Xenophobia's Contours During an Ebola Epidemic: Proximity and the Targeting of Peul Migrants in Senegal

Ato Kwamena Onoma

Abstract: This article examines the effect of geographical proximity on targeting patterns during Ebola-era xenophobic outbursts by Senegalese against a migrant Peul population of Guinean origins. It highlights the limited extent to which epidemics shape the micro-dynamics of outbreaks of xenophobia during public health crises, demonstrating that epidemics are not defining events that inflect inter-group relations. They mostly reinforce long-persisting patterns of exclusion. The conclusion is that the contours of xenophobia in contexts marked by public health crises and in those situations in which these issues of public health do not constitute a major concern tend to mirror each other.

Résumé: Cet article examine l'effet de la proximité géographique sur le ciblage pendant des éclats xénophobes contre les migrants Peuls par des Sénégalais durant l'épidémie de maladie à virus Ébola. Il met l'accent sur l'influence limitée des épidémies sur les micro-dynamiques des éclats de la xénophobie pendant des crises des sante publique, démontrant ainsi que les épidémies ne représentent pas des événements déterminants qui transforment les relations intercommunautaires. Au contraire, ils renforcent des tendances d'exclusion déjà existant dans les sociétés. La conclusion et que les schémas de la xénophobie, que ce soit dans des contextes marqués par des crises de santé publique ou dans des situations dans lesquelles ces problèmes de santé publique ne constituent pas une préoccupation majeure, ont tendance à se refléter.

Resumo: O presente artigo analisa o impacto da proximidade geográfica na definição dos alvos dos ataques xenófobos dos senegaleses contra as populações migrantes de etnia Fula, durante o período da epidemia do Ébola. O enfoque é dado à diminuta influência que as epidemias exercem na microdinâmica dos surtos de xenofobia em

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períodos de crise de saúde pública, demonstrando-se que as epidemias não constituem acontecimentos marcantes que infletem as relações intercomunitários. As epidemias se limitam a reforçar padrões há muito existentes nas relações intergrupais. Conclui-se que, tendencialmente, as características da xenofobia em contextos de crise de saúde pública e em contextos onde as questões de saúde pública não constituem preocupação de maior são reflexo umas das outras.

Keywords: inter-communal relations; xenophobia; Ebola; Senegal; Peul

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> During the Ebola crisis we continued to visit the shops of those Peul-Fouta that we already knew but we completely avoided those we did not know and we behaved very aggressively sometimes to Peul-Fouta strangers. During the crisis we called Peul-Fouta we did not know all sorts of names. . . . We used to avoid them since we thought that they had Ebola. (Ibrahima, a Senegalese hotel employee, Interview 1, Pikine Guinaw Rail, March 20, 2018)

Introduction

Ngone lives in Pikine on the outskirts of the Senegalese capital, Dakar.[1] One morning at the height of the 2013–2016 Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic in West Africa, she prepared herself for her daily trip to Marché Thiaroye to shop in preparation for the day's meal. She carefully plotted how she was going to negotiate her way through the market to avoid the Peul migrants from Guinea who worked there. These migrants were being widely scapegoated then as spreaders of EVD in Senegal on account of their connections to Guinea (Onoma 2017). But when Ngone alighted from the taxi at the market, a young Peul boy rushed toward her hawking plastic bags. Ngone recounted what happened next: "I pushed him away with all of my strength and he fell in the road.... It was fear that made me do that. I regret it. The boy was surprised and did not understand what was happening. He did not even know that people were avoiding them [the Peul] because of Ebola" (Interview 33, Bountou Pikine, March 24, 2018).

The portrayal of migrants and other "outsiders" as vectors of diseases during epidemics is well documented in the literature (Gilles et al. 2013; White 2010; Mason 2012; Echenberg 2002; Ngalamulume 2012). Mary Douglas's (1984) reflections on "purity and danger" provide a broad framework within which we can make sense of these anxieties over the polluting effects of outsiders. But the literature on the intersection of public health crises and xenophobia pays little attention to the question of which particular members of scapegoated communities people direct attacks at during these epidemic-era outbursts. This is despite the fact that the question of targeting has preoccupied the literature focusing on inter-group conflicts in contexts not marked by health crises (Fujii 2008, 2011; Hilker 2012).

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This study begins to fill this gap in the literature by mapping and explaining targeting patterns by Senegalese in the community of Pikine during xenophobic outbursts aimed at the Peul inhabitants at the height of the 2013–2016 EVD epidemic. More specifically, it asks the following questions: What effect did geographical proximity have on targeting patterns during Ebola-era xenophobic outbursts by Senegalese against the migrant Peul population? What explains the difference that proximity had on targeting patterns? Exploring these questions will help us begin to understand the extent to which the contours of xenophobia in contexts marked by public health crises and in those situations in which these issues of public health do not constitute a major concern mirror each other.

This exercise provides an unexploited vantage point from which to reflect on the extent to which epidemics represent defining events that inflect rather than just reinforce long-persisting patterns of inter-group relations. Many authors, in examining these public health crises, have cast doubt on the degree to which epidemics represent a break in long-persisting orders and regimes, seeing them instead as deeply embedded in and determined by broader historically-rooted social processes (Faye 2015; Abdullah & Rashid 2017; Niang 2014; Benton & Dionne 2015; Dionne & Seay 2015; Benton 2015). This study of targeting patterns should shed further light on this question by enlightening us on the extent to which epidemic-era xenophobic outbursts are about epidemics and the fear they unleash instead of being extensions of long-standing exclusionary intergroup dynamics.

