethnicities*

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### **Abstract**

Senegal remains one of the more peaceful, stable countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with little to no ethnic conflict or racial tension. Numerous social factors are credited with promoting this peace, ranging from political decisions to friendly jokes between different ethnic groups. Some artists claim that dance promotes positive relations between ethnicities; however, little to no academic literature reflects this social dynamic. Thus I have used formal interviews, informal interviews, observation, and participant observation to explore if Senegalese dance serves to promote peace between ethnic groups and, if so, why it has the power to serve this purpose. Through connecting the ideas of participants with observations of dances, I discerned that traditional Senegalese dance promotes peaceful relationships between ethnicities. This is due to widely-held associations with traditional dance, themes that emphasize commonality in humanity, and the effects of directly articulating dance as a peacebuilding art form.

## Background to the Study

*Car qui apprendrait le rythme au monde défunt des machines et des canons? [...]  
Nous sommes les hommes de la danse, dont les pieds  
reprennent vigueur en frappant le sol dur.*

For who would teach rhythm to a dead world of cannons and machines? [...]  
We are the men of dance, whose feet take on new strength from stamping the hard  
ground.

- Léopold Sédar Senghor, “Prière aux Masques” (Un Jour Un Poème, 2014 ; Poetry  
Foundation Ghana, 2001).

Senegal, a country situated in the farthest west section of Africa, is known for its tolerance and acceptance of diversity. There are around 20 ethnic groups in Senegal, yet little conflict exists between these groups, distinguishing the country from many neighboring nations (Fall, April 2014, personal communication). A variety of events, decisions, and cultural characteristics of Senegal are credited as being factors in promoting peace within Senegalese society. For example, in “A Joking Nation: Conflict Resolution in Senegal,” Ferdinand de Jong (2005) refers to a dynamic in which jokes between people of different ethnic groups serve to promote peaceful relationships (p. 391). In an informal conversation, a Senegalese friend explained to me that it is Senegal’s mandatory education of children that ensures more peaceful relationships than in some other African countries. Some credit Senegal’s first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor, with promoting peaceful group relations by being of an ethnic and religious minority himself and through making constructive leadership decisions during his presidency (Vaillant, 2002, p. 21). Senghor encouraged inter-ethnic collaboration both while working for independence and while working as president (Fall, April 2014, personal communication; Vaillant, 2002, p. 21). Yet amidst these varied explanations of Senegal’s relative peace lies a possible factor of particular interest to artists: Senegalese dance.

At a performance titled “Ce Qui Nous Lie” (“that which ties us together”), the Ballet National La Linguère performed a series of dance pieces linked to different Senegalese ethnic groups. This performance, held at the Théâtre National Daniel Sorano in February 2014, emphasized the way in which dance traditions of various Senegalese ethnicities serve to connect people, giving them the collective identity of “Senegalese.” This performance was consistent with the larger mission of the Théâtre National Daniel Sorano, as Senghor created the theater in part to promote a collective sense of Senegalese identity while celebrating the country’s cultural diversity (Fall, personal communication, April 2014). After watching the performance, “Ce Qui Nous Lie,” I became intrigued by the potential dance has to link Senegalese people of diverse ethnic backgrounds, promoting peaceful group relations in the process.

This inquiry is significant because it appears fairly untouched within academic literature on Senegalese music and dance. While exploring numerous databases in search of relevant peer-reviewed articles, I found that academic information on Senegalese dance is limited. Articles on dance specific to Senegal generally focus on the *sabar*. The term *sabar* refers to events in which groups of people, primarily women, gather to dance to the *sabar* drum, generally in a celebration of feminine sexuality (Heath, 1994, p. 94; Penna-Diaw, 2005, p. 201-215). The *sabar* is largely rooted in Wolof and Sereer traditions,<sup>1</sup> but has expanded to include a wider range of ethnic groups (Covington-Ward, n. d., p. 208). Because of the ethnic diversity encompassed in *sabar* practices, along with the truly communal nature of the dance, research on the *sabar* is relevant to studying how dance may connect ethnic groups; however, current articles on the *sabar* focus primarily on feminine sexuality and expression as opposed to relationships between people of different ethnicities (Covington-Ward, n. d., p. 207-210; Heath, 1994, p. 94; Penna-Diaw, 2005, p. 201-215).

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<sup>1</sup> Wolof and Sereer are two Senegalese ethnic groups.

In my searches, I found one article that explicitly addressed the relationship between dance and ethnic group connections. Researcher Francesca Castaldi compares the image that the Ballet National La Linguère promotes as a multi-ethnic dance company with subtler, internal ethnic relations (Covington-Ward, n. d., p. 208-209). “Wolofization, in the past a process that privileged Wolof language and culture over the languages and cultures of other Senegalese groups, also appears in performances,” Covington-Ward wrote in her review of Castaldi’s research (Covington-Ward, n. d., p. 208-209). Castaldi’s findings hinted that there may be ways in which dance performance weakens inter-ethnic relationships despite contrary statements promoted by the Ballet National and other dance organizations. This dynamic suggested a need to further study the role that dance plays in relationships between ethnicities.

Because my searches through databases did not yield other research focused on Senegalese dance as a source of connection between ethnic groups, I contacted the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) located in Dakar, Senegal. CODESRIA e-mailed me a bibliography of eleven journal articles, however many focused on Senegalese music and none focused specifically on my topic. Pheobe Mayor, a former student of SIT: National Identity and the Arts, chose to study dance for her Independent Study Project. She explained in her final project report that she found few resources on dance at libraries and organizations in Dakar, including the West African Research Center (WARC), Université Cheikh Anta Diop, and the Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor. The apparent shortage of resources on dance suggested a need to further explore dance in a Senegalese context.

In addition to there being few resources on Senegalese dance, information on conflict resolution and peacemaking – both within Senegal and other locations – rarely includes dance as a possible component in promoting peace. Thus there appears to be a disconnect between the



vocalized beliefs of the Ballet National La Linguère and information on dance within academic literature; while groups in Senegal, such as the Ballet National, may view dance as a means of promoting peace, this dynamic remains largely untouched within academic literature and anthropological analysis.

Yet studying dance as a source of inter-ethnic connections is significant. It is worthwhile investigating how and why Senegalese dance succeeds in promoting peaceful relations – if it does indeed succeed in doing so. Forming a deep understanding of this dynamic may enable group relationships within Senegal to be further strengthened. Furthermore, analyzing dance as a resource for peacemaking may empower groups in other locations to promote peace. For example, collaborative, inter-ethnic expressions of Senegalese dance may provide ideas for conflict solving efforts in places where there are serious problems of racism, class tension, or bullying in the United States.

### **Specific Objectives of the Study**

My specific objective of this study was, firstly, to discern if Senegalese dance does indeed work to connect people of different ethnicities in Senegal. Secondly, I wished to learn why or why not this is the case. If my data suggested that Senegalese dance does improve ethnic relations, I wanted to learn what about dance's qualities, content, and role in society enable it be an agent of creating and maintaining inter-ethnic peace. If my data suggested that Senegalese dance does not improve ethnic relations, I wanted to learn why it did not accomplish this and why some regarded dance as providing this function in Senegalese society.

### **Methodology**

This project consisted entirely of qualitative research. Because both ethnic identity and dance are deeply personal, emotional experiences, my research methods left space for listening

to people to express their perspectives in their own words and for observing how relationships exist in their own complex forms. For these reasons, I relied primarily on semi-structured formal interviews, informal interviews, participant observation, and observation. I sought perspectives from three main groups of people: Senegalese people involved in the field of professional dance, Senegalese sociologists, and members of the public. In stating “members of the public” I refer to people who are not necessarily dancers or academics, but who can offer valuable perspectives on dance, identity, and relationships from their own vantage points. I chose these three general groups of informants in order to develop a balanced range of perspectives; I wished to hear from experts on dance and Senegalese society while also developing a sense of wider, public viewpoints. I based my research in Dakar, Senegal’s capital city, where there are many dance organizations, university and library resources, translating services, and a large degree of ethnic diversity.

In order to accomplish these goals, I relied upon the following resources:

### **Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor**

The Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor is a center that functions as a community base for dancers, musicians and other artists. Built with open indoor and outdoor rooms, groups of a variety of dance styles come to practice. This made the center a place in which I could observe traditional dance rehearsals and network with artists in order to find candidates for interviewees. Through the Centre Cultural, I found a dance teacher, Sophie Jaffar, who instructed me for a total of three dance courses. Following the courses, she agreed to participate in a formal, semi-structured interview. Additionally, I connected a relative of Oumy Sene, one of the first lead dancers of the Ballet National. Through this connection, I was able to visit the home of Sene and interview her and some of the dancers present in her home, including a retired artist who had

danced with Youssou N’Dour. On a different occasion, a dancer at the Centre invited me to attend a dance spectacle in the Dakar neighborhood of Pikine. In an open, outdoor space between residential buildings, I observed a dance of “faux lions.” These “faux lions” or “false lions” were young adult men dressed in elaborate lion costumes who played the roles of mischievous, slightly malicious lions before a highly entertained crowd of neighborhood people. Before and after the spectacle, I conducted formal and informal interviews with dancers, dance instructors, and other people formally or informally associated with the spectacle. The following week, I observed a dance spectacle held at the Centre Cultural to celebrate International Dance Day. The celebration included both a *sabar* and a dance performance of the Ballet National La Linguère. Meanwhile my visits to the Centre resulted in a variety of informal interviews, including one with a Senegalese cinematographer who films traditional dances throughout Senegal.

