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Situating "wicked" women: gender panic and savoir vivre in urban Senegal

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CHAPTER 3

Women's “oddkin” bonds and the cultivation of *savoir vivre*

Ramadan has ended, and today is the feast of Korité (Eid-al-Fitr). After a month of fasting and resting – most *ñi génn guddi* do not work during Ramadan – we share a late breakfast of *laax* (millet porridge) with *Nafissatou*.⁷⁸ Mame Diarra is impatient to go home to clean her room and get ready for the night. I offer to join her. Arriving at Mame Diarra's house, we encounter a lively group. Mame Diarra's sister and some of her friends are engaged in cheerful banter as they prepare the food, cutting large quantities of potatoes, onions, and chicken, a meal typically prepared for Korité. In a corner of the compound, the men are playing a game of Ludo on a phone. Cigarette smoke circles up from the group, and beer cans litter the sand. Mame Diarra's room is indeed a mess. Dirty laundry lies scattered on the floor, which has not been swept in a while. She collects her laundry and I start to make her bed. When we are done, she says, with a mischievous smile: "Bala ma génn ci guddi, damay def curaay ci néeg bi. Qui sait quel invité je ramènerai à la maison ce soir!" (W/F: Before I leave tonight, I'll put some curaay in the room.⁷⁹ Who knows what visitor I'll bring home tonight!) Satisfied with the result of our cleaning session, Mame Diarra takes a little black dress from her wardrobe that I had given to her the last time I came to Senegal, from her wardrobe. She tries it on, inspects herself in the mirror, and then parades outside to show her outfit to the other women. "Shiii, tey danga sañse Diarra!" (W: Shiii, today you are well dressed Diarra!) exclaimed Coumba. "Loes dafa ma ko jëndal. La prochaine fois day indil ay boucles en or" (W/F: Loes bought it for me. Next time she will bring me golden earrings), Mame Diarra responds. "Oohh Mame Diarra, tey danga wacce koñ bi!" (W: Oohh Mame Diarra, today you are stealing the show!), Coumba proceeds. The women are in a festive mood, happy to share the feast of Korité as a family, and eager to get back to work.⁸⁰

Wacce koñ bi is a Wolof expression with multiple meanings. It literally translates to "bringing down the neighbourhood," and it can be said to compliment someone on their stunning appearance. This was the case when Coumba said that Mame Diarra was "stealing the show" with her outfit. Having an appearance that stands out is highly valued in Senegal, and it is important for *ñi génn guddi* like Mame Diarra who draw upon their appearance to attract clients. In the next chapter, I explore a different meaning of *wacce koñ bi*: when uttered in the networks of *lesbiennes*, *wacce* refers to publicly humiliating someone by loudly denouncing their involvement in same-sex intimacies. Although they are two distinct meanings of the same expression, both connotations indicate how the presence of others is an important factor that informs people's status in their social world.

Coumba, who had complimented Mame Diarra that she had "*wacce koñ bi*," is a friend of Mame Diarra who had been staying with her for a month. Unable to save money to pay her rent during the month of Ramadan, when she was not working, she had left her

⁷⁸All the names of interlocutors in this chapter are pseudonyms.

⁷⁹Incense. *Curaay* is widely used in Senegalese homes, and it is said to have aphrodisiac qualities. As such, it is among women's seductive strategies, collectively called *mokk pooj*. See Gilbert (2017) for an elaborate account of *mokk pooj*.

⁸⁰Fieldnotes, 13 May 2021.

room to stay with Mame Diarra. Sharing a room and having friends and family over for a longer period of time, is not uncommon in many Senegalese households. Family members who move to the city for work or education are often hosted for lengthy periods, and friends may offer to share their bed with a friend who needs a place to stay, be it for practical reasons, such as proximity to work, or for financial reasons. Mame Diarra's house is no exception, and many people have passed through – some for days, others for weeks or even months. The people she hosts, in addition to facing financial difficulties, often had compromised ties with their own families. Some had been kicked out by their families, and others preferred the freedom that they found in Mame Diarra's house to live their dissident lives. In this chapter, the focus is on these places and moments where so-called wicked women get together to care for each other, producing particular forms of sociality.

In the previous chapter, I analysed how women who choose to abstain from public debates about gender norms and sexual rights displayed various forms of craftiness to negotiate space and time for their dissident lives. Networks of support and kinship are vital for women to realise such spaces, and to find support when things become difficult, materially as well as socially. Economic precarity or uncertainty gives rise to networks and associations in which people pool resources, give and receive help, and maintain ties of solidarity (Rodima-Taylor and Bähre 2014). Economic precarity and the lack of a public social safety net increase the need for strong social and kinship ties for everyone, because of the dependency on others to sustain your family (Bass and Sow 2006) and to borrow money to be able to participate in family ceremonies where one is expected to give gifts (Buggenhagen 2012). An awareness of the difficulties of life-making and the resulting necessity of networks of relationships and support to overcome the hardships of life, gives rise to convivial ways of living in which people secure life through their relationships with others (Nyamnjoh 2017). Where the previous chapter revolved around women's craftiness to maintain elusiveness around their dissident lives, this chapter explores how such craftiness is learned. Women's craftiness, which I refer to as *savoir vivre* (F: knowing how to live well), is a skill that is developed, learned and transmitted together with others.

To understand this process, the question that guides this chapter is the following: *How do so-called wicked women create and transmit savoir vivre together in a challenging urban context?* Drawing upon new kinship studies, African feminist theorising on motherhood, and ideas about the social obligations to share resources as a result of sharing a physical presence with people (James Ferguson 2021), I argue that the kin bonds that my interlocutors have established with each other enable the development, sharing, and transmission of *savoir vivre*, a knowing how to live well. This *savoir vivre* relates to navigating anti-queer sentiments, economic precarity, and changing communal or family expectations. With

this *savoir vivre*, women are able to create liveable lives for themselves, generating forms of sociality that encourage inclusion into their own networks that they create with other so-called wicked women (which I will define and explain, following Haraway (2016), as “oddkin”) as well as into people’s biological families and society at large.