Ethnographic research in the community of Pikine in 2018 indicates that within the context of the scapegoating of the Peul residents during the Ebola epidemic, Senegalese tended to target Peul who lived outside of their immediate neighborhoods with xenophobic acts, including name calling, insults, and the avoidance of bodily contact. But they spared their immediate Peul neighbors of these exclusionary practices and continued to interact in very intimate and convivial ways with them. Drawing insights from the work of Mark Granovetter (1985) and Lee Ann Fujii (2008) among others, I emphasize the role of prior ties and networks in explaining targeting patterns by Senegalese in Pikine. Historically-rooted networks anchored in neighborhood economies led the Senegalese to spare Peul neighbors that they had convivial relations with, saw as economically useful, and perceived as posing low health risks.

Ebola and its fear exerted little influence on the micro-dynamics of this episode of xenophobia. Historical processes of identity formation and inter-group relations in this corner of the African continent hold far more explanatory potential for understanding targeting patterns than Ebola and the fear it generated. Targeting patterns during this crisis were informed by the broader and longer processes through which the category defined as properly Senegalese is produced and policed in an area of the continent that has long been a meeting point and melting pot of populations and cultures. The EVD crisis may have reinforced historical patterns of exclusion, but it did not inflect them. In this sense, one can assert that Ebola was not a defining event in inter-communal relations and historically rooted processes

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of identity formation in Senegal. This assertion corroborates the voices of many others (Benton 2015; Faye 2015; Abdullah & Rashid 2017; Niang 2014; M'Bokolo 1982; Farmer 2005; Obadare 2005; Turshen 1984; Benton & Dionne 2015; Lawrance 2018; Onoma 2018; Obeng-Odoom & Bockarie 2018) who have asserted the importance of broader and longer historical processes in understanding the occurrence, persistence, evolution, and effects of epidemics.

The EVD epidemic of 2013–2016 was centered on the Mano River Basin countries of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea and was caused by the Zaire ebolavirus species of the Ebola virus. At the start of the outbreak, EVD had no known cure or vaccine, even though an experimental vaccine and trial treatments were introduced during the course of the epidemic. The disease spread to densely populated urban centers and far surpassed previous Ebola outbreaks, which had been confined to East and Central Africa, in its magnitude (Abdullah & Rashid 2017:3; Garske et al. 2017). The World Health Organization declared the outbreak a "public health emergency of international concern" in August 2014 (WHO 2014). The epidemic involved over twenty-eight thousand infections and led to over eleven thousand fatalities by its end (Abdullah & Rashid 2017:3). Beyond the Mano River Basin, cases were also documented in other countries, including Italy, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, and the United States (Abdullah & Rashid 2017:4). The epidemic wreaked significant havoc on struggling economies as well as on educational, health, and agricultural systems in the worst affected countries, which were at that time still recovering from the recent Mano River Basin wars (Economic Commission for Africa 2015).

EVD spreads through contact with the bodily fluids, secretions, and organs of those infected with the disease (Abdullah & Rashid 2017:2; Goeijenbier et al. 2014). While symptom-free Ebola cases exist (Richardson et al. 2016; Glynn et al. 2017), most people who are infected with Ebola only become contagious when they begin to manifest symptoms of the disease (Beeching, Fenech, & Houlihan 2014). Spaces that ensure significant physical contact are the most propitious for the spread of EVD. During the 2013–2016 epidemic, health facilities and homes where people cared for and interacted with the Ebola sick and organized funerals for those who died from the disease accounted for large proportions of transmissions and acted as drivers of Ebola's propagation (Merler et al. 2015; WHO 2015). Scholars have cited multiple factors that influenced the evolution of the outbreak. These include a botched international response, lack of trust in the state, structural adjustment programs that weakened states, and recent wars that further subverted the capacity of already weak states (Abdullah & Rashid 2017; Richards 2016; Fairhead 2016; Benton & Dionne 2015; Obeng-Odoom & Bockarie 2018). Xenophobic responses to the disease across the world also shaped the course of the epidemic (Onoma 2016; Monson 2017; Bangura 2014).

We know today that Senegal ended up having only one case of EVD, which involved an infected Guinean student who traveled to the country in September 2014 (Desclaux & Sow 2015). But at the height of the epidemic

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many feared that it would spread in Senegal. There was a lot of anxiety and tension, as was the case in many countries that were even further removed from the epicenter of the disease. When news broke that a Guinean visiting relatives in Dakar's suburbs had been diagnosed with the disease, there was widespread panic, and the health authorities quarantined seventy-four people, fearing the worst (Desclaux et al. 2016). This news also further heightened the construction of the Peul migrant community as a health hazard in the country.

The rest of this article is divided into four sections. After reflecting on methods, case selection and ethnic nomenclature immediately below, I lay out the theoretical grid that informs the research. That is followed by a section that maps and explains the contours of xenophobia in Pikine during the Ebola epidemic, closing with a brief conclusion.