Ultimately, conducting research and networking at the Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor provided the opportunity for two dance spectacle observations, three traditional dance rehearsal observations, three dance classes, and the majority of my formal and informal interviews (see Appendix B). The Centre was an invaluable resource in that it allowed me to communicate with people who had diverse experiences with dance. Artists who participate in activities at the Centre range from people who dance as a pastime outside a day job to professional dancers at the Ballet National La Linguère.

### **Ballet National La Linguère**

The Ballet National La Linguère was an essential resource for my project given the relevance of its goals to my topic. One of three troupes at the Théâtre National Daniel Sorono, the Ballet National La Linguère articulates itself as a multi-ethnic dance company celebrating the ethnic and cultural diversity of Senegal. I observed the Ballet practice for a total of three

rehearsals held at the Théâtre, each lasting in the range of two-and-a-half to four hours. On these occasions, I observed how the dancers prepared for a second performance of the program “Ce Qui Nous Lie” (“that which ties us together”), the same performance I watched as an audience member in February. I found it especially worthwhile to observe the Ballet during the same weeks that I observed rehearsals at the Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor; I was able to draw connections between the dances and better observe commonalities between ethnic traditions. Yet as important as observing the content and technique of the dances was observing the collaborative process involved in practicing them. For two out of three of the rehearsals at the Ballet, I sat in close proximity to the dancers (within two feet of the rehearsal stage). This enabled me to witness how the artists communicated while dancing and socialized during the down times of the rehearsal.

Following my three rehearsal observations of the Ballet National La Linguère, I interviewed both one of the company’s dancers and the director of the ballet, Madame Ndeye Bana Mbaye (see Appendix B). These interviews assisted in illustrating details of how the company functions that I was not able to fully understand from observation alone.

### **Elementary School Class Observation**

In an effort to more fully understand how people of diverse ethnicities are socialized to appreciate one another’s music and dance traditions, I shadowed ethnomusicologist Gabi Ba as he taught a music workshop for four elementary school classes. Through these participant observations (participant in that I, too, was invited to dance and learn some of the songs), I noted how the children learned lyrics and songs from a variety of ethnic traditions. Following the participant observations, I conducted a formal, semi-structured interview with Ba to better sense his perspective on his work with the children and why he structured the program as he did.

### **Interviews with Sociologists**

I conducted formal, semi-structured interviews with two Senegalese sociologists, Djiby Diakhaté and Abdoulaye Diallo. They could speak about ethnic relations and the roles of traditional dance from a sociological perspective while still having some distance from the professional dance sphere.

### **Interviews with “People of the Public”**

I decided to interview three people who had no formal instruction in dance and little to no association with higher education. This was part of an effort to develop a broader sense of if and how people of the general public of Dakar view dance as a means of improving inter-ethnic relations. I interviewed a security guard outside a residential building, a tailor, and a maid working domestically in a middle-class Senegalese household (see Appendix B). This segment of my project was, in many ways, a difficult endeavor because three individual perspectives can in no way represent the general (and incredibly diverse) public of Dakar. Nevertheless, I found that these interviews, interpreted in light of the other interviews of my project, did assist in developing a perspective of popular and public ideas around Senegalese dance.

### **Ethical Considerations**

While conducting research, I upheld ethical standards and strove to approach the research in ways that were culturally appropriate. Because of the highly oral nature of Senegalese culture, I sought verbal consent (as opposed to written consent) for observations, class participations, interviews, photo graphs, audio recordings and video recordings. When minors were participants in my research within a school context, I obtained verbal consent from the instructor who in turn received consent from the institution’s director. While conducting research, I strove to openly explain my topic and research intentions. I sought consent to use information interviewees

provided both before and after the interviews. Following formal interviews, I asked if informants preferred that their real name or pseudonym be used in the final report. I saved audio-recordings on my personal lap top that requires a password to use and backed up documents, including audio-recordings, using a personal USB stick. I asked each interviewee if one of my language professors could listen to the audio recording to aid me in comprehending the interview.

I strove to conduct all research in ways that were culturally sensitive. I shared most interview questions with my project advisor to receive advice on the cultural appropriateness of the questions. With all of these measures in mind, no physical, mental, emotional, or psychological risk existed for participants beyond what risks are characteristic of everyday life.

### **Notes on Terminology**

While completing this research, I discovered the necessity of considering what I meant when I discussed “Senegalese dance” and “traditional Senegalese dance.” In *Choreographies of African Identities*, researcher Francesca Castaldi (2006) addresses the immensely broad quality of these terms when she writes:

The single term ‘dance’ hides within it the struggles of the dance makers over the control of their products; the circulation, consumption, and proliferation and dances beyond an original locus of production; and the gaps in age and culture and social background between artists, producers, and audiences. The term ‘Senegalese’ covers an even more heterogeneous ensemble of religious, political, economic, ethnic, generational, and gendered identities and histories. ‘Senegalese dance’ as such does not exist. (p. 2)

Despite Castaldi’s misgivings regarding the phrase “Senegalese dance” I chose to use the phrase, inviting participants in my research to interpret it as they chose. As a newcomer to both Senegal and the vast world of dance within the country, I decided to enter my study in a way that was

exploratory and open. I did not wish, for example, to impose the assumption that “traditional” dance would be more effective at connecting people of different ethnicities than more “modern” forms of dance, or vice versa. Likewise, I originally chose to not focus on a particular genre or tradition within Senegalese dance. As a result, the study initially carried a quality that felt dangerously broad; nevertheless, I trusted my intuition that this broadness would be a means of making my study more inclusive of voices from diverse ethnic backgrounds, traditions, educational levels, and experiences with dance.

As my study progressed, I found myself particularly fascinated by the way in which an artist of one ethnicity was often familiar with the more “traditional” dances stemming from other ethnicities. For this reason, I decided to observe dances more likely to be termed “traditional.” I found that using the phrase “traditional” was helpful in assisting others as they directed me to places where I could observe dances origination from distinct ethnic heritages. Yet, despite the utility of the word “traditional” I found myself constantly discovering the necessity of considering this word in ways that are more dynamic and complex than perhaps what is normal during everyday conversations within American society. Tradition, I found, is not static. “Traditional” dances are, it seems, recreated to some degree as they are adapted and repurposed for different events, audiences, and places (such as the stage). Richard Handler and Jocelyn Linnekin address this dynamic when they write, “Tradition refers to an interpretive process that both embodies continuity and discontinuity... Since all cultures change ceaselessly, there can only be what is new, although what is new can take on symbolic value as ‘traditional’” (Handler & Linnekin, 1984). Castaldi (2006) addresses this phenomenon in light of Senegalese dance when she writes, “Past, present, and future are continually transformed in the dancing circle, which delimits the boundaries of manipulable space-time: History is reinterpreted and rewritten

through the performance and through the fusion of bodies and spirits” (p. 3). Thus when using the term “traditional,” I do so with the understanding that tradition is an ever-moving, artistic creation rooted in a deep sense of the past and practiced within a present context. Subjective and personal, it exists differently across time and differently among people living in the present.

### **Findings**

Through the combined use of formal and informal interviews, I ultimately gathered the perspectives of a fairly wide range of people living in the city of Dakar. I was in turn able to connect these viewpoints with what I observed or experienced during dance rehearsals and classes. Ultimately, I discovered information on the following subtopics of my research:

#### **Ideas Regarding Conflict in Senegal**

At the beginning of formal and informal interviews alike, I tried to get a sense of how participants perceived conflict or lack thereof within Senegal. This, in turn, could serve as a base for better comprehending their ideas around peace between ethnicities and how Senegalese dance assisted or did not assist in promoting this peace. There was common agreement among all interviewees that substantial, violent conflicts do not exist between ethnic groups in Senegal. Several interviewees, including my interview with Adjì (pseudonym employed), a tailor, and Aminata Diemé (pseudonym employed), a full-time maid, answered that conflict simply does not exist between ethnic groups (A. Diemé, personal communication, May 3, 2014; Adjì, personal communication, May 3, 2014). “Everyone listens well. In Senegal [there are no conflicts],” Aminata Diemé explained in Wolof. “The people are united.... We want to simply increase and improve that peace” (A. Diemé, personal communication, May 3, 2014). Several interviewees, including two retired professional dancers (Oumy Sene and a former dancer with Youssou N’Dour) along with a security guard (Palé) mentioned the current rebellion in the



Casamance region in the south of Senegal as the primary, current instance of conflict in Senegal. “But it [the conflict] is not between ethnicities” one the interviewees, a retired dancer, qualified in French. “It’s with the government” (Anonymous, personal communication, April 18, 2014). My project advisor Souleyemane Ngom, suggested a similar notion when he commented that the conflicts related to the region’s attempts to gain national independence are political and economic. The conflicts are not fought along ethnic lines (S. Ngom, personal communication, May 10, 2014).