Strong social ties are not just a necessity for so-called wicked women, but the particular challenges that they face in securing liveable lives for themselves leads to particular expressions of kinship. Contrary to popular representation of sexually dissident persons in Senegal as being self- rather than community-centred, and their relationships as loveless, interest-based, and instigated by greed or naivety (Mbaye 2021), my interlocutors showcase the importance of togetherness, of sharing, and of communal values, for survival. The kin bonds that they develop among themselves are crucial as they allow for supposedly wicked lives to exist and develop in negotiation and interaction with normative kinship bonds (Andrikopoulos and Spronk 2023; Bradway and Freeman 2022). Kinship is also important because it embeds people in the networks necessary for imagining and building a future (Andrikopoulos and Spronk 2023).

I approach kinship empirically as I explore the making of relations between women who refer to each other in kinship terms, most commonly through mother-daughter relationships. Mothering bonds appear to be central to processes of learning and developing a *savoir vivre*. Mothering practices take shape through women’s mentoring, housing, clothing, feeding and educating of their daughters. These kin formations reveal, firstly, the importance of space: in a context of spatial constraints, where family members often share bedrooms with multiple siblings or cousins, the space for dissident practices is not evident. Second, they shed light on the relevance of presumably odd connections between *ñi génn guddi* and *lesbiennes*. Although often considered to be living different lives and to have different concerns in terms of health and rights, my research shows that *lesbiennes* and *ñi génn guddi* often live together and share a *savoir vivre* in networks of kinship. Third, these women’s oddkin bonds reveal the important role of mothering in building a collective and transmitting the *savoir vivre* that is necessary to survive and sustain supposedly wicked lives.

New kinship studies and the importance of “oddkin” in Senegal

I draw upon the work of new studies in kinship and African feminist theorising about motherhood to develop my argument about the emergence of *savoir vivre* in Senegal. Kinship has been central to the discipline of anthropology as it has sought to understand the social organisation of societies. Kinship studies have evolved away from the early structural-functionalist understandings of kinship as genealogical relations, which had a focus on the nuclear family as the centre of the social (re)production of societies. Such

understandings of kinship as the most central social bonds that derive from procreation, and thus “natural,” have been criticised for being Euro-American (Schneider 1984). New kinship studies have reconceptualised understandings of kinship as various forms of “relatedness” (Carsten 2000) that extend well beyond biology and reproduction. Kinship studies were revitalised by feminist scholarship on gender and personhood (Yanagisako and Collier 1987), and through the development of new technologies of assisted reproduction and practices of adoption (Franklin and McKinnon 2001; Strathern 1992). Forms of lesbian and gay kinship (Weston 1991) have, furthermore, helped us to rethink how families are not given entities, but can take different shapes. “Kinship is not, therefore, a *sui generis* field of relationships whose value persists unchanged through a lifetime [...] but a fraught and formative field in which meanings are constantly being made and unmade” (Jackson 2017, 102). Despite a much broader understanding of kinship today, scholarship on “queer” kinship still remains largely focused on the Global North (Dankwa 2021). In this regard, Serena Dankwa’s work on same-sex desiring women in Ghana is important to begin to understand how kinship can take shape in such a context, “as an active mode of relating” in women’s everyday practices (*ibid.*, 41). I build upon her work to explore the importance of kinship bonds for the relations among so-called wicked women in Senegal.

Kinship ties in Senegal have always been much larger than the nuclear family. Ties with extended family members are constantly reinforced by the systematic practices of pairing cousins with each other, or by fostering out children to half-brothers or -sisters, among other things (Sylla 1978). Sons are paired with one of their (female) cousins, with whom he develops close bonds. This “preferred sister” is expected to organise his wedding and, in return, he is expected to name his first-born daughter after her (*ibid.*, 126). Kinship ties in Senegal are not only predicated upon blood ties, they may be developed between people with “extensive shared social experience” (Bass and Sow 2006, 91), including between individuals who shared certain rites of passage, like circumcision or attending the same school (*ibid.*, 90; Sow 1985). Such practices lead to “webs of kinship” whereby resources and responsibilities are shared between the many different people who are connected to each other through these bonds (Alber, Häberlein and Martin 2010).

For women, social and financial support networks are a long-standing tradition, and these networks have included institutionalised bonds of friendship and kinship. In the absence of formal banking, monthly *tontines* (credit rotation schemes) allow women to pool resources to be able to save for larger expenditures. They are valuable for women in a context where family obligations and community demands are high, and where saving is challenging (Guerin 2006). *Tontines* were crucial for women to be able to take up commercial activity during the economic decline in the 1980s, and the subsequent Structural Adjustment Programmes in the 1980s and 1990s, which required households

to devise new strategies to gather an income and to diversify their work activities. In addition to its financial purposes, the weekly, bi-weekly, or sometimes monthly meetings of these groups have always served social purposes of fostering female friendships away from male or family control (Bop 1995).

These female friendship bonds are called *ndey dikke* (W: the mother or twin of my choosing). In women's organising in *tontines* or *mbootaay*, women's associations where women of the same age cohort gathered regularly to pool resources, share gifts, and have a good time together, such mother-child or sibling friendships are formed.⁸¹ *Ndey dikke* are one-on-one relationships between women in which friendship and intimacy, on the one hand, and reciprocal gifts, on the other hand, come together (A. Kane 2002). Talking about sex and eroticism has always been part of these women's gatherings, as the homogeneity in terms of gender and age relieved many taboos. Erotic *sabar* dances are often part of these gatherings, and with their *ndey dikke* women share tips about how to manage and seduce their husbands. These bonds blur the boundaries between friendship, eroticism, and kinship, as women share many things, including sometimes same-sex intimacies (Oudenhuisen 2018). The long-standing importance of strong female kinship and friendship bonds puts my interlocutors' kinship bonds in context and conversation with other forms of female conviviality in Senegal. Although these friendship bonds, like *supi* in Ghana (Dankwa 2021), and "mummy-baby" relationships in South Africa (Gunkel 2009), have provided room for same-sex erotic intimacies, the perception of such friendships might change over time. *Supi* in Ghana has increasingly become equated with "lesbianism" (Dankwa 2021), which points at the backlash that visibility and discursiveness can generate for women's same-sex bonds.