Note on Methods, Case Selection, and Ethnic Nomenclature

This study is mostly based on ethnographic research conducted on the outskirts of Dakar in 2018. It involved eighty semi-structured interviews in the community of Pikine. Twenty-seven of the interviewees were women and fifty-three were men. The diversity of interviewees, including petty traders, security guards, hospital workers, professional footballers, and barbers ensured rich and diverse reflections on the events of that period. While forty of those interviewed traced their origins to Guinea, the rest did not. Combining interviews of members of these two populations was important partly because corroboration by both parties lends greater weight to accounts. Also, canvassing both communities was essential because each group potentially stood to give particularly credible information on certain questions because of their structural location. I also draw on two previous rounds of ethnographic research on EVD and inter-communal relations in Pikine and the nearby neighborhoods of Guédiawaye and Parcelles Assainies. Living in Dakar during and after the EVD outbreak also influenced my interest in and views on this subject.

Established in 1952 (Sow 1983), Pikine is part of the agglomeration that constitutes Dakar, the capital of Senegal. Pikine's population in 2013 stood at 1,170,791, making it the most populated department in the country whose population then stood at 13,508,715 inhabitants (ANSD 2016:11). The fact that Dakar was the place where the only Ebola case in Senegal occurred (Ka et al. 2017; Desclaux & Sow 2015) makes the study of xenophobic responses to the epidemic there particularly rewarding. Pikine has a significant Peul community with links to Guinea, making the study of attitudes toward them by other residents of Senegal viable. The similarity of Pikine to other neighboring communities such as Guédiawaye and Parcelles Assainies in its population density and presence of Peul migrants enhances the external validity of the study.

Peul migrants from Guinea belong to the broader category of Fula-speaking peoples who can be found across West and Central Africa, where

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they are also sometimes called "Fulani." Some of the migrants that I spoke to in Senegal asserted that they were Pulho or "*Peul tout court.*" This emphasis on being *Peul tout court* is an oppositional stance against the moniker, "Peul-Fouta," which is widely used in Senegal to distinguish these migrants from Peul who originate from Senegal and those from other neighboring countries such as Mauritania and Mali. It is a moniker that challenges the belonging of these migrants to Senegal by tying them to the Fouta-Djallon highlands in Guinea, whence they are said to originate. The interchanged use of "Peul-Fouta" and "*les Guinéens*" by many Senegalese leaves no doubt about the exclusionary connotations of the term "Peul-Fouta" (Onoma 2017). Here I use the designation "Peul" to refer exclusively to members of this migrant community and indicate otherwise when I speak of other Peul populations. I also employ the term "Senegalese" in juxtaposition to the Peul for heuristic purposes only, knowing that many Peul originating from Guinea are now Senegalese, and many Senegalese have historical ties to other countries.

Many Peul fled from Guinea to Senegal during the troubled reign of Sekou Touré, the first president of Guinea, and others continue to follow for economic, political, and other reasons (Lefebvre 2003; Groelsema 1998; Diallo 2009:54). The Peul community of Guinean origins in Senegal is a very diverse one, with members having arrived in Senegal at different periods, occupying varying socio-economic strata in Senegalese society, and having ties of different strength to Guinea and Senegal (Onoma 2018). Many are now citizens of Senegal, working in various Senegalese state structures. Some were born in Senegal and may have never even been to Guinea. The Peul are only one of the many migrant communities originating from elsewhere in Senegal, other West and Central African countries, Europe, and Asia that have played significant roles in the population and evolution of Dakar (Fall 1998; Sow 1983; Nyamnjoh 2005).

Targeting During Epidemic-era Xenophobic Outbursts

Mary Douglas's (1984) reflections on "purity and danger" provide a broad framework for making sense of anxieties over the polluting influence of those portrayed as outsiders. Mobility and those in movement can be understood as doubly polluting within the framework she sketches. The first reason for this relates to popular suspicions about the supposed insalubrity of migrants and "strangers." This construction of the other as insalubrious can be understood as an integral part of the process of fabricating the self, which is in many ways defined by the other that it is not, as the model of cleanliness and propriety (Onoma 2017). But Douglas's work provides an even more fundamental means of grasping these anxieties in defining the unclean as "matter out of place" (1984:41). Since movement "displaces" people from their "natural" location, which is often portrayed as a unique piece of the earth to which they properly belong (Nyamnjoh 2013; Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 2000; Geschiere 2009), migration by its very nature is perceived

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as polluting (Douglas 1984:37). It is in this sense that we can grasp the tendency of people in many societies to frame movement as incessant, pointless, and even insidious, and to regard migrants as marauders and vagrants who can be legitimately blamed for all social ills (HSRC 2008; Landau 2012; Zolberg, Suhrke, & Aguayo 1989; Lischer 2005; Whitaker 2003; Neocosmos 2010; Jacobsen 1997; Crush, Ramachandran, & Pendleton 2013; M'Bokolo 1982).