Sociologist Djiby Diakhaté reflected upon a more subtle dynamic of ethnic inequality that could be considered a conflict, depending on how one choses to define “conflict.” Diakhaté described ways in which Wolof culture and language are often privileged above the cultures and languages of other ethnicities:

Il y a une ethnie qui domine les autres ; c’est le Wolof. En fin, au Sénégal, dans les grandes villes... tout le monde parle le Wolof... A l’école, on parle le Wolof. Dans la rue, on parle le Wolof. Au marché, on parle le Wolof. A la radio, on parle le Wolof. A la télévision, on parle le Wolof... Le Wolof c’est presque imposé partout. (D. Diakhaté, April 28, 2014)<sup>2</sup>

Diakhaté considers his life evidence of this dynamic. His mother is of the ethnicity Bombara and his father is of the ethnicity Maure; however, he himself does not speak Bombara or Maure. He speaks Wolof. Yet alongside describing this social dynamic, Diakhaté explained that Senegal successfully resolves conflicts between ethnicities. While there was increased potential for

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<sup>2</sup> “There is one ethnicity that dominates the others: it’s Wolof. In the end, in Senegal, in the large cities... everyone speaks Wolof... At school, one speaks Wolof. On the street, one speaks Wolof. At the market, one speaks Wolof. On the radio, one speaks Wolof. On the television, one speaks Wolof.... The Wolof language is imposed nearly everywhere” (D. Diakhaté, April 28, 2014).

conflict between ethnic groups during and following European colonization of the area, Senegal has developed “several manners” of promoting social stability (D. Diakhaté, April 28, 2014).

### **Social mechanisms credited as Senegalese peacemakers**

While I entered my project having heard from several sources that dance was a means of connecting ethnic groups, I wanted to discover the degree to which this was believed by dancers, sociologists, and people of the general public. Before asking interviewees if they believed that dance could promote more peaceful relations between ethnic groups, I consistently asked interviewees why they believed there was relatively little conflict in Senegal. Dance was not a regularly attributed cause of peaceful relations among interviewees involved in dance or “people of the public.” By contrast, a number of interviewees credited Senegal’s deep value of hospitality, or *teranga*, with creating and sustaining peace in Senegal. A manager at the Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor, Oumy Sene, two of Oumy Sene’s relatives (a dancer and retired dancer), dancer Ibrama (Serpent),<sup>3</sup> and Adjji, a tailor, each described *teranga* as a factor in Senegal’s peace. The manager at the Centre Cultural elaborated upon the way in which it is essential, within Senegal, to offer hospitality to all visitors from foreign places, whether they are from another country or from another region within Senegal. Regardless of what differences exist, giving of one’s resources and expressing compassionate curiosity in the lives of others is vital (Anonymous, personal communication, April 18, 2014).

Just as numerous interviewees mentioned *teranga*, a variety of people listed Islam as a presence in Senegalese society that connects ethnic groups. When I asked former National Ballet dancer Oumy Sene why there is little ethnic conflict in Senegal, she responded, “Nous sommes

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<sup>3</sup> “Serpent” is Ibrama’s artist name. He requested that it be included parenthetically so others Dakar’s dance sphere would recognize him.

des Musulmans. C'est notre education" (O. Sene, personal communication, April 18, 2014)<sup>4</sup>.

One of Sene's sons, a dancer himself, voiced that the first reason Senegal has peace is that "One believes in God" and, secondly, "One believes in Muhammed." I asked another relative of Oumy Sene, a retired dancer as well, if Senegal would have less peaceful inter-ethnic relationships if dance (hypothetically) did not exist in Senegalese society. He responded that Senegal would still know peace as it is Islam that connects the ethnicities before dance (Anonymous, personal communication, April 18). Ibrama (Serpent), a dancer and dance instructor associated with the Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor, also suggested that Islam decreases and prevents conflict (Ibrama (Serpent), personal communication, April 25, 2014).

Several other causes of peace were mentioned by interviewees. Abdoulaye Diallo, educated as a sociologist at the university level, articulated that media production serves to connect people of diverse ethnicities in Senegal (A. Diallo, personal communication, April 24, 2014). Both Diallo and Diakhaté described the importance of joking relationships between ethnic groups (A. Diallo, personal communication, April 24, 2014; D. Diakhaté, personal communication, April 28, 2014). Yet Diakhaté was the single informant who credited dance with promoting peaceful relations between ethnic groups before I directly asked if dance provided this function. "The second solution [after joking relations] is dance," he explained in French. "Dance can link people of different ethnicities" (D. Diakhaté, personal communication, April 28, 2014). Diakhaté stated that, without dance in Senegalese society, there would be more social tension between ethnic groups (D. Diakhaté, personal communication, April 28, 2014).

### **Explanations of Dance's Relationship to Inter-ethnic Peace and the Emphasis on Emotions**

While the majority of my interviewees did not initially mention dance as a factor in inter-ethnic peace, many expressed that it does serve this purpose after I asked if it could. When I

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<sup>4</sup> "We are Muslims. It's our education" (O. Sene, personal communication, April 18, 2014).

asked why and how dance could promote peace between ethnic groups, the conversation often turned to a discussion of the sense of personal peace and happiness involved in dancing. “When one dances, one smiles,” Oumy Sene said in French. I ultimately heard this phrase echoed in other interviews. Multiple interviewees expressed the importance of the sheer joy involved in dancing. Sophie Jaffar, my dance instructor at the Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor, emphasized that many dancers come to the Centre because they deeply enjoy dancing and feel happier when they leave (S. Jaffar, personal communication, May 3, 2014). A musician and a retired dancer (both anonymous) each separately explained that dance has an important role in society because it is a way of having fun and relieving stress in the midst of poverty (Anonymous, personal communications, April 18, 2014). Diakhaté made a similar statement, explaining that dance’s first role in Senegalese society is to provide stress relief in the midst of social and economic hardship (D. Diakhaté, personal communication, April 28, 2014).

These statements regarding the joy of dance were embodied at the dance spectacles I observed. At both the performance of “faux lions” I observed in Pikine and the celebration at the Centre for the International Day of Dance, spectators came to cheer, clap and joyfully engage. Meanwhile the dancers, as Oumy promised, did indeed smile – if smiling was consistent with the theatrical characters the dancers portrayed. During the most participatory part of the dance celebration at the Centre, a *sabar*, dancers weaved in and out of the open space surrounded by viewers to dance vigorously, their bodies and faces emanating with joy.

### **Commonalities in Dance Content and Themes**

While there are generally distinctions between historical dances different ethnic groups, there are many commonalities overarching the dance traditions of Senegal (Anonymous, personal communication, April 16, 2014). Numerous interviewees mentioned that most ethnic

groups in Senegal have dances for major life events; informants mentioned birth, baptism, circumcision, marriage, and death as reasons to dance that exist across a variety of ethnicities (Anonymous, personal communications, April 18, 2014; D. Diakhaté, personal communication, April 28, 2014). While observing the Ballet National La Linguère, I noticed the presence of several of these major life events reflected in the dances. Within their program “Ce Qui Nous Lie” (“That Which Ties Us Together), dancers perform a piece titled “Marriage Soninke.” Based on the performance’s printed program and my observations of rehearsals, I learned that the piece tells a story of a couple from two different ethnicities who fall in love, get married, and encounter struggles during the marriage ceremony through which they must persevere. The piece “Ballade Dans Le Penc,” provides a message of equality between men and women, while also illustrating the story of a woman’s pregnancy.

In addition to pertaining to major life events, traditional dances of a variety of ethnicities capture forms of work and movements of everyday life. Researcher Bakari Edison Lindsay has argued that Senegalese dances often reflect physical movements involved in chores (Bizas, 2005, p. 25). I recalled this research while observing the Ballet National La Linguère rehearse the pieces “Réveil Matinal,” “Ballet de La Recolte Serer” and “Pêcheurs en Mer.” In “Réveil Matinal,” the dancers illustrate a village waking up as people of varying social roles commence the day’s work. Dancers on the side of the stage make convincing sounds of cows mooing in rhythm with a musician’s flute, while one woman scolds another for being too sleepy to begin a task at hand. In “Ballet de La Recolte Serer,” dancers illustrate the process of planting and harvesting peanuts. In “Pêcheurs en Mer,” a dance stemming from a Lébou tradition, dancers illustrate the importance of fishing for sustaining one’s livelihood. Each dance, originally

inspired by the ideas of different ethnicities, illustrates as theatrical performance the work of ancestors and the work of some Senegalese people today.