When conceptualising kinship in the context of so-called wicked women in Senegal, I also draw upon African feminist theorising about the importance of motherhood in African societies to understand how women's kinship bonds are often expressed as mothering. Scholars like Amadiume (1987; 1997), Oyèwùmí (1997), and Steady (2011) have argued against (Western) assumptions that motherhood equals women's oppression and their relegation to the domestic sphere. Instead, mothers have always also been economically, politically, and spiritually engaged. These qualities attributed to motherhood in African contexts are, however, shaped by conjugal- and hetero-normativity (Debele 2023a). Moving away from essentialising ideas of motherhood and focusing instead on mothering as a quotidian practice of a diversity of women who mother "children who are not supposed to exist" (Gumbs in Debele 2023a), allows for a broader understanding of the importance of mothering for the construction of alternative forms of sociality. Following Debele

⁸¹ The word *mbootaay* is commonly used to signify a variety of active women's associations, often in the domain of credit rotations and saving schemes, and sometimes in combination with social gatherings (J.L. Diouf 2003).

(2023b), I argue that mothering is about creating the possibilities to sustain supposedly wicked lives by sharing wisdom, knowledge, and resources collectively. In this chapter, I look at various forms of mothering and how these are constitutive of a *savoir vivre* that enables so-called wicked women to craft liveable lives.

In addition to this conceptualisation of mothering, I have been inspired by Donna Haraway's (2016) concept of "oddkin" for an analysis of how and where women's kin bonds take shape. In *Staying with the trouble*, Haraway reclaims kin to mean not merely blood relatives ("godkin") but also those whose company we choose to be in ("oddkin"). "Odd" here means unexpected or unusual, but also suggests the odd ones out. Oddkin brings the odd ones together in kinship bonds. Generating oddkin is about "mak[ing] kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present" (ibid., 1). Generating oddkin, Haraway writes, is about becoming-with others in order to create a liveable, flourishing world. It is about surviving collectively in precarious times, and it thus depends on "response-ability," which Haraway defines as "cultivating collective knowing and doing" (ibid., 34). "Making kin as oddkin, rather than, or at least in addition to, godkin," she furthermore writes, "troubles important matters, like to whom one is actually responsible... What shape is this kinship, where and whom do its lines connect and disconnect, and so what?" (ibid., 2). I refer to the cultivation of response-ability among my interlocutors as *savoir vivre*. Haraway takes a trans-species perspective, considering how all critters, human and other-than-human, are not bounded units, but rather become through their interactions with one another. Thinking with and across social groups that are often considered separately in political debates and policy practice, makes these connections between *lesbiennes* and *ni génn guddi* somewhat "odd." *Lesbiennes* and *ni génn guddi* are thought to have different concerns in terms of health and rights, and they may appear to be living different lives. My interlocutors reveal, however, the many different kin relationships that they mutually entertain.

When I attended a workshop in July 2021 for *gays*, *lesbiennes*, and *ni génn guddi*, organised by a sexual health and -rights NGO, I was struck by the absence of *ni génn guddi*.⁸² I had been invited by Fadiga who, in addition to her work for women's football as I elaborated upon in Chapter One, regularly attended workshops and meetings with sexual health and -rights organisations. What was supposed to be a joint meeting to discuss shared struggles, did not really work out in practice. When the workshop leader attempted to compare the stereotyping and discrimination of *gays* and *lesbiennes* to *ni génn guddi*, he approached this by asking the group to draw a *ku génn guddi* as they imaged them. The resulting drawings showed women in mini-skirts and -dresses, with heavy make-up, wigs and bleached skins, and with a bottle of alcohol or a cigarette in their hand.

⁸² In the context of this NGO meeting, they were referred to as *travailleuses de sexe* (F: sex workers).

When discussing the drawings in the group and pointing at the participants' stereotyping of *ni génn guddi* with these visual clues, he urged the group to look beyond such stereotypes which, he said, only worked to emphasise the differences, where in reality the connections between *ni génn guddi*, *lesbiennes* and *gays* are much more relevant. In an attempt to defend herself from the suggestion that she was distancing herself from *ni génn guddi*, Fadiga responded: “*Mais les lesbiennes et les prostituées ne sont pas des amies! Je ne connais aucune prostituée, je ne les fréquente pas. C'est seulement les gays et les prostituées qui sont des amis.*” (F: But *lesbiennes* and prostitutes are not friends! I don't know any of them, I do not frequent them. Only *gays* and prostitutes are friends.)⁸³

Because of their co-presence in sexual health and -rights NGOs, *gay* men and *ni génn guddi* – or Men who have Sex with Men (MSM) and *travailleuses de sexe* (F: “sex workers”) in NGO-parlance – have indeed been targeted together as so-called “key populations” at risk of contracting HIV. “Key populations” is a term used by health workers to designate those groups most vulnerable to contracting HIV: “sex workers,” men who have sex with men, and intravenous drug users. It is only recently that some of the NGOs that had thus far focused their work on men and HIV/AIDS prevention, have started to include *lesbiennes* in their work. In that sense, Fadiga was right to say that *lesbiennes* and *ni génn guddi* hardly connect, at least not in an institutional setting. If they have only recently begun to connect to each other in the institutional sphere, they do, however, meet in other circles of support and care. In scholarly work, the social relations between “prostitutes” and sexually dissident men have been documented, for example in Gaudio's (2009) work on *'yan daudu* (“men who act like women”) and *karuwai* (“prostitutes”) in northern Nigeria, as well as in Chauncey's (1997) work on the sexual subculture of working-class gay men, effeminate homosexual men called “fairies,” and “prostitutes” in early twentieth century America. Despite Fadiga's assurance that “prostitutes” and *lesbiennes* are not friends, I found many connections between *ni génn guddi* and *lesbiennes*. Beyond the supposed boundaries between heterosexual sex work and same-sex love, *ni génn guddi* and *lesbiennes* have developed meaningful kinship bonds as a way to share knowledge and resources for survival in an urban context.