Douglas portrays the orifices of the body politic understood as its fringes and frontiers, which are vulnerable to penetration or "invasion" by these perceived pollutants, as the object of concern and anxiety (1984:122). It is on account of this that measures such as the strengthening of border controls and the refusal of entry to what are seen as diseased migrants are proffered as efficacious ways of safeguarding the integrity and health of the body politic and the lives that populate it (Fairchild 2004; Bashford 2002; Onoma 2016). But given the fact that many of these pollutants may already be within, their "physical control" to ensure the integrity of internal boundaries becomes necessary (Douglas 1984:40). It is in this context that expulsions, enhanced surveillance, quarantines, and disparaging discourses to ensure that these pollutants stay in well-demarcated and policed zones become pervasive during public health crises (Eichelberger 2007; Crawford 1994; Bashford 2002; White 2010; Gilles et al. 2013; Echenberg 2002; Ngalamulume 2012; Markel & Stern 2002; Fairchild 2004; Shoop 1993; Onoma 2016; Adeyanju & Neverson 2007; Monson 2017). As Douglas notes, more drastic measures involving the "elimination" of these perceived threats is often very much on the table (1984:40).

In the rich literature on the intersection of epidemics and xenophobia, the question of which specific members of scapegoated migrant communities are targeted with xenophobic acts during epidemics is one that has not received significant attention. This is despite the fact that the question of targeting has preoccupied many scholars focusing on inter-group conflicts that are not tied to public health crises (Wood 2006; Kalyvas 2006; Fujii 2008; Hilker 2012). This literature clearly indicates that perpetrators during such attacks often do not equally or randomly target all members of opposing groups (Wood 2006; Kalyvas 2006; Fujii 2008, 2011). When it comes to the intersection of proximity and targeting, one pattern observed in multiple cases, including in South Africa (Landau 2012; HSRC 2008) and Guinea (Onoma 2013), sees people victimizing members of "opposing" communities that are geographically proximate to, instead of those that are distant from them. Proximity here is seen as an exacerbating factor, and scholars have proffered multiple reasons for this dynamic, focusing on economic competition, legibility, social interactions, and ease of access. Firstly, proximity is said to often lead to economic competition for jobs and other economic opportunities between migrants and certain segments of host communities (Whitaker 2002), making locals antipathetic to their migrant neighbors. Secondly, the greater legibility of the perceived threat posed by migrant neighbors may influence people to attack them while sparing those

who are distant and less visible. The literature recognizes the influence of perceived threat posed by outsiders on xenophobia (González et al. 2008; Hjerm & Nagayoshi 2011).

Thirdly, geographical proximity and the socio-cultural interactions and convergence that it can cause may be psychologically unnerving for nativists, fueling xenophobic reactions against proximate "boundary crossers" (Nyamnjoh 2013; Geschiere 2009). Such reactions seek to restore markers, purify and stabilize the self, and reconstitute the other as a well-bounded and separate entity susceptible to surveillance, policing and control (Goldberg 2002:27–28; Chirot 1997; Dougan 2004:35–36). Colonial campaigns against "deracinated Africans" present a good example of such anxieties over proximity (Alie 1990; Wyse 1989; Johnson 1971). Finally, neighbors are often more accessible (Pillay nd:15). Movement is costly, and the visible and invisible fences (Caldeira 1996) that subdivide human settlements only raise these costs, making it easier to target proximate migrants.

Contrary to these arguments, some scholars have pointed to a pacifying and inclusionary effect of geographical proximity on inter-group relations (Bekhuis, Ruiter, & Coenders 2013; Jolly & DiGuisto 2014). Arguments for why proximity has these positive effects often focus on many of the same issues raised by those who highlight the exacerbating effects of proximity on social relations. But they approach these issues from different angles, emphasizing potentials that are often ignored by those making the opposite argument. First, focusing on economic interactions resulting from proximity, these authors emphasize the benefits that powerful local actors draw from migrants and their resulting incentive to protect them (Whitaker 2002; Onoma 2013). The lower likelihood of having economic ties with more distant migrants means people are less likely to be dissuaded from attacking these migrants on account of their economic utility. Second, these authors emphasize the conviviality that proximity along with the interactions and convergence in cultures that it sometimes results in. Such conviviality, it is argued, can obviate hostility toward proximate migrants (Radice 2016; Crush, Ramachandran, & Pendleton 2013:47). Finally, the greater legibility of migrants that proximity permits is cast in a positive light as obviating the uncertainty over others and what they represent that geographical distance often breeds. Such uncertainty tends to create anxiety in the minds of dominant populations (Landau 2012; Bauman 1997; Hoffman 1986). Xenophobic acts, in such situations of uncertainty, can become ways of rendering the distant other more legible (Appadurai 1998). Frequently repeated calls for censuses and registration of certain communities as well as restriction of their movement are all ways of rendering these groups more legible and constitute central aspects of the process of governmentality (Foucault 1995; Scott 1998). Physical proximity can attenuate such anxieties and their resultant violence by making the "other" more legible.

Given the potential of geographical proximity to both obviate and promote xenophobic attacks, context-specific mediating factors that cause the actualization of one or the other of these potentials become key.

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Here, I emphasize deliberate efforts at everyday peace-building by migrants aimed at ensuring good relations with their proximate local neighbors. One form that these efforts can take is migrants' involvement in and privileging of economic interactions that are beneficial to their neighbors. Migrants' offers of loans, reduced prices for goods, and cheap or free labor to their neighbors from the local community are examples of these measures. On account of these steps, locals can come to see their migrant neighbors as economically beneficial to have around and begin to perceive good relations with these migrants as important. These interactions also stand to strengthen feelings of conviviality between migrants and their neighbors. The prevalence of these feelings among powerful members of the local community is particularly important, since they can influence how less powerful members of these communities interact with migrants.