### **Commonalities in Dance Socialization**

In addition to similarities in the contents and purposes of dances, there are similarities in the ways in which people of different ethnicities are socialized to dance. While sitting in the home Ibrama (Serpent) in Pikine, shortly before watching the spectacle there, I attempted to informally interview another dancer next to me. “How did you learn to dance?” I almost yelled in French. The booming, rhythmic sounds of *djembes*<sup>5</sup> nearby made it nearly impossible to successfully communicate the question or understand a response. We exchanged loud, inaudible statements back and forth several times before I realized that within feet of my chair, a child of one year and two months was joyfully dancing to the sounds of the *djembes*. As she hopped up and down and waved her arms, her mother, sitting to my left, grinned and clapped her hands, lovingly encouraging her child to continue. She turned to me and said proudly, “Elle danse. C’est dans le sang. Parce que, mon mari, il danse aussi.”<sup>6</sup> I realized then that, in that moment, I could understand perhaps how Senegalese people learn to dance better through observation than attempting to exchange words.

I ultimately came to observe young toddlers dancing at the encouragement of loving adults on several occasions. Each time, the young child bounced up and down, grinning as several adults leaned forward in their seats, clapping, beaming and vocalizing rhythmic sounds. Adjji may have articulated this same process when she described, “Quand j’étais petite, j’ai dansé très bien! Quand j’ai [commencé] tout le monde a applaudi !” (Adjji, personal communication,

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<sup>5</sup> *Djembes* are large drums regularly used in more traditional Senegalese dance performances.

<sup>6</sup> “She dances. It’s in the blood. Because, my husband, he dances, too.”

May 3, 2014).<sup>7</sup> A cinematographer of dance expressed to me that there is a Wolof phrase articulating that children learn to dance as their mothers teach them to walk. Shortly after this conversation, I witnessed one of my host sisters holding onto the arms of her not-quite-yet-walking nephew, vocalizing rhythmic sounds as she waved his arms, teaching him how to dance. My observations suggested that the practice of teaching and encouraging young children to dance is a part of multiple – if not all – ethnic groups in Senegal.

I, too, was not exempt from encouragement to dance. Throughout my homestay experience, my host mother and other household members often asked me to dance either solo or with some of the younger family members. (This may happen if one voices interest in Senegalese dance.) Each time I began to rhythmically move my body before my small audience in the salon, people would clap, beaming. Either my host mom or the family's maid would begin to vocalize rhythmic sounds to guide my movements, just as I had observed women do so for children. Hearing the sounds, my body would take on a new rhythmic life, and I would begin beaming just like my family members. Towards the end of the second rehearsal I observed at the Ballet National La Linguère, a number of dancers insisted that I join them on stage and dance with them for the remainder of the song. Several dancers motioned me emphatically to come forward, while another artist assisted me in stepping over a bench up onto the stage. It was as if they had been anticipating the right time to invite me to participate and now was the time. On stage, I tried to imitate the fast, complex movements of a dancer facing me, highly cognizant that a full room of some of Senegal's most talented artists were watching every move. After the drummers completed their last, loud, emphatic beats, I stepped off the stage in a slight daze. I recall Papa Camara, one of the dancers, greeting me with a large smile on this face. "You dance well!" I believe he said in French, clasping my hand in a friendly handshake. Both within the home and

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<sup>7</sup> "When I was little, I danced very well! When I would start, everyone would clap!"

within one of Senegal's most prestigious dance companies, social encouragement is an integral part of dance socialization and dance instruction.

### **Multiculturalism within Senegalese Dance**

Throughout interviews and observations alike, I discovered that people are regularly exposed to dances that stem from ethnic traditions other than their own. I learned quickly during my interviews that there was little “*de facto*” segregation among artists of different ethnicities, not only within the Ballet National but within other dance contexts as well. For example, while in Pikine, I attempted to conduct an informal focus group interview with three men following the spectacle of the “faux lions.” Each man was either a dancer, former dancer, and/or dance instructor. They sat side by side on a bench in a bedroom that was used as a place for friends and family to socialize. Each man identified himself with a different ethnicity: Wolof, Socé, and Toucouleur (a sub-group of the Peulhs) (Anonymous, personal communications, April 25, 2014). Conversations with other people in the household suggested that ethnic diversity was present. Sociologist Abdoulaye Diallo noted that when dance festivals occur, people of all ethnicities are invited (A. Diallo, personal communication, April 24, 2014). Thus, people, often at an early age, are exposed to a wide range of dance traditions.

### **Concern for Cultural Representation in the Creation of National Identity**

Several observations and conversations indicated that dance serves the important function of representing Senegalese cultures on a national level. Sociologist Abdoulaye Diallo explained that “traditional dance” provides “une identification ethnique” or “ethnic identification” for people different group in Senegal (A. Diallo, personal communication, April 24, 2014). Multi-ethnic, multicultural representation appears to be one of the main goals of the Ballet National La Linguère, historically and presently. While interviewing Oumy Sene, Sene expressed that the



Ballet includes “toutes les ethnies Senegalaises”<sup>8</sup> Given the sheer number of ethnic minorities in Senegal (see Appendix A), it is questionable whether the Ballet literally includes all ethnicities; however, interviews and observations at the Ballet indicate that representing and honoring dance traditions of different ethnicities is indeed an important value. The director of the Ballet, Madame Ndeye Bana Mbaye, explained during a formal interview that dancers must be well-acquainted with a variety of dance traditions in order to become part of the Ballet (personal communication, April 30, 2014). During auditions, dancers are asked to perform a dance from a particular ethnicity. The dancers do not know which ethnic tradition they will be expected to represent before the audition. “C’est mieux. Parce que, ici, vous voyez, on danse beaucoup des danses ici – les danses de plusieurs ethnies,” Madame Mbaye explained (personal communication, April 30, 2014).<sup>9</sup> Once dancers are accepted into the company, they share responsibilities in instructing dances. When learning a new dance, it is the dancer (or dancers) of the same ethnicity as the dance who take primary responsibility for teaching its movements (N. Mbaye, personal communication, April 30, 2014). Thus, while observing the Ballet rehearse, I noticed the ever shifting movements of leadership. One dancer would demonstrate movements and provide suggestions for a piece and, afterwards, the primary source of leadership seamlessly transitioned to another dancer. Decisions to structure the Ballet in this way may explain why Ngom described the company as being ethnically “non-hierarchal” (personal communication, April 23, 2014). It may also explain, to some degree, why Djiby Diakhaté described dance as a sector of Senegalese society less impacted by Wolofization than many other sectors (D. Diakhaté, personal communication, April 28, 2014).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> “all Senegalese ethnicities.”

<sup>9</sup> “It’s better that way. Because, you notice here, one dances many dances – of many ethnicities.”

<sup>10</sup> The term “Wolofization” refers to ways in which Wolof culture and language has spread throughout Senegal and influenced the cultures and languages of other Senegalese ethnic groups (Convington-Ward, Y., n. d., p. 208-209).

## Discussion and Analysis

During my research process, I initially struggled to discern if the information I found provided solid indication of whether or not dance connects Senegalese ethnic groups. Yet now that I have completed all interviews and observations, there is clear indication that dance does indeed serve as one of many social mechanisms creating and maintaining inter-ethnic peace in Senegal. This became evident in exploring the patterns in interviews and the ways in which these patterns re-surfaced during observations.

The crediting of other social mechanisms with promoting peace in Senegalese society was a clear trend throughout my interviews. Notably, dancers and non-dancers alike often did not describe dance as a part of Senegalese society that promotes peace before I specifically asked if dance could provide this function. It appears that there are certain widespread explanations for why Senegal is a generally peace nation and reasons that go less mentioned. For example, the importance of *taranga* (hospitality) and Islam are on the forefront of the public's consciousness. Dance, while also often an aspect of everyday life (D. Diakhaté, personal communication, April 28, 2014), does not have a strong, popular connotation with peacemaking. I suspect that this may be in part due to the way in which inter-ethnic collaboration in the field of dance is so common – so much an aspect of the dance experience – that perhaps this inter-ethnic collaboration is somewhat forgotten. During a Celebrating Diversity Workshop in the States, I heard the phrase, “Culture is like the water that fish swim in.” Water is so intrinsically part of a fish's experience that it does not necessarily consider that it is swimming in water just as humans do not necessarily consciously think about the reality that we live in air. The inter-ethnic peace in Senegal and ways in which dance facilitates this peace may be so much a part of Senegalese

society that they become the water that the Senegalese swim in or the air that the Senegalese live in – ever present but not necessarily regularly discussed.

This dynamic may explain why many informants voiced the importance of finding emotional peace through dance. Unlike peaceful ethnic relations, internal peace cannot be as easily taken-for-granted within Senegalese society. Stresses of economic struggle create a constant need for the therapeutic element of Senegalese dance.