Kinship bonds between *lesbiennes* and *ni génn guddi* develop in part because of the spaces that they share in town. Their co-presence in bars and houses gives rise to forms of responsibility and response-ability that Haraway talks about. In an “essay on the share,” James Ferguson (2021) argues that presence (being physically there) provokes social obligations to share. Dominant ideas about sociality, including notions of what to share and with whom, often draw upon ideas of membership of a group or a nation. Ferguson argues that physical presence, instead, should be considered as a position from which to claim your part of a share. Sharing a physical space drives claims to resources,

⁸³ Field notes, 10 July 2021, Dakar.

even if people are not considered members or right-bearers. To give an example, he describes township residents in the Global South who claim access to infrastructural and public goods such as water and electricity, by illegally tapping these goods from the urban network (ibid., 28-35). Sharing does not mean that the people who share hold equal positions, and the type of sharing that people claim with their presence, “demand sharing,” is fiercely contested, and often granted only grudgingly under duress. The obligation to sharing does not necessarily come from a feeling of compassion, and it can invite anger or irritation. In Senegal, the Senegalese cultural value of *teraanga* (W: hospitality) expects people to share and to be generous. *Teraanga* refers to warmly welcoming visitors to your house and taking good care of them with food, gifts, or cash if you have it. The value of *teraanga* also carries the expectation that you offer others your help whenever you are asked (Sylla 1978). It fits with the obligation to share with people whom you share a presence with. In the following section, I demonstrate how such sharing-through-presence takes shape in a house of *kóoba*, where *ñi génn guddi*, *lesbiennes*, and drug addicts share rooms and resources. Mame Diarra, a *ku génn guddi* in her early fifties, mothered various tenants and passers-by in this house, and her care for a variety of *ñi génn guddi*, *lesbiennes* and drug addicts is illustrative of the oddkin bonds that develop among so-called wicked women.

Mame Diarra and “the house of *kóoba*”: A form of odd mothering

In 2020, I was introduced to Mame Diarra, a *ku génn guddi* in her early fifties. She had been living in a family home with her siblings since 1984, a house that they affectionally called “*la maison des kóoba*” (F: the house of *kóoba*). Situated in one of the popular neighbourhoods of Dakar, the house functions as a safe haven for *kóoba*, a code name for social outcasts like *lesbiennes*, *ñi génn guddi*, bandits, and aggressors, and their seemingly odd connections, often established through their nightlife encounters (Oudenhuijsen 2021b). *Kóoba* also refers to the embodied knowledge of what happens in the milieu of nightlife and of sexual dissidence, as well as how (not) to talk about that. *Kóoba* is derived from the beer brand *Kóoba* that was produced in Senegal in the 1960s, and it refers to all those who drank *kóoba* beer in bars.

Kóoba can thus be likened to the “cultivating [of] collective knowing and doing” in Haraway’s definition of oddkin. Mame Diarra’s house of *kóoba* is a house where biological family and oddkin come together, as she and her siblings have always welcomed friends and new acquaintances alike, offering a place to stay for those in need.

The family has lived there since the 1980s in different constellations, depending on work commitments or family (marriage) arrangements elsewhere. The house is a family home that was built by Mame Diarra’s stepfather, the father of her half-brothers and

-sisters, in the early 1980s. Mame Diarra lives here with two of her half-brothers, their wives, her half-sister, and their children, some of which have been adopted. The house consists of four bedrooms along the length of the courtyard, a sandy square where the women and men chat, drink, smoke, and eat together throughout the day. In the evening, most of them go out. Some women go out at night (they are *ni génn guddi*), and most men also frequent the bars to hang out with friends or to try to earn some money at night. After years of saving money by going out at night, Mame Diarra invested in the family home and had two additional rooms built on the compound in 2019 and 2020.

Mame Diarra had been absent from the house for seven years around the turn of the century, when her younger half-sister invited her to come to The Gambia to work with her. Her sister had been living in The Gambia for couple of years already, where she went out at night. At the time, in the mid-1990s, Mame Diarra had worked for years as a *mbindaan* (W: housemaid) in Dakar, following in the footsteps of her mother, who had taken up this job when she moved from her village in the Saluum region in Senegal to Dakar. For many women, work as a housemaid is their first experience away from their families, particularly for those who move to Dakar from rural areas. The work as a *mbindaan* hardly pays the bills and many women start doing *mbaraan* to add to their income (Aduayi-Diop 2010). This was also how Mame Diarra had first encountered commercial sex. After working hours, she would go “*de Maiga à Maiga*” (F: from Maiga to Maiga), offering sex for 1,500 F CFA (about two euros and 30 cents), to top up her income.⁸⁴ “*Parfois on faisait une semaine sans faire bouillir la marmite*” (F: Sometimes we went a week without boiling the pot), Mame Diarra said, referring to the fact that sometimes her family would not cook a proper meal for an entire week, because of a lack of money. So, when her sister proposed that Mame Diarra come to The Gambia, promising a better-paying job, she agreed. She would work in the house of a certain man who, Mame Diarra only discovered upon her arrival in The Gambia, was a pimp. She had received the address of a house in Serrekunda, the largest urban centre in The Gambia close to the capital city Banjul. When she arrived in Serrekunda she was given a mini dress and high heels. She said that she had not understood why they gave her these clothes, and she had told them that she had come to work. When I asked her if she did not know what type of work she was going to do there, she said no. She had always been a housemaid, and she had been told that she would work as a housemaid, and that she would just earn a bit more. Despite her unpreparedness, she started going out at night and sent most of her earnings back to Dakar to her mother and stepfather.

Before Mame Diarra left for The Gambia, when she was around twenty-five years old, she had been married, and recently divorced. About this period she said: “*Dafa mettiwoon*.

⁸⁴ “Maiga” is what many small roadside restaurants are called. Many of them are run by Malians, and Maiga is a common surname in Mali (Interview with Mame Diarra, 17 September 2020).