Another measure involves migrants ceding certain rights in instances where asserting them might sour relations with host communities. These rights can include those to pursue debtors, seek legal redress when offended by neighbors, and assert themselves in local political affairs. The refusal of migrants to respond to provocative and sometimes xenophobic discourses is an important part of this ensemble. The exaggerated performances of subjugation discussed by Onoma (2013) constitute other examples of this strategy. These measures reduce the extent to which local communities come to see their migrant neighbors as threats to their economic and political dominance. As Onoma (2013) notes, these measures that ensure the positive texture of proximity also perpetrate significant structural violence on migrants and subordinate groups.

Ebola as a Non-defining Event

In the Senegalese community of Pikine, long histories of convivial interactions and mutually beneficial economic relations between Peul and their Senegalese counterparts built on neighborhood economies, against a background of dichotomizing discourses of otherness, ensured that Senegalese continued to treat their Peul neighbors with courtesy and warmth during the EVD epidemic. This was while the Senegalese poured xenophobic scorn on the Peul community in general, maltreating individual Peul they met in other parts of the city. The convivial hue that proximate interactions have come to assume over time is in many ways due to deliberate quotidian efforts by Peul migrants to ensure good relations with their Senegalese neighbors. Processes during the 2013–2016 epidemic thus mirror cases in non-epidemic contexts (Bekhuis, Ruiter, & Coenders 2013; Jolly & DiGuisto 2014) in which proximity has been shown to exude a pacifying influence on social relations. The dynamics observed in this case also conform with extant findings on non-epidemic era inter-group conflicts which indicate that social networks predating these crises play significant roles in shaping targeting patterns during them (Fujii 2008, 2011). One can assert, based on these findings, that the epidemiology of Ebola and the fear that this disease

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generated exerted little influence on targeting patterns during the xenophobic outburst. Instead, people seemed to have seized on Ebola and the fear it generated as another opportunity to further marginalize certain categories of people that had long been the target of exclusionary measures.

This conclusion coincides with the view that actors often mobilize the possibilities presented by these public health crises to pursue longstanding ends that include the control of populations, purification of nations, and the realization of certain visions of urbanity and development (Benton 2015; Markel & Stern 2002; Curtain 1985; Goerg 1998). These findings also buttress the insights of those who have reflected on how more marginal actors also marshal these epidemics to navigate legal and social regimes wrought by dominant actors and structures, including international legal regimes, states (Lawrance 2018), and societal groups (Onoma 2018). The fundamental point worth noting here is not that actors *unconcerned* by epidemics merely deploy these public health crises as cover to achieve other ends. It is that these other longstanding dynamics and ends come to shape the very construction of and reaction to epidemics (Benton 2015; Echenberg 2002; Ngalamulume 2012; Obeng-Odoom & Bockarie 2018).

Epidemics, then, do not constitute defining events that inflect pre-existing social dynamics. These public health crises mostly reinforce long-standing patterns of inter-group relations. The literature is clear on the fact that broader sociopolitical factors that far surpass disease outbreaks as biomedical events significantly influence why epidemics occur, when they are declared, how they evolve over time, what is done about them, what their effects are, and how people come to understand and deal with them (M'Bokolo 1982; Farmer 2005; Scott 2017; Obadare 2005; Niang 2014; Turshen 1984; Lawrance 2018; Onoma 2018). This study of targeting patterns agrees with these scholars in providing another angle from which one can challenge what Sylvain Faye (2015) called the tendency to portray and treat epidemics as "exceptional" events.

The Contours of Ebola-era Xenophobia in Senegal

Sharing land borders with Guinea, one of the worst affected countries during the 2013–2016 EVD epidemic, the Senegalese state was quick to roll out an action plan to prevent the spread of Ebola within its boundaries and to contain it in the event of its arrival (Abdoulaye et al. 2015; Mirkovic et al. 2014). Spearheaded by the then-Minister of Health, Awa Marie Coll Seck, these measures included the establishment of a taskforce and a special health unit for dealing with EVD cases as well as a sensitization campaign (Desclaux & Sow 2015; Desclaux et al. 2016). Measures such as the closure of Senegal's land borders with Guinea and xenophobic acts targeting the Peul community were some of the reactions to the epidemic that were of more doubtful efficacy (Onoma 2016). They coincided with and in some ways fed off similar moves across the world to scapegoat, distance, and isolate populations and territories seen as Ebola-ridden during the 2013–2016

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EVD epidemic (Onoma 2016; Monson 2017; Dionne & Seay 2015). The epidemic became another occasion for nativists across the world to pursue long-held ambitions of ridding their "homelands" of unwanted foreigners. Misplaced and ill-founded narratives (see Kaplan 1994) about the danger posed to "modern civilization" by zones portrayed as disease-ridden flourished. The targets of such xenophobic measures took the form of ever-increasing circles that included certain villages, neighborhoods, and districts within the worst-affected countries, national territories, and their populations (Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia), sub-regions (Mano River Basin, West Africa), and the African continent and its Diaspora (Onoma 2016). Countries that targeted others they portrayed as Ebola vectors sometimes found themselves and their populations similarly scapegoated as Ebola-ridden.