While beginning my research, I considered the emphasis on emotional wellbeing and health during interviews to be only tangentially related to my topic. Yet due to the steadfast, consistent, recurring nature to these comments throughout nearly all interviews, I discerned that it is worthwhile (and necessary) to reflect upon the significance of emotional peace to ethnic relations. If joy and diversion from poverty is, as Djiby Diakhaté noted, the primary role of dance in Senegalese society, how does this role relate to inter-ethnic peace? The way in which dance provides joy and stress relief does indeed empower dance to improve inter-ethnic relations. This is because people of a wide variety of ethnicities approach dance with the mentality that it is an outlet for having fun and decompressing. When people of diverse ethnic groups gather for more traditional dance events, fun (as opposed to competition) is of utmost importance. Individuals come to dance events with the mentality that it is a time for being happy and relaxed. This creates a laid back, communal environment optimal for building positive social relationships. Because dance classes and celebrations are generally multi-ethnic – both in terms of people present and dances practiced – these fun-filled events in turn work to promote positive ethnic relations. Dance rehearsals and spectacles thus form instances in which ethnic relationships are nourished despite the way in which improving ethnic relationships may not be a stated goal at the events.

The ways in which many Senegalese people are socialized to appreciate dance also provides indication that dance has the power to connect people of diverse cultural backgrounds. My research suggests that children are often socialized to appreciate dance in similar ways. Many children have the experience of dancing happily at a young age to the clapping and encouragement of nearby adults. Traditional dance thus becomes associated with family members and the pride and support of people significant in a child's life. Due to these childhood experiences, individuals from a variety of ethnic backgrounds learn at early ages that traditional dance is a context of encouragement. One takes joy in both dancing and in watching the dances of other people. Just as music and traditional dance are inseparable, encouragement and traditional dance are nearly inseparable. Even in the context of the National Ballet, where dancers take seriously their performances and there is critical emphasis on performing well, I observed dancers congratulating one another for their solos with hugs and handshakes. Because the social value of encouragement within dance traverses ethnicities, it too works to foster a positive environment in which people of diverse backgrounds can bond with one another.

The content of dance traditions, too, assists in connecting people of different ethnicities. Interviewees regularly mentioned that dance is an important part of ceremonies for births, baptisms, and marriages. Some noted that there are dances present at deaths. The ceremonies listed are especially significant in that they all pertain to major life events shared across people of different ethnicities. Dance thus reminds people of the commonality of birth, the commonality of relationships, and the commonality of death. Essentially, dance reminds people of humanity. Dances reflecting the work of everyday life (whether everyday life of the past or everyday life of the present), also artistically represents humanity. During the piece "Réveil Matinal," a woman yawns as she barely begins a morning chore. Her friend scolds her and attempts to wake her up.

A minor conflict arises when a man stumbles into a woman completing a different chore. During another piece, the first down pour of the rainy season begins. The people completing their work hear the thunder, stop and look at one another with looks of excitement. Could it be true? When the rain falls, they rejoice and dance with more vigor than before. With yawns, scoldings, little conflicts, and celebration of water, the dancers perform a portrayal of humanity.

In addition to *qualities* of Senegalese dance that promote peace, deliberate articulation that dance promotes peace in turn improves inter-ethnic relationships. The Ballet National La Linguère intentionally articulates itself as a diverse group of artists. In addition to promoting this image, the company structures itself to reflect many different dance traditions. Through creating a system in which artists share leadership while learning new dances, the company gives voice and empowerment to artists of different ethnicities. Thus dance as an art that “links” people of Senegal is not merely a title existing on a paper program handed to audience members. It is a reality that the people of the company strive to create during rehearsals and performances alike. This articulation – that dance has the power to link ethnicities – can in thus become a self-fulfilling prophesy. If artists articulate traditional dance as an art that can connect ethnic groups, than they may be more likely to take strategic action to learn and perform dances that reinforce this idea.

### **Conclusions**

Traditional Senegalese dance earns the recognition as one of the social mechanisms promoting inter-ethnic peace in Senegal. Yet this is not due to commonalities in rhythms or dance themes alone. Dance serves to connect ethnic groups because of widely-experienced associations with dance – such as joy and encouragement – which in turn create positive environments conducive to relationship-building. Secondly, traditional Senegalese dance

connects ethnic groups because of the way it intentionally captures expressions of humanity through the performance of major life events and everyday tasks. Thirdly, dance connects ethnic groups in part because some individuals and organizations articulate dance as an art that has this capacity. This articulation in and of itself functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy that in turn assists in creating situations in which dance bonds people of different ethnic heritages.

With these realizations in mind, an inquiry lies ahead: can these insights into Senegalese dance provide ideas for how dance can connect people of diverse backgrounds in other locations? Could, for example, an anti-bullying program in the United States adopt dance as a program focused on building positive relationships between elementary school students? Could an area in which there is currently tension between people of different racial or ethnic backgrounds use dance strategically to improve racial/ethnic relations? Senegal cannot be recreated in another country; however, the aspects of Senegalese dance that lead to peacemaking could perhaps be respectfully interpreted, adopted, adapted, and re-created to fit the needs of other cultural settings. Those leading the anti-bullying program in the States could, for example, focus on the following:

- Striving to create a dance-learning environment in which dancers are encouraged by one another as they dance.
- Placing a large emphasis on fun, relaxing and enjoying the dance process.
- Experimenting with dances that tell stories. That is, trying a dance in which the goal is not only to move physically in ways that are engaging or impressive, but to create dances that tell stories of relevance to the people involved.
- Identifying lifestyle or cultural characteristics that all members of the group have in common and integrating these characteristics into the content of the dance.

- Articulating dance as an art that has the power to connect people and promote peace within a variety of environments – thus opening up opportunities for turning this belief into concrete reality.

### **Challenges and Limitations Encountered During Research**

Most challenges I entered during my research were due to language barriers and time limitations. I have studied Wolof for less than three months and speak French adequately but not fluently. This reality meant that I was bombarded with language confusions and difficulties on a daily basis. Language barriers were particularly difficult during situations in which I believed that a participant spoke French fluently, only to discover while posing questions that a translator was necessary. Often unprepared for the need for formal translation, I regularly relied upon translation from nearby people who spoke the languages at hand but were not professional translators. This in turn raised concerns regarding whether or not my questions were being posed as I intended them and if responses were being fairly portrayed. Occasionally I sensed that my volunteer translator was responding to a question as much as the designated interviewee. I strove to take this into account while gathering and collecting data. I often tried to pose questions in multiple ways to aid in communication and I regularly clarified responses given. An effective long term way of addressing this challenge would be to take an intensive local language learning course before commencing research. Proficiency or fluency in Wolof would open innumerable doors in the context of Dakar, particularly for researchers wishing to connect with people from a variety of viewpoints and dodge limitations involved in using translator services.

The limited amount of time available was my second main challenge in researching. I quickly discovered that two weeks is very little time to locate resources, establish connections, build rapport, and begin collecting rich data. After two weeks, I sensed that I was on the verge of

collecting the information I most needed, thus I allowed myself to use a third week for collecting information. Unfortunately I entered the fourth (and final) week of the project feeling that I did not have nearly enough time to organize and interpret my data as I had originally hoped. If I were to repeat the process, I would likely succumb to collecting less research over the course of a three week period. This would allow me more time to organize information as I collected it and still use three full weeks to build rapport with organizations and participants. Through this strategy, I would likely have clearer notes, more time to reflect upon the progression of my research, and less data organization to complete during the fourth week of the project. Ultimately, however, allocating more than four weeks for research is essential to gathering data and ideas of depth.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

In line with the challenges I mentioned above, I offer the following recommendations for students and researchers who choose to work in a similar field:

- To make local language study a primary focus of the early research process with the ultimate goal of becoming proficient or fluent in that language.
- To learn from the perspectives of a demographically more diverse group of informants. Largely due to time constraints, there are some demographic imbalances in my research. For example, men represent the overwhelming majority of my informants (though women consist of half of my formal interview participants) (See Appendix B). Most of my informants were not of small ethnic minorities, while a large number of informants were Peulh. More time in the field coupled with conscientious efforts to work with a diverse body of informants could enable researchers to gather a larger variety of perspectives.



- To use more time in the field in order to further explore the connections between dance and ethnic relations, perhaps studying a specific aspect of this connection in depth.
- To consider studying the same or a similar topic outside of Dakar. (In an effort to limit the scope of my project, all of my research was based in Dakar and thus largely limited to perspectives of Dakar.)
- To consider basing similar research in the Casamance region, thus addressing the relationship between dance and peaceful relations in an area in which there is more tension.
- To consider how dance may serve to promote peaceful relationships in the Casamance region, whether these relationships be largely ethnic, political, and/or economic.
- To consider dynamics in other African countries in which there are rich dance traditions along with inter-ethnic conflict; to consider the connections between dance and ethnic relations found in these contexts and compare the findings to that which I have found in my research.
- To research the capacity of other dance genres (including those more contemporary) to unify people and improve relationships between people.
- To consider how dance may improve relationships between people and groups from a psychological perspective. As a Sociology major, I chose to approach my topic from a sociological perspective; however, one could certainly focus on the ways in which people experience dance psychologically to further consider dance's potential for peacebuilding.

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## Appendix A

### Senegalese Ethnic Groups

The following is a reformatted list of ethnic groups provided by Souleyemane Ngom (see Appendix B).