Sama jëkkër dafa soxorwoon, il me battait violemment chaque fois qu'il était ivre, ce qui était le cas tout le temps. C'est pourquoi je ne veux plus de mari" (F/W: It was incredibly difficult. My husband was mean, he beat me up really badly whenever he was drunk. Which he was all the time. This is why I don't want a husband anymore). In addition to having a violent husband, her family-in-law, and her own family too, criticised Mame Diarra for failing to have children:

Ba tey dañu wax ne: 'sa génération ñepp am nañu doom. Demal wuut dóom.' Ils n'arrêtent pas de me le dire, et même mon petit frère me dit: 'caga nga, va chercher des enfants au lieu de te prostituer' (W/F: They keep telling me: 'your entire generation has children. Go search for children.' They keep telling me this, and even my little brother tells me: 'you're a prostitute, go search for children instead of prostituting yourself').

Mame Diarra may have never birthed children, but she cares for two children whom she can call her own. One of them is the son of her ex-boyfriend from The Gambia. The boy lost both of his parents, and with no other family in Senegal, Mame Diarra adopted him. The other boy is the son of her sister, who also passed away. These sons live with her in Dakar, in the family home that she moved back to after seven years in The Gambia. In 2003, Mame Diarra returned to Senegal, after she had travelled for a burial. Upon her return to Dakar, she resumed going out to a night club in Plateau, in the city centre. A little later, she found a more rewarding way of engaging in commercial sex, *puces yi* (F/W: sim cards), which allowed her to stay home mostly. *Puces yi* is a system of already-identified phone numbers that you buy for 2,500 FCFA (about 4 euros). In addition, you pay 15,000 FCFA (about 24 euros) a week for the person managing the sim for you. This person advertises your number via websites and social media networks, after which potential clients call you directly. In a brief phone conversation, the client and the woman negotiate on the price, time, and location. "*Moo gën a noppale*" (W: This is more relaxed), Mame Diarra said about this way of working. You can stay home as clients visit you at home, and they generally offer quite a bit more than those visiting bars. Some offer 10,000 FCFA (16 euros), but others go up to 30,000 (48 euros). "*Puces yi.. noonu laa tabaxe fi*" (W: It is with the sim cards that I have constructed the rooms here), she said, pointing at the newly constructed rooms on their compound.

Mame Diarra rented out one of the rooms to Ndeye, a thirty-three-year-old *lesbienne* who, after breaking up with her partner with whom she had lived together, was looking for a place to stay. With the rent that Ndeye paid, the family could pay the water and electricity bills, which temporarily eased the stress on the family in terms of paying the bills and who was to contribute. It was not always appreciated that Mame Diarra decided who she invited to their home. As a half-sister, she is not a legal heir of the house, and this inequality in her position regularly led to conflict among the siblings. When Ndeye's

commerce ambulant (F: itinerant trade) in clothing failed to yield enough revenues to pay the rent for three consecutive months, an argument broke out between Mame Diarra and her siblings, who thought that Mame Diarra was keeping the rent for herself. When Ndeye left the room, tension arose over who would decide who could next occupy the room. This tension over who was to occupy the room after Ndeye had left shows how care and conflict go hand in hand in kinship relations (Horton 2018).



Ndeye in her room with a set of boxer shorts that she had on sale, October 2020. Photo: Loes Oudenhuijsen.

Despite such conflicts about who gets to decide who occupies what room, to whom rent is paid, and who is then responsible for paying the collective water and electricity bills, Mame Diarra's house of *kóoba* is a place where many people have passed through. The second room that had been built in 2019-2020 was not directly rented out. In addition to remaining a storage room for some building materials, the room was occupied by Fatima, a woman who had been living on the streets in their neighbourhood. She had been kicked out of her family home because of a heroin addiction and mental health crises. Mame Diarra's brother had taken Fatima home one day when he saw how she was the object of mockery in the streets and was at risk of being beaten or harassed. When he brought her home, Mame Diarra invited Fatima to sleep in their courtyard. Fatima's presence in their neighbourhood had compelled them to share their home with her.

A couple of years after having returned to this house of *kóoba*, Mame Diarra had met Nafissatou, who worked for a health NGO at the time. Nafissatou invited Mame Diarra

to participate in workshops on HIV-prevention and treatment, which she attended. In the years that followed, she attended numerous workshops on human rights, health care, and psychosocial support for “key populations.” It was during the workshops with Nafissatou’s organisation that she had met *lesbiennes*. Nafissatou recalled of those workshops that “*Même si elle n’est pas lesbienne, elle sait parler avec elles, et tout le monde la connaît*” (F: Even if she [Mame Diarra] is not a *lesbienne*, she knows how to talk with them, and everyone knows her). In these trainings, she was taught to be a “*relais*” (F: support, intermediary) for any of the “key populations,” and to assist them in accessing healthcare, for example. After these trainings, Mame Diarra started to support people, who were often referred to her by Nafissatou to access healthcare. Her support for Fatima, for example, extended beyond offering her a place to sleep on their compound. She also accompanied her to CEPIAD (Centre de prise en charge intégré des addictions à Dakar, English: Integrated addiction treatment centre in Dakar) at the Fann Hospital, where Fatima received a methadone substitution treatment for her heroin addiction (Ndione 2016). “*Sama famille la. Dama wara jàppale*”⁸⁵ (W: It’s my family. I have to help), is how she expressed her role as a *relais* (support) for a woman like Fatima. She invoked kinship terminology to emphasise a sense of duty to care for others.

It is this invocation of kinship that brought me to study the different kinship bonds that Mame Diarra entertains within her family at home, with the people who pass through their house, and with those whom she has helped to access healthcare. Fatima received care and safety from Mame Diarra that she had never received from her own family. Unfortunately, Fatima died a year after I first saw her at Mame Diarra’s house. Paradoxically, the visibility as a household presumably comprised entirely of *caga* – because this is what the neighbourhood believes, according to Mame Diarra – may grant them more security and protects them from a lot of the stigma that they would otherwise face as individuals living with their biological families. At the same time, the fact that the house is a family home where everyone is familiar with nightlife and its associated risks, illicit activities, and stigmatised identities, such as *caga* and *lesbiennes*, does not mean that it is beacon of peace. Stigma about one’s supposed immorality does not always come from outsiders. Sometimes, it comes most fiercely from those to whom one is closest.