Interviews with Peul and Senegalese in Pikine indicate that xenophobic acts during the 2013–2016 EVD epidemic took two forms—denigrating discourses and physical distancing. Awa, a vendor of telephone recharge cards, was one of many Senegalese interviewees who rehashed xenophobic discourses blaming the Peul for the occurrence of the epidemic and casting all of them as Ebola-ridden. At fault in her eyes was the "bizarre lifestyle of the Peul-Fouta," which supposedly included being dirty, lacking interest in personal wellbeing, and eating "all sorts of things" including monkeys and dogs (Interview 3, Pikine Guinaw Rail, March 20, 2018). Some took to calling Peul "Ebola." Sidy, a Senegalese taxi driver, reechoed the widespread accusation that the "Peul-Fouta hated Senegal and were deliberately trying to spread Ebola in Senegal by sending Ebola patients to Senegal" (Interview 5, Marché Waxinaan, March 21, 2018). Radio phone-in programs, social media, and online forums became key avenues for rehashing and fanning these sentiments (Onoma 2017).

Some people avoided shaking hands with members of the Peul community, sitting close to them in public transport vehicles, or even speaking with them ("lest they spray Ebola-laden saliva on one") to, ostensibly, avoid exposure to Ebola. Maimouna, a Senegalese administrative assistant in a private security agency, recalled the temporary laying off of a Peul security guard since "no one wanted a Peul-Fouta to stand guard in front of their place because they wanted the clients to come in" (Interview 22, Pikine Est, March 23, 2018). Calls for the expulsion of "Peul-Fouta" who "are too many" in Senegal went along with the formation of vigilante groups that patrolled the country's land border with Guinea, apprehending migrants trying to cross into Senegal (Ba 2014). Many of these exclusionary moves have precedents in Senegal, which has experienced many epidemics in its history, including bubonic plague, yellow fever, and cholera outbreaks. Xenophobic and exclusionary attitudes toward marginal groups by the colonial state and by certain sections of society had characterized responses to these public health crises during the colonial period (Ngalamulume 2012; Echenberg 2002). Efforts by colonial administrators to keep the "dangerous" local population at arm's length during earlier epidemics included restrictions

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on the movement of Africans and the increased racial segregation of cities such as Dakar and St. Louis, through the burning of whole African neighborhoods and the establishment of new ones (Betts 1971; Ngalamulume 2004; Echenberg 2002). The ancestors of many of the Dakarois of today who targeted Peul with xenophobia during the 2013–2016 Ebola epidemic were probably migrants who were stigmatized by the old residents of the then-colonial city of Dakar during these recurrent epidemics (Echenberg 2002; M'Bokolo 1982).

During interviews, both Peul and Senegalese indicated that in the environment characterized by the scapegoating of the Peul community, the Senegalese in Pikine spared their Peul neighbors of xenophobic discourses and distancing. They were much more likely to target Peul that they came into contact with outside of their neighborhoods. A good example of this is Ngone, who recounted her eventful visit to Marché Thiaroye in the introduction to this article. Her family was renting rooms to a Peul family that she indicated she continued to treat in convivial ways during the epidemic. Badou, an unemployed youth, indicated that "When you went out of this neighborhood you tried to avoid the Peul-Fouta. You showed them they were not welcome in the country. At the garage of Bountou Pikine you heard insults against the Peul-Fouta often there" (Interview 30, Bountou Pikine, March 24, 2018). Waly, a university student, pointed out that:

> During the crisis I treated the Peul-Fouta of this neighborhood with whom I grew up well. I was not avoiding them but when I went to Université Cheikh Anta Diop or on the way there I was very careful with the Peul-Fouta that I met because the media had diabolized the Peul-Fouta as if they all had Ebola. There were insults and all when we met them elsewhere or in public transportation. (Interview 40, Pikine ICOTAF, March 25, 2018)

Members of the Peul community confirmed this pattern, indicating that during the epidemic, they felt safest in their own neighborhoods and even limited trips outside to avoid unpleasant encounters. Momodou, a Peul shopkeeper, indicated that "My neighbors did not insult me but the Senegalese outside said all sorts of things against the Peul. I noticed this when I moved around Dakar" (Interview 71, Pikine Nord, April 9, 2018).

Explaining the Contours of Ebola-era Xenophobia in Senegal

Historical modes of co-existence between Senegalese and Peul in Pikine help us understand the differential attitudes of Senegalese to proximate and distant Peul during the Ebola epidemic. When you ask many Senegalese in Pikine how relations between Peul and Senegalese in their neighborhoods are, initial responses are often similar to those of Ndeye: "There are Peul-Fouta here but our relations with them are limited. We just greet each other" (Interview 19, Pikine Est, March 23, 2018). One hears echoes of J. S. Furnivall's evocative description of groups in colonial Burma and Java that

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"mix but do not combine… with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit" (1956:304).