The statistically largest ethnic groups in Senegal and their subgroups:  
Ethnicities are typed in bold and listed from largest to smallest by percentage of population.

- **Wolof**
  - Wolof
  - Lébou
- **Peulh**
  - Fouta Toro (Toucouleur)
  - Boundou
  - Firdou
  - Fouta Jallon
  - Jolof
  - Laobé
- **Sereer**
  - Sine
  - Niominka
  - None or Léhar
  - Ndout
  - Diobass
  - Safène
- **Diola**
  - Fogny
  - Blouf
  - Cassa
  - Bandial
- **Mandingues**
- **Soninkés**

Smaller ethnicities (statistically) that are largely found in the Casamance region:

- **Mandjack**
- **Balante**
- **Mankagnes**

- **Bainouks**
- **Pépels**
- **Badiarankés**

Ethnic minorities found in the regions of Tambacounda and Kédougou:

- **Bassari**
- **Bédik**
- **Koniagui**
- **Diallonké**
- **Khassonké**
- **Diakhanké**

Other ethnicities noted :

- **Bambara** (originally from Mali where the Bamabaras are currently the majority)
- **Maure** (originally from Mauritania where the Maures are currently the majority)

Additional notes:

- According to Souleyemane Ngom, there are approximately 20 ethnic groups in Senegal, each listed above. He noted there are other ethnicities present as a result of more recent immigration, but chose not to include them in the list of Senegalese ethnic groups.
- The names of ethnicities above are all listed in French. Varying names and spellings exist for the same groups. For example, *Sarahkhole*, an ethnicity listed by one of my informants, is another term for *Soninké*. *Fulani*, the ethnicity identified by interviewee Gabi Ba (see Appendix B) is another term for “Peulh.” In my chart of informants, I chose to use the name each participant used to describe their ethnicity as a way of honoring their choice of terminology (see Appendix B). I prioritized this over choosing a consistent language
- Above, “Lébou” is listed as a subgroup of the Wolofs. Ngom described the Lébous as such but noted that there is debate within Senegal as to whether or not they can be considered a “subgroup.”

## Appendix B: Chart of Informants

Name/ Description	Ethnicity	Languages	Places of residence	Sex	Age	Relevant background details	Languages used during communi- cation
Souleyemane Ngom, project advisor	Serer	Serer, French, English, Wolof, “a little Peulh,” “a little German.”	Past: Togo; Belgium; Senegalese cities and towns Kaolack, St. Louis, Diourbel, Tambacounda, Dakar.  Current residence: Dakar	M	57	Works as, Cultural Advisor for the Ministry of Culture; upper graduate degrees in Sociology and History, diplomas in Communications and Cultural Advising	Primarily French with occasional English words
Musician at Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor, anonymous informal interviewee		<i>French, Wolof, possibly other.</i>	Currently lives in Dakar	M	Likely middle-aged	Has management position at the Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor; has experience in singing, percussion, composition, song-writing	French
Mamadou Fall, informal interviewee		<i>French, Wolof, possibly other</i>		M		Percussionist for the Theatre National Daniel Sorono	French
Oumy Sene, <b>formal interviewee</b>	Lébou <sup>11</sup> and Serer (with a Lébou mother and Serer father)	<i>Wolof, some French, possibly other</i>	Currently lives in Dakar	F	App. 66	Retired professional dancer; began dancing professionally in 1959 at age 11; Was the first lead dancer for the Ballet National; referred to on the website of Kaay Fecc as a “legendary dancer.” <sup>12</sup> (Kaay Fecc 2011).	Some direct communication in French, remainder in Wolof, translated non-professionally by Cheikh Seck.

<sup>11</sup> The “Lébous” are said by some to comprise a Wolof subgroup. (See Appendix A.)

<sup>12</sup> Kaay Fecc, meaning “Come Dance” in Wolof, is a dance organization in Senegal.

Former professional dancer, informal interviewee			Lives in Italy and occasionally visits family in Dakar	M		Danced professionally for musician Youssou N'Dour, Son of retired former director of Ballet National.	French
Dancer, informal interviewee	Mandingues			M	Likely in 20's or 30's	Son of retired dancer Oumi Sene (mother) and former director of Ballet National (father)	French
Dancer and friend of informant above, informal interviewee				M	Likely in 20's or 30's	Dancer from the Casamance region	French
Cinematographer, informal interviewee		<i>French, Wolof, possibly other</i>		M	Likely middle-aged	Films traditional Senegalese dances throughout country, currently focuses on spiritual dances and/or dances in Casamance region	French
Abdoulaye Diallo, <b>formal interviewee</b>	Peulh	Peulh, Wolof, French, Socé, English	Grew up in cities/ towns Kaolack, Kafrine, Bignona, and St. Louis; grew up "un peu partout Senegal" ("all over Senegal")	M		Sociologist by university education	French
Gabi Ba, <b>formal interviewee</b> , provided opportunity for elementary	Fulani (same ethnicity as Peulh)		Grew up in village in northern Senegal before studying in Dakar	M	Likely middle-aged	Ethnomusicologist, musician, elementary school music teacher; Founded primary school	French



school observation						music program to promote Senegalese musical understanding and aid in enriching children's sense of identity.	
Ibrama (Serpent) <sup>13</sup> <b>formal interviewee</b>		<i>Wolof, some French, possibly other.</i>	Lives in Pikine, neighborhood with many dancers and dance festivals in Dakar.	M	32	Dancer and dance instructor; danced as a the main "faux lion" in dance spectacle observed in the Dakar neighborhood Pikine	French and Wolof with non-professional translation assistance from his sister, Mariama (see below)
Mariama (requested pseudonym employed), <b>formal interviewee</b>	Wolof, Toucouleur	Wolof, French	Lives in Pikine, neighborhood with many dancers and dance festivals in Dakar.	F	34	Has perspective of someone who is not a dancer, but lives with dancers and regularly has dancers and dance instructors in her home; stays home as mother of young children	French
Dancer in Pikine, informal interviewee	Socé	Socé, Wolof, Toucouleur, "a little" Bombara, French, "a little" Spanish		M	23	Works as dancer and dance instructor.	French
Three men associated with dance spectacle in Pikine,	14) Wolof 15) Toucou-	<i>Wolof, some French, likely other</i>		14) M 15) M 16) M	14) 38 15) 37 16) 20	These men were dancers and/or dance instructors; one of the men	Some direct communication in French with large

<sup>13</sup> "Serpent" is Ibrama's artist name. He requested that it be included parenthetically so others in Dakar's dance sphere can recognize him.

informal focus group interviewees.  (In this setting, many different people, primarily men, came and left the room, sometimes participating a bit in the interview before leaving.)	leur  16) Socé					was a former “faux lion” dancer while another worked as a manager for a group of dancers.	amount communicated in Wolof with the non-professional translation assistance of Mariama (see above).
Djiby Diakhaté, <b>formal interviewee</b>	Bambara (ethnicity of mother), Maur (father’s ethnicity)	Mentioned Wolof exclusively ; spoke in French and English during interview.	Grew up in the city of Thies, came to Dakar for university studies, studied in Belgium for PhD, returned to Dakar in 2000.	M	47	Has PhD in Sociology; works as Sociology professor at Université Cheikh Anta Diop of Dakar, director of doctoral and research program at Institute Africain de Management, consultant for UNICEF.	French with occasional words or phrases in English.
Papa Camara, <b>formal interviewee</b>	Described himself as Guinean, with father of Soussou ethnicity and mother of Sarakhole ethnicity	Soussou, Sarahkhole , (aka Soninke) (mentioned Wolof after I asked about it; did not mention French)	Grew up in Dakar	M	25	Professional Dancer for the Ballet National La Linguère; dances in other contexts such as the Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor; comes from a family of artists; has background in percussion and numerous forms of dance.	French

Ndeye Bana Mbaye, <b>formal interviewee</b>	Lébou	<i>Wolof, French, possibly other.</i>	Born and raised in Dakar, currently lives in Dakar; has travelled extensively through work with Théâtre National Daniel Sorono.	F		Director of Ballet National La Linguère; started dancing professionally at Théâtre National Daniel Sorono in 1982, studied and participated in theater at Daniel Sonoro, became director of Ballet National La Linguère in 2002.	French
Palé, <b>formal interviewee</b>	Lébou	Wolof, Lebou (Wolof dialect), French, “a little” English	Lives in neighborhood Grand Yoff of Dakar	M	25	Security guard for a residential building in Dakar neighborhood Point E, former member of Senegalese army.  Forms a perspective for one of my “people of the public” interviews	French
Adji (pseudonym requested), <b>formal interviewee</b>	Peulh	Wolof, Peulh, French	Grew up in neighborhood Medina in Dakar, lives (currently in neighborhood Mermoz of Dakar.	F	34	Tailor in Mermoz, Dakar.  Forms a perspective for one of my “people of the public” interviews.	French
Sophie Jaffar, <b>formal interviewee</b>	Mother is Peulh, father is from Lebanon.	French, Wolof	Grew up in down-town Dakar. Currently lives in Benntally a neighborhood of Dakar.	F	29	Has an office job but dances many evenings of the week at the Centre Cultural Blaise Senghor.	French

						Began dancing at 12 years old, learned under Guinean dance instructor.	
Aminata Diemé (requested pseudonym employed), <b>formal interviewee</b>	Socé	Socé, “a little Wolof.”	Currently lives in Mermoz (large neighborhood of Dakar)	F	17	Works as maid in the middle-class Senegalese household in Mermoz; lives in this household.  Forms a perspective for one of my “people of the public” interviews	Wolof with professional translation services from my French professor and occasional translation provided non-professionally by household members.