“*Déedet, ci mbedd mi kenn mësuma wax caga. Waaye ci sama famille dañu ko wax bës bu nekk!*” (W: No, on the streets I have never heard anyone call me prostitute yet. But in my family they call me that every day!).⁸⁶ Exclaimed Mame Diarra to me as we were discussing her relationships to her siblings. I asked her what exactly they call her.

⁸⁵ Interview with Mame Diarra, 17 September 2020.

⁸⁶ Interview with Mame Diarra, 17 September 2020.

Mame Diarra: *caga bi ngay doon, caga bu amul doom, wala maggat bu caga bi. Ils disent, ‘t’aurais dû rester chez toi et construire une villa. La prostitution ne t’a rien apporté. Tu n’as même pas construit un étage sur la maison, tu n’as pas de voiture. D’autres ont de l’or, ils ont construit un château... toi, tu n’as rien.’ Ma famille me dit toutes ces choses.*

(W/F: You prostitute, the prostitute who has no children, or old prostitute. They say, ‘you should have been staying home to build a villa. Prostitution has not earned you anything. You have not even built a storey on the house; you do not have a car. Others, they have gold, they have built a castle... you, you have nothing.’ My family tells me all these things.

Loes: How do you respond to such criticism?

Mame Diarra: *Bu ñu wax maggat bu caga bi, dama ne: damay fey lépp. Bo feebare, dama lay toppaato. Boo xiife, damay fey. C’est vous qui devriez-vous occuper de cette vieille prostituée! Je suis avec Dieu, et j’irai avec Dieu.*

(W/F : When they tell me you old prostitute, I say: I pay everything. When you are sick, I take care of you. When you are hungry, I pay. It is you who should be looking after this old prostitute! I am with God, and I will go with God).

Loes: What does your family contribute to the household?

Mame Diarra: *Dara. Gisuma dara. Ci kër ga, sama rakk bu jigéen dafa génn. Faram ay bandit lañu, chaque jour un autre. Deful dara ci kër ga.*

(W/F: Nothing. I have not seen anything. In the house, my younger sister goes out. Her boyfriends are gangsters, another one every day. She does not contribute anything to the house).

Despite the fact that they have been living together as a family for decades, and despite the fact that, in many ways, the siblings, other relatives, and friends depend on one another for support, there are tensions, which sometimes erupt into heated arguments and even physical fights. Through kinship ties, people access care and support, but these ties simultaneously create hierarchies and inequalities that can lead to tensions and conflict. Care and conflict go hand in hand, and the intensely intimate bonds of kinship are marked by ambivalence and antagonisms (Geschiere 2013; Jackson 2017). The dynamics between Mame Diarra and her siblings, and the complications that arose when Ndeye joined the house for a couple of months, reveal how conflict and care go hand in hand, and that kinship relations can never be simply assumed. They are continuously made and remade, as adjustments and flexibility are required to deal with changing circumstances.

The logics of sharing in Mame Diarra’s house of *kóoba* also reveals how oddkin can substitute normative kinship bonds, when the latter do not provide the necessary security. The obligation to share as a result of physical presence reflects the way in which Mame

Diarra's house has come to be a "house of *kóoba*." Mame Diarra and her siblings did not intentionally create a *kóoba* house, but they have shared what they have with people they have met in the streets and in the bars they frequent, and whom they could help by offering them a place to stay. In a study of *gay* men in Dakar, Jason Ferguson (2017) also points at obligations to share. He writes how men share their earnings from commercial sex with others from the same social network, who have helped them obtain the necessary *savoir vivre* to earn money by selling sex in downtown Dakar. The mothering practices of Mame Diarra brought together Fatima, Ndeye, and other *lesbiennes* and *ñi génn guddi*, and offered these women the room and resources to live their dissident lives.

Adji and the cultivation of *savoir vivre*: *Lesbienne* mothering

Where Mame Diarra's house of *kóoba* had offered women the possibility to establish oddkin bonds and to provide direct care for women when needed, this section demonstrates how the substance of women's oddkin bonds constitutes the creation and transmission of *savoir vivre*. This knowing how to live well as a so-called wicked woman is an example of the forms of sociality that women create, and it sheds light on the importance of women's kinship bonds to get by in a context of gender panic. One of my interlocutors who displayed such *savoir vivre* was Adji. She was among the many visitors to Mame Diarra's house, regularly visiting the house when her then girlfriend was staying there for a while. Like Mame Diarra, Adji has shared her own house with many young *lesbiennes* who, for various reasons, temporarily needed a place to stay. Adji was twenty-four years old when I met her in 2021, but despite her young age, she has the life experience that enables her to care for others. Over the years, since her arrest in what became known as the first mediated "*lesbienne* scandal" in Senegal in 2013, Adji has gathered a family of about fifteen *lesbiennes* around her, whom she refers to as her children. In addition to providing housing to women, she shared her *savoir vivre* with these women, helping them navigate some of the challenges that had brought them to Adji's house, such as compromised ties with family, a lack of income or trouble with the police.

Adji was, she said herself, *précoce* (F: precocious, mature at a young age). When she was twelve years old, she quit school. Disinterested in school, and eager to discover the world beyond the protective confines of her family, she lived without a fixed home for a while. After a couple of years of roaming the streets of Dakar and staying with different friends, she opted for some stability and got married when she was fifteen. She had a child with her husband. They soon divorced and, after briefly living with her son, she decided to ask her mother to care for him so that she could continue, and expand, her business of selling household appliances. She rented a room in an apartment with other *kóoba*, primarily *lesbiennes* and *ñi génn guddi*. After a couple of years, she remarried and moved in with her husband. When I met Adji in 2021, she had divorced again but

this marriage had allowed her to develop oddkin bonds with other *lesbiennes* whom she referred to as her children.

Age is not the decisive factor in determining who can be a mother to whom; indeed, Adjì is younger than many of her children. Adjì used her relatively stable financial and housing situation to help her children, which reveals some of the possibilities that marriage can afford women. Her own success as a trader, as well as her husband's financial situation, allowed Adjì to extend her care to others, by hosting friends whenever they needed it. These fifteen women have all lived with Adjì, at different moments and to different extents. They stayed with her and her husband, where Adjì provided them with a space to live, love, care, and fight with each other. By doing this, she took away some of the pressure that women face when they attempt to sustain their same-sex intimacies while living with their own families. By hosting her children in the house where she lived with her husband, Adjì demonstrates that dissident lives are not antithetical to normative life.