These responses are embedded in widespread dichotomizing discourses that all too often characterize the fabrication and performance of identity and belonging around the world (Geschiere 2009; Nyamnjoh 2013). One gets a picture of two communities—Senegalese and Peul—separated by very thick boundaries. Each community is portrayed as internally homogeneous and stable, and links between the two communities are said to be almost non-existent. The Senegalese often present themselves as epitomizing civilization while pillorying the Peul as "*mal-civilisé*." This is a rather peculiar term, whose translation is not at all obvious, but whose negative connotations are often more explicitly elaborated in denigrating discourses that touch on a multitude of issues including hygiene, eating habits, sexuality, and ethics.

Field research in Pikine revealed that this portrayal of relations between Peul and those who see themselves as properly Senegalese suffers from many of the pitfalls that have been pointed out in similar dichotomizing portrayals elsewhere (Nyamnjoh 2010; Caplan 1995). The two groups display far less internal homogeneity and stability than is let on. The boundaries separating the two communities are far more porous than the thick lines invoked; and links and interactions are far more common than is suggested. Commerce constitutes a good starting point for understanding the dense ties that connect Senegalese and Peul in Pikine's neighborhoods. The Peul have since the early 1990s gradually come to dominate the running of the little corner shops and fruit stands that dot Dakar's neighborhoods. The proximity of these stores to people ensures that they are often the most frequent recourse for many Dakarois seeking to meet their daily shopping needs. The quotidian encounters and interactions are shaped by complex interfaces between persisting poverty, rising inequalities, and the destruction of public safety nets on the one hand (Mkandawire & Soludo 2003) and evolving aspirations, tastes, and desires shaped by global flows and vernacular cultures on the other (Dosekun, 2016; Simone 2004; Nyamnjoh 2005).

Peul shopkeepers have worked strenuously over time to transform this economic niche into a mechanism for ensuring that their proximity to their Senegalese neighbors takes on and maintains a positive hue. They have done so by opening themselves to the possibility of price negotiations, purchase-on-credit arrangements, cash loans, and gift-giving. Many actively cultivate and reward neighborhood friends through the offer of reduced prices, loans, and purchase-on-credit arrangements as well as gifts. Souleymane, a Peul shopkeeper, indicated that even children are not spared in these charm offensives: "I have no problem with anyone. Even the kids love and respect me because when they come through the shop I always give them *tangal* (candy)" (Interview 70, Pikine Nord, April 7, 2018). Jean, an unemployed youth, indicated Senegalese recognition and appreciation of these efforts by their Peul neighbors (Interview 35, Pikine ICOTAF, March 25, 2018).

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Without putting social relations entirely and solely down to these economic structures, one can say that these economic arrangements have clearly identifiable social consequences in terms of levels of interactions, the extent to which members of each community have come to know each other, and the level of conviviality between neighbors from these groups. Given the risk of losses involved in purchase-on-credit arrangements and the offer of cash loans, shopkeepers tend to favor those they know well in the extension of these courtesies. Many Senegalese, therefore, have an incentive to frequently interact with neighborhood shopkeepers, thereby cultivating good relations with them. There is awareness of the fact that these shopkeepers do not only see the offer of these economic incentives as a tool for consolidating their businesses in a competitive landscape, but that they also regard it as an instrument for fostering good relations with their neighbors and friends. Balla, a Senegalese security guard at a bank, noted that "If you have a Peul-Fouta friend he might give you reduced prices. He could even lend you money during hard times" (Interview 9, Marché Waxinaan, March 21, 2018).

It is no wonder then that beyond the narratives of separateness, positive interactions between these communities proliferate. Many live together in the same houses, share meals and cooking utensils, exchange gifts during religious holidays, participate in each other's ceremonies, form parts of the same neighborhood associations and *tontines* (savings schemes), name their children after each other, and intermarry. Non-marital sexual relations proliferate, along with all of the attendant tensions and ambiguities that have been pointed out in the literature (Ssewakiryanga 2003; Hofmann & Moreno 2017). One narrative on these intimate relations dwells on Peul women engaging in transactional sex with Senegalese men to ameliorate difficult life circumstances in Senegal. Mats Utas's concept of "victimacy" (2005) could potentially help us make sense of some of these relationships. But they are unfortunately, often spoken of just in terms of what is said to be the promiscuity of Peul women. Another narrative portrays "savvy" Senegalese women targeting what are said to be rich but naïve Peul shopkeepers. This narrative is embedded in pervasive discourses about the hyper-sensuality and corrupting influence of Senegalese women that have a long and inglorious history dating back to the area's initial contacts with Europe (Ngalamulume 2012:4; Nyamnjoh 2005; De Benoist 2008:67–69). Both narratives often dwell on the allure and danger of the female body while stressing the need to discipline and control it in the interest of social order (see Tamale 2017 and McFadden 2003, among others).

Peul migrants have also sought to ensure positive relations with the Senegalese by often ceding rights when asserting them might sour relations with these neighbors. During interviews, many Peul were clear about the restraint they exercise in the face of hurtful names and pejorative jokes about their community. This tendency to cede rights is also seen in their approach to defaulting debtors. The interest in ensuring good relations with their neighbors induces Peul shopkeepers to avoid taking drastic

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measures such as reporting defaulters to the Chef de quartier or the police. The preferred solution involves a refusal to extend further credit to those who have not paid earlier debts. Momodou, a Peul shopkeeper, repeated the popular Wolof saying "*Borr dou am rakk*" ("A loan does not have a younger sibling," meaning you cannot take a new loan without paying off an existing one) to specify his approach to defaulters (Interview 71). Indeed, it is this approach of Peul migrants that make them particularly attractive to their Senegalese neighbors seeking credit.