## Appendix C

Interview questions used for formal interview participants

### Interview Questions for Oumi Sene

(one of the first dancers for the Theatre National Daniel Sorano)

#### Consent and ethics question set 1:

- Est-ce que je peux poser des questions sur le Théâtre National Daniel Sorano et la danse Sénégalaise pour un projet?
- Est-ce que je peux prendre des notes ?
- Est-ce que je peux enregistrer notre conversation pour écouter quand je fais mon devoir écrit ?

#### Background info/questions:

Quand est-ce que votre travail avec le Théâtre National Daniel Sorano a commencé ? (A quelle année ?)

Est-ce que vous avez dansé avec le Ballet National ?

Quand est-ce que votre travail avec le Ballet Nationale a commencé ? (A quelle année ?)

Quand est-ce que vous avez fini votre travail avec le Ballet Nationale ? (A quelle année ?)

Est-ce que vous êtes d'une famille griot ?

Vous êtes de quelle ethnie ?

#### Getting-Deeper questions :

Pourquoi est-ce que vous avez choisi de travailler/danser avec le Théâtre National Daniel Sorano/Ballet National ?

Le Ballet National était créé **pour quelles raisons** ?

Quels étaient les objectifs du Ballet National ?

Pourquoi est-ce que le Ballet National est important pour le Sénégal ?

Quand le Ballet National a commencé, les danseurs étaient de quelles ethnies ?

Est-ce que vous pouvez décrire les danses du Ballet National quand vous avez dansé/travaillé avec le Théâtre ?

En général, les danses étaient des quelles ethnies ?

Quand vous avez travaillé pour le théâtre, est-ce que vous avez appris plus d'informations sur les autres ethnies ?

Qu'est-ce que vous avez appris ?

Quand vous avez travaillé pour le théâtre, est-ce qu'il y avait des désaccords entre des personnes des différentes ethnies ?

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

Quels désaccords existaient entre des personnes de différentes ethnies ?

Pourquoi est-ce ces désaccords existent ?

### **PEACE :**

Pourquoi est-ce que il n'y a pas beaucoup des grands désaccords ou conflits entre des ethnies au Sénégal ?

Est-ce que les danses Sénégalaises aident avec crée la paix entre des ethnies au Sénégal ?

Comment ?

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

Est-ce que le Ballet National a aidé avec crée plus de la paix entre des ethnies au Sénégal ?

**Comment ?**

Comment est-ce que votre travail avec le Théâtre/Ballet National a changé votre vie ?

### **Consent and ethics question set 2:**

- Je préparerai une présentation pour un cours et un devoir écrit. Est-ce je peux utiliser tous les informations que vous avez donné pour ma présentation et pour mon devoir écrit ?
  - Est-ce que je peux citer les quelque phrases que vous avez dit ?
- Dans ma présentation et mon devoir écrit, je préfère d'utiliser un pseudonyme pour vous. Est-ce que je peux utiliser un pseudonyme pour vous ? Quel pseudonyme est-ce que vous préférez ?
- Quand j'écoute cette conversation avec mon enregistreur, est-ce que mon professeur de la français peut écouter aussi pour aider moi avec la compréhension ?

## Interview Questions for National Ballet Directrice

### **Consent and ethics question set 1:**

- Est-ce que je peux poser des questions sur le Théâtre National Daniel Sorano et la danse Sénégalaise pour un projet?
- Est-ce que je peux prendre des notes ?
- Est-ce que je peux enregistrer notre conversation pour écouter quand je fais mon devoir écrit ?

### **Questions pour trouver un contexte de votre perspective :**

1. Depuis combien de temps est-ce que vous êtes la directrice du Ballet National ?
2. Vous êtes de quelle ethnie ?

3. Vous parlez quels langues ?
4. Où est-ce que vous avez grandi ?
5. Est-ce que vous avez une religion ? Quelle religion ?
6. *Quelle est votre âge ? Excusez-moi de poser cette question. C'est uniquement pour une raison scientifique.*

### **Getting-Deeper questions :**

1. Combien des danseurs sont dans le Ballet National ?
2. Quel est le rôle de danse dans la société Sénégalaises ?
3. Quels sont les objectifs du Ballet National aujourd'hui ?
4. **Pourquoi est-ce que le Ballet National important pour Sénégal ?**
5. Comment est-ce que le Ballet choisit les danses pour des séances ? (performances)
6. Comment est-ce que le Ballet choisit ses danseurs ?
7. *Les danseurs de Ballet National représentent quelles ethnies ?*
8. Pourquoi est-ce que il n'y a pas beaucoup des grands conflits entre ethnies au Sénégal ?
9. **Est-ce que les danses Sénégalaises aident avec crée la paix entre ethnies au Sénégal ?  
*Comment ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?***
10. Est-ce que le Ballet National, spécifiquement, aide avec crée plus de la paix entre ethnies au Sénégal ?  
*Comment ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?*

### **Consent and ethics question set 2:**

- Je préparais une présentation pour un cours et un devoir écrit. Est-ce je peux utiliser toutes les informations que vous avez données pour ma présentation et pour mon devoir écrit ?
  - Est-ce que je peux citer des phrases que vous avez dites ?
- Est-ce que je peux utiliser votre nom dans ma présentation et mon devoir écrit ?
  - Si non, est-ce que je peux utiliser un pseudonyme pour vous ? Auquel cas, quelle est le pseudonyme que vous préférez ?
- Quand j'écoute cette conversation avec mon enregistreur, est-ce que mon professeur de français peut l'écouter pour m'apporter son aide ?

## Interview Questions for Dancers at Theatre National

### Consent and ethics question set 1:

- Est-ce que je peux poser des questions sur le Théâtre National Daniel Sorano et la danse Sénégalaise pour un projet?
- Est-ce que je peux prendre des notes ?
- Est-ce que je peux enregistrer notre conversation pour écouter quand je fais mon devoir écrit ?

### Questions pour trouver un contexte de votre perspective :

1. Quand est-ce que votre travail avec le Théâtre National Daniel Sorano a commencé ?
2. Où est-ce que vous avez grandi ?
3. Vous êtes de quelle ethnie ?
4. Vous parlez quelles langues ?
5. Est-ce que vous avez une religion ? Quelle religion ?
6. Quelle est votre âge ? [Excusez-moi de poser cette question. C'est uniquement pour une raison scientifique. ]

### Getting-Deeper questions :

1. Comment est-ce que vous avez appris à danser ? (Quand ? Où ? Comment ? A quelle âge ?)
2. Pourquoi est-ce que vous avez accepté un post avec le Ballet National ?
3. *Quels sont les objectifs du Ballet National ?*
4. Pourquoi le Ballet National est-il important pour le Sénégal ?
5. Les danseurs ici sont de quelles ethnies ?
6. En général, les danses représentent quelles ethnies ?
7. *Comment est-ce que le Ballet choisit les danses pour des séances ? (performances)*
8. *Comment est-ce que le Ballet choisit ses danseurs ?*
9. *En dansant avec le Ballet National, est-ce que vous avez appris plus de choses sur les autres ethnies ?*  
*Qu'est-ce que vous avez appris ?*
10. Est-ce que vous pouvez décrire les rapports entre danseurs ici ? Pourquoi c'est le cas ?
11. Est-ce qu'il y a des désaccords entre des personnes des différentes ethnies ici?  
Si oui, pourquoi ?
12. Est-ce qu'il y a des conflits entre des ethnies au Sénégal dans le passé et aujourd'hui encore ?
13. Pourquoi est-ce que il n'y a pas beaucoup des grands désaccords ou conflits entre des ethnies au Sénégal ?
14. Est-ce que les danses Sénégalaises peuvent aider à instaurer la paix entre ethnies au Sénégal ?



*Comment ?*

*Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?*

**15.** Est-ce que le Ballet National, spécifiquement, aide avec crée plus de la paix entres des ethnies au Sénégal ? **Comment ?**

### **Consent and ethics question set 2:**

- Je préparais une présentation pour un cours et un devoir écrit. Est-ce je peux utiliser toutes les informations que vous avez données pour ma présentation et pour mon devoir écrit ?
  - Est-ce que je peux citer des phrases que vous avez dites ?
- Dans ma présentation et mon devoir écrit, je préfère utiliser un pseudonyme pour vous. Auquel cas, quelle est le pseudonyme que vous préférez ?
- Quand j'écoute cette conversation avec mon enregistreur, est-ce que mon professeur de français peut l'écouter pour m'apporter son aide ?