In addition to sharing her food and house with others, Adjì's mothering practices revolved around sharing with her children a number of lessons that would enhance their position vis-à-vis their families, and in the challenging nightlife milieu where many of them are often found. Adjì, and many of her children too, occasionally engage in a fight during a night out, or they may be caught with weed, which can lead to confrontation with the police. Adjì's early experience with the police during the "*lesbienne scandal*" of 2013 taught her a lot about police violence and humiliation, and ways to resist those. She recounted how, when she and her four friends who had also been arrested were brought from the police station to the court hearing, they had faced a large crowd of journalists and people curious to witness the trial of the first – exposed – *lesbiennes* in Senegal. She told me proudly how she had held her head up high when facing the crowd, and had showed no fear of the crowd or the verdict. She had been the only one, of the group of five, who had not succumbed to the police violence and humiliation when they tried to get a confession that they were *lesbiennes* from them. This experience gave Adjì legitimacy to teach her children lessons about how to behave and keep their dignity vis-à-vis the police. The ways in which Adjì now teaches her children lessons that she had learned the hard way are exemplary of the transmission of *savoir vivre*.

An example of one of Adjì's children who had learned from Adjì how to stand her ground in challenging encounters with the police and others in nightlife, was Awa. Awa, who was thirty-three years old when I met her in 2021, had previously lived with Adjì intermittently for about three years. She never really left the room that she rented during all these years with her mother and sister, and she has always maintained a good relationship with both of them. She nevertheless spent most of her time with Adjì and Adjì's other children. By staying with Adjì when things got particularly intense on the

relational front, she could shield her mother from that part of her life. Her sister, who is aware of Awa's same-sex relationships, and who knows that she has spent a couple of nights in prison, keeps this information from their mother. Adjì transmitted to her children a *savoir vivre* that eased their way through nightlife. It offered her children the moral, financial, and spatial support that might allow these women just what they need to navigate their relationships with their biological families. Other women, however, have more compromised ties with their families, and being mothered by Adjì may be the best available way to build their lives as *lesbiennes*.

Awa had been scouted in her village, in the region of Fatick along Senegal's west coast, to come and play for an urban women's football team when she was about fourteen years old. Initially, she found it difficult to integrate into the team and the urban milieu, being constantly reminded of and bullied for her lack of style and wit. She was referred to as *kaw-kaw* (W: villager), and to this day she is jokingly referred to by her village of origin. Feeling that she had to prove her worth in her new urban environment, Awa toughened up and developed a habit of fighting back, with words or with deeds, against those who made fun of her. After about ten years of playing club football and making it to the selection of the national women's team, Awa finally had to give up football due to an injury. She decided to move to Dakar in search of work opportunities and, together with her mother, who opened her own small roadside restaurant, and her older sister, the three women rented two rooms in a shared apartment building in one of the popular neighbourhoods of Dakar.

In Dakar, she further integrated into the *kóoba* milieu through her visits to bars and clubs. Integrating into a network of *kóoba* comes through learning and adopting urban *lesbienne* styles such as *jump* (masculine-presenting) or *sexy* (feminine-presenting), attracting girlfriends, and navigating the desires for urban success in *lesbienne* networks with the discretion necessary to avoid being exposed as *lesbiennes* within their own families (Oudenhuijsen 2018). This knowledge circulates unevenly and is not publicly available to anyone. The knowledge of how to dress, learning how to comport oneself as *jump*, *sexy*, or as *kóoba* is learning to become part of a social network of *lesbiennes*.

Awa met Adjì at a *soirée* (F: evening party) that was organised by a *lesbienne* performer. They dated for about a week, until they figured out that they would be better together as friends. Their friendship evolved into a mother-child relationship. When I asked Awa why she considers herself to be one of Adjì's children, she responded "*dafa niit*"⁸⁷

⁸⁷ *Nit* means person in Wolof; *nite* or *niit* means having the qualities of a person, which include ideas of lucidity, reason, and wisdom.

(W: she is lucid) and “*dafa jiite ñépp*” (W: she guides everyone).⁸⁸ Because Adjì is lucid, wise, and experienced, she is able to advise Awa and her other children on how to navigate difficult situations, such as when being confronted with the police after fighting in a bar.

When I had first met Awa, at the first communion of a mutual friend’s son, she had a fresh scar on her cheek. We were sitting on the rooftop terrace of the friend’s family house with some of their acquaintances. As beers and joints were passed around, Awa’s girlfriend Kenza started telling us how Kenza and Awa had spent the night in jail the day before yesterday. They had fought with men in a bar, after which they had been arrested by the police. “*Il m’a insulté! Je ne pouvais pas le laisser me traiter comme ça!*” (F: He insulted me! I couldn’t just let him treat me like that!), Awa exclaimed in defence of herself. Upon arrest for a minor infraction like fighting in a bar, the police often ask people to pay 12,000 FCFA (about eighteen euros) to be released. Kenza had paid 12,000 FCFA in the morning after having spent the night in jail, but Awa had refused, and she had to stay until seven o’clock in the evening. “*C’est Adjì qui m’a appris à ne jamais payer la police. Tu veux que je passe la nuit au commissariat? Très bien. Je dormirai bien*” (F: It’s Adjì who taught me to never pay the police. You want me to spend the night at the police station? Fine. I’ll sleep well).