Conviviality partly engendered by these neighborhood economies influenced many Senegalese to spare their neighbors of xenophobic attacks. The sudden switch from discussing life around *ataya* (green tea) every day and taking care of each other's children to insulting and avoiding all physical contact with Peul neighbors proved difficult for many Senegalese, even when they portrayed the Peul community at large as a danger to Senegal. In this vein, Christophe, a retired civil servant, noted: "We treated them with respect since they have lived in this neighborhood for a long time. We cannot one day just ignore them completely. It is not normal" (Interview 26, Bountou Pikine, March 24, 2018). Further, the fact that many found their Peul neighbors economically useful to have around and be on good terms with partly explains why many Senegalese avoided visiting xenophobia on proximate Peul. Also, encounters and interactions within neighborhoods rendered the Peul legible to their Senegalese neighbors and forced these Senegalese to confront the hollow character of portrayals of all Peul as health threats. This is what Fatimatou, who lets some rooms in her home to a Peul family, said about interactions with her Peul neighbors during the crisis: "We did not avoid them and their shops because we knew them. We knew that they did not have the disease. Why avoid people that you share many things with and who also are not sick?" (Interview 29, Bountou Pikine, March 24, 2018).

Historical processes of elaborating and performing a Senegalese nation-state and a Senegalese people in a context marked by mobility and intimate encounters exerted a dominant influence on targeting patterns during the xenophobic outbursts that accompanied the 2013–2016 EVD epidemic. Senegal has long been a confluence of populations and cultures from the North, South, East, and even West (the Atlantic has served more as a pathway than as an impediment for those seeking the shores of this area of Africa). The instability of the "Senegalese" is guaranteed by the welcoming tendencies of many Senegalese, their love of travel, their inquisitiveness about other people and places, and their interest in sharing their culture and receiving influences from elsewhere. All of this is evident in the evolving and rich fashion, dance, cuisine, music, and visual arts in the country and among Senegalese diasporas around the world. Indeed, many Peul interviewed for this study professed their admiration of the openness, generosity, and sense of solidarity of many Senegalese. All of this aligns the Senegalese context with many others across the continent highlighted in the literature on the incorporation of "strangers" in African societies

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(Colson 1970). There is, thus, a lot of substance to the Senegalese reference to their country as "*le pays de la teranga*" (the country of hospitality).

But the process of molding a stable and well-bounded Senegalese nation-state and a Senegalese people out of this constantly evolving and inherently unstable confluence has, as in many other places in the world, involved the simultaneous construction of those who are not Senegalese. Exaggerated discourses about the alterity of Peul migrants, *Nyaks* (this is a term used to refer to Africans who are not from countries neighboring Senegal), Cape Verdians, Moors, and other immigrant groups has historically been an integral part of this continuing process of elaborating and performing the Senegalese (Nyamnjoh 2005). Onoma (2017) has detailed how these processes contributed to the construction of the Peul community as an Ebola vector in Senegal during the 2013–2016 epidemic. What this study argues is that this process and the intricacies of co-existence that complicate it also thoroughly overwhelmed concerns over the nature of Ebola, how it spreads, and the ways in which it can be contained in determining which individuals many Senegalese in Pikine targeted with various forms of xenophobia during this outburst.

Because "the Senegalese," like other identities, cannot but be an evolving and unstable imaginary, the age-old and continuing effort to stabilize and ossify it is inherently a Sisyphean task riddled with incoherencies and ambiguities. Some of these incoherencies and ambiguities were clearly on display in targeting patterns during the anti-Peul outburst at the height of the 2013–2016 EVD epidemic. For example, some of the Peul I spoke to recalled their consternation at discourses casting them as the cause of the EVD epidemic. They actually live in Senegal, after all, not in Guinea where the epidemic is said to have started, and the Fouta Djallon in Guinea where many Peul originate suffered the least number of EVD cases. Considering their fear of Ebola, which caused many Peul to limit visits to Guinea and reduce the number of guests from Guinea they hosted, many were flabbergasted by claims that they were trying to deliberately spread EVD in Senegal. Given the often-voiced view that all Peul are Ebola carriers, people's victimization of Peul strangers with whom they had almost no physical contact while continuing to interact in intimate ways with proximate Peul (some of whom visited Guinea during the epidemic) also shows how little considerations of Ebola's mode of transmission shaped the everyday enactment of xenophobia.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the literature on the intersection of xenophobia and epidemics by shedding some light on the micro-dynamics of epidemic-era exclusionary politics. In helping us understand which people are more likely to be targeted during such attacks, it allows us to see the parallels between the dynamics of epidemic-era xenophobic outbursts and inter-group conflicts in contexts not marked by these health crises. This research

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demonstrates the overwhelming influence of longstanding social dynamics on targeting patterns and the rather marginal influence (if any) that the epidemiology of EVD had on which people were targeted by xenophobic acts. This reinforces the much-emphasized need to insert epidemics into longer and broader social dynamics if we are to make sense of them.

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Note

1. I have used pseudonyms for all interviewees to guarantee their anonymity.

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