## Interview Questions for Sociologists

### **Consent and ethics question set 1:**

- Est-ce je peux enregistrer notre conversation pour écouter quand je fais mon devoir écrit ?

### **Background info/questions:**

Vous êtes de quelle ethnie ?

Est-ce que vous avez une religion ? Quelle religion ?

Où est-ce que vous avez grandir ?

### **Getting-Deeper questions :**

- 1) Quel et le rôle de la danse au Sénégal ?
- 2) Quel et le rôle de la danse traditionnel, spécifiquement, dans la société Sénégalaise ?
- 3) Dans une situation hypothétique, si la danse n'existait pas au Sénégal, comment est-ce que la société Sénégalaise serait différent ?
- 4) Est-ce qu'il y a des conflits entres des ethnies au Sénégal dans le passé et aujourd'hui encore?
- 5) [Si non] pourquoi est-ce qu'il n'y a pas beaucoup de conflits entre des ethnies au Sénégal ?
- 6) Quels sont les mécanismes sociaux qui instaurent la paix dans la société Sénégalaises ?
- 7) Est-ce que les ethnies au Sénégal sont égales dans la société Sénégalaises ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?
- 8) Est-ce que la société Sénégalaise représente les cultures des ethnies également ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

**9) Est-ce que les danses Sénégalaises peuvent aider à instaurer la paix entre ethnies au Sénégal ?**

**Comment ?**

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

10) *[Si oui]* Quels aspects de la danse Sénégalaise aident avec instaurer la paix ?

11) Si les gens au Sénégal pense que la danse peuvent aider à instaurer la paix, est-ce que ces pensées, seulement, aident à instaurer la paix ?

**Comment ?**

Pourquoi/pourquoi pas ?

12) Pourquoi est-ce que la danse a le pouvoir de lier des personnes ou crée communauté entres personnes ?

13) Pourquoi c'est normal pour des personnes danser les danses des autres ethnies ?

14) Est-ce qu'il y a des instances quand la danse Sénégalaise instaure des conflits entre ethnies au Sénégal ? Ou entres des personnes ?

**Comment ?**

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

15) Est-ce que le Ballet National, spécifiquement, aidé avec crée plus de la paix entres des ethnies au Sénégal ? **Comment ?**

16) Est-ce le Ballet National est un symbol de paix entre ethnies par la pratique de la danse ? Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

17) Dans une situation hypothétique, si la danse Sénégalaise arrêta complètement et n'existait pas, est-ce vous pensez que moins de la paix existait entre ethnies au Sénégal ?

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

**Consent and ethics question set 2:**

- Je préparais une présentation pour un cours et un devoir écrit. Est-ce je peux utiliser toutes les informations que vous avez données pour ma présentation et pour mon devoir écrit ?
  - Est-ce que je peux citer des phrases que vous avez dites ?
- Dans ma présentation et mon devoir écrit, je préfère utiliser un pseudonyme pour vous. Auquel cas, quelle est le pseudonyme que vous préférez ?
- Quand j'écoute cette conversation avec mon enregistreur, est-ce que mon professeur de français peut l'écouter pour m'apporter son aide ?

**Interview Questions for Gabi Ba, ethnomusicologist and teacher**

**Consent and ethics question set 1:**

- Est-ce je peux enregistrer notre conversation pour écouter quand je fais mon devoir écrit ?

**Background info/questions:**

Quel est ton travail et ton poste ?

Vous êtes de quelle ethnie ?

Est-ce que vous avez une religion ? Quelle religion ?

Où est-ce que vous avez grandi ?

**Getting-Deeper questions :**

1) Quel est le rôle de la danse et la musique au Sénégal ?

2) Pourquoi est-ce que vous pensez que la musique et la danse sont importantes pour les enfants ? Pourquoi enseigner la musique et la danse ?

3) Les enfants dans ce cours sont de quelles ethnies ? Quelles ethnies représentent la majorité des étudiants ? Quels sont les minorités dans la classe ?

4) La musique et la danse dans ce cours sont de quelles ethnies ? Quelles traditions ethniques sont représentées le plus souvent ?

5) Quand les enfants apprennent les danses ou les chansons des autres ethnies, est-ce qu'il y a des avantages ? Quelles sont les avantages ?

6) Est-ce qu'il y a des conflits entre des ethnies au Sénégal dans le passé et aujourd'hui encore ?

7) [Si non] pourquoi est-ce qu'il n'y a pas beaucoup de conflits entre des ethnies au Sénégal ?

8) Quels sont les mécanismes sociaux qui instaurent la paix dans la société Sénégalaise ?

**9) Est-ce que les danses (et la musique) Sénégalaises peuvent aider à instaurer la paix entre ethnies au Sénégal ?**

**Comment ?**

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

10) [Si oui] Quels aspects de la danse Sénégalaise aident avec instaurer la paix ?

11) Est-ce qu'il y a des instances quand la danse Sénégalaise instaure des conflits entre des ethnies au Sénégal ? Ou entre des personnes ?

Comment ?

Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

12) Dans une situation hypothétique, si la musique et la danse Sénégalaise arrêtaient complètement et n'existait pas, est-ce vous pensez que moins de la paix existait entre ethnies au Sénégal ?  
Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas ?

**Consent and ethics question set 2:**

- Je préparais une présentation pour un cours et un devoir écrit. Est-ce je peux utiliser toutes les informations que vous avez données pour ma présentation et pour mon devoir écrit ?
  - Est-ce que je peux citer des phrases que vous avez dites ?
- Dans ma présentation et mon devoir écrit, je préfère utiliser un pseudonyme pour vous. Auquel cas, quelle est le pseudonyme que vous préférez ?
- Quand j'écoute cette conversation avec mon enregistreur, est-ce que mon professeur de français peut l'écouter pour m'apporter son aide ?

Interview questions for “people of the public”:

1. Je suis une étudiante à l'université. Je fais la recherche sur la danse Sénégalaise pour un devoir écrit et une présentation à l'école. Est-ce que je peux poser des questions pour mon projet ? **Jangkat laa ci Uniwersite. Damay gestu ci mbirum pecc mi si senegal. Damay def been examen ci mbiru pecc. Ndax men naa la laaj ci mbirum pecc mi ci senegal ?**
2. Est-ce que je peux prendre des notes dans mon cahier? **Ndax men naa bind li ngay wax?**
3. Parce que je ne comprends pas le Wolof bien, est-ce que je peux enregistrer notre conversation ? **degguma wolof bu baax, ndax men naa enregistre li ngay wax ?**
4. Est-ce que mon professeur à l'école peut l'écouter pour m'apporter son aide ? **ndax dakoor nga sama jangalekat degglu ko ngir dimbali ma ?**
5. Si il a y des questions à que tu ne veux pas répondre, ce n'est pas un problème. **Sufekke am na laaj yoo beggul tontu, amul problem.**
6. Où est-ce que tu as grandi ? **foo juddoo ?**
7. Ou est-ce que tu habites maintenant ? **foo dekk leggi ?**
8. Tu es de quelle ethnie ? **ban xeet nga ?**
9. Tu parles quelles langues ? **yan lakk nga mena wax ?**
10. Est-ce que tu as une religion ? Quelle religion ? **Ci ban diine nga bokk ?**
11. Quelle est ton âge ? **naata at nga am ?**

12. Est-ce que tu penses que la danse est importante dans la culture Sénégalaises ? Pourquoi ?  
**ndax xalaat nga ne pecc am na solo ci aada senegal ? lutax loolu ?**
13. Quand est-ce que tu, personnellement, danse ? **Yow ci yan jamono ngay faraldi fecc?**
14. Est-ce qu'il y a des conflits entre des ethnies au Sénégal dans le passé et aujourd'hui encore? **Ndax am na nakk deggoo ci diggante xeet yi ci senegal ? ci diggante sereer ak tukuler, tukuler ak joola...**
15. Pourquoi est-ce que il n'y a pas beaucoup des grands conflits entre des ethnies au Sénégal ? **lutax amul nakk deggo yu bari ci diggante xeet yi?**
16. Est-ce que les danses Sénégalaises peuvent aider à instaurer la paix entre ethnies au Sénégal ? **ndax xalaat nga ne pecc men na indi jamm ci diggante xeet yi nekk ci senegal ?**
17. Si oui, pourquoi est-ce que les danses Sénégalaises peuvent aider à instaurer la paix entre ethnies au Sénégal ? **ci naka ?**
18. Si non, pourquoi est-ce que les danses Sénégalaises ne peuvent pas aider à instaurer la paix entre ethnies au Sénégal ? **ci naka ?**
19. Est-ce que je peux utiliser toutes les informations que vous avez données pour ma présentation et pour mon devoir écrit ? Est-ce que je peux citer des phrases que vous avez dites ? **tu as déjà demande**
20. Dans ma présentation et mon devoir écrit, je préfère utiliser un pseudonyme pour vous. Auquel cas, quelle est le pseudonyme que vous préférez ? **bumay jefandikoo li nga wax beneen tur laay jel, ban tur nga begg ma jel ?**