The response-ability and responsibility that Haraway (2016) writes about in relation to the making of oddkin, manifest in different ways here. Adjì’s responsibility has become clear from her practices of care. She houses and feeds her children whenever they are in need, and she teaches them to maintain their dignity vis-à-vis the police’s dehumanising practices. As a mother, it is the expectation that Adjì provides materially for her children. Her capacity to host her children, and to feed them, confers upon her the status of mother. In return, Adjì’s children also have a responsibility towards their mother. They are loyal to her, and they often express this by reassuring her status in the social network of *lesbiennes*. As a mother in the *lesbienne* milieu, and as a relatively successful trader who is able to visibly spend money during *lesbienne soirées*, Adjì has achieved a certain status in this environment. She commands respect, but also fear, as she competes with another woman for the position of “best-known” *lesbienne* in the Dakarois *kóoba* milieu. This woman also has a group of children. Some of my interlocutors called these two women’s groups “*clans*” (F: clans) or “*bandes*” (F: gangs), which says something about the dynamics of loyalty, competition, and violence that may occur between these groups. I will not go into detail about the violence that occasionally erupts between these groups, as this is the focus of the next chapter, but what is relevant here is that the loyalty that is expected from Adjì’s children relates to their readiness to defend their mother’s status. This reveals the value of reciprocity that exists in these networks. Where mothers are ready to educate and support younger, or less experienced, *lesbiennes*, they command the support and recognition of their children to acquire a respected status in their social networks.

⁸⁸ Conversation with Awa, 21 June 2021.

Adjí's mothering work shows that the transmission of know-how remains crucial in the lives of *lesbiennes* and other *kóoba*. Through the provision of housing, care, and education to other *lesbiennes*, Adjí continues to create and transmit *savoir vivre*. This generates a form of *lesbienne* sociality in which women learn, share, and exchange with one another. This transmission of know-how enables the coming-into-being of new generations of supposedly wicked women. In the introduction, I described the recurring complaints about the moral degeneracy of youth, and particularly of young women. Women's conspicuous consumption and supposed sexual looseness are often blamed for the nation's decline, which is related to the loss of certain so-called traditional Senegalese values. Those who seem to postpone or refuse marriage and/or parenthood, at least in its normative sense, like many *lesbiennes* and *ni génn guddi*, are condemned in discussions about the social fabric and continuity of the Senegalese nation. In the public debate, they are often represented as the embodiment of individualist consumer culture – out for quick money and infected by Western cultures of sexual promiscuity and homosexuality – and they are blamed for putting at risk their family's honour by appearing out-of-line in their appearances and life choices. On the contrary, women like Adjí demonstrate how they do transmit communal values and knowledge to their peers and children. The ways in which Adjí teaches her children how to keep their dignity when they face the police is an example of the transmission of *savoir vivre* and is at the heart of sociality. The knowledge that circulates between Adjí and her children, in addition to the sharing and exchanging of financial resources, physical space, and loose networks of friends, are evidence of the mothering work that is at play in women's oddkin formations. Where anti-queer sentiments and new anti-LGBTIQ law proposals risk shrinking the spaces for dissident practices, the circulation of a *savoir vivre* in kinship bonds become ever more important for people to build and sustain supposedly wicked lives.

Connecting motherhoods in women's football

The *savoir vivre* to be able to live dissident lives that is learned and created with others also depends on the ability to navigate between oddkin and normative kin bonds. In the domain of women's football, the interactions between these two become visible as some experienced football players partly take over the roles of players' biological parents, while also keeping in touch with them. They refer to themselves as mothers of younger, less experienced players. Their children, these younger players, affectively call their mentors "*maman*" (F: mother). While the stories of parents who are afraid to let their daughters play football because of the supposed lesbianism in women's teams abound, the examples of parents having trusted their daughters to more senior or experienced players and managers are also numerous. Where Adjí teaches her children to assert themselves with dignity in an urban space that is fraught with interpersonal tensions, Fadiga has taken up the work of mothering young players to commit themselves to serious study, and

she maintains relations of mutual respect with the players' biological families. Fadiga's long-standing experience with women's football, first as a player, and later as a manager and activist, has made her suited to taking on the role of a mother. Through this work, she and other football mothers effectively connect *lesbienne* sociality to broader social relations and interactions with family and outsiders to the football milieu.

In Chapter One, we saw how women's attempts to promote and develop women's football centre around collective organising. In addition to initiatives such as the Association des Footballeuses Professionnelles, and Fadiga's role as an organiser of women's competitions and tournaments in the Dakar region, the importance of these women's presence in the football milieu as coaches and team managers includes forms of care and education that take shape through practices of kinship. Football mothers provide some aspects of the education of young players that their biological families cannot, or do not, provide, including conversations about how to form same-sex relationships, how to live through breakups, and how to engage in pleasurable and safe sex. Fadiga convenes a group of about fifteen footballers with whom she meets once a month on Sundays to discuss all sorts of relational matters. They meet in an office space that they have been able to rent via a sexual rights organisation, at the beach, or in another quiet public space where they can talk freely. In between these meetings, the women exchange with each other via WhatsApp. Through her role as a mother for these women, Fadiga provides a space for young women who play football to discuss friendships, education, relationships, sexuality, and gender in terms that their families would not allow.

Not everything that mothers like Fadiga do for their children in football happens outside of the purview of the players' biological families. Mother-daughter relationships are common in women's football because of the difficulties that many young women face in accessing this domain, and in subsequently defending their pursuit of this sports life. If a woman did not benefit from the invitation of a (often male) family member to play football, football mothers can play a role in mediating between the woman and her parents, helping to convince her parents to let their daughter play (Packer 2019). Parents' concerns include the abandonment of studies, as well as the rumours that circulate about women in football who all are, or become, *lesbiennes*. These mother-daughter dynamics in women's football are indicative of a collective response to social stigma, and of the role that oddkin can play to navigate stigma. Packer's (2019, 284) definition of *mamans* (F: mothers) concerns football players who continue to adhere to norms of femininity, in appearance, in their status as wives, or through the gendered roles that they perform at home. Instead of embodying and appropriating the stigma that comes with being a football player, these *mamans* seem to wish to show others outside the sphere of women's football that playing football is not antithetical to being a "good woman." Fadiga and her friend Meta, a thirty-three-year-old former international football player whose

mothering practices I will discuss shortly, do not, however, adhere to norms of femininity to get the trust and respect from the players' families. It is through their practices of care and mentoring of players that they get their families' respect. Their invocation of kinship bonds communicates the responsibility that they take for the young players that they take under their wings. This shows that multiple forms of mothering are possible.

In the previous chapter, I discussed Fadiga's football activism and the walls that she has run up against when attempting to denounce the sexual violence and mismanagement of funds that she encounters in women's football. She has had, I argued, to adjust her engagement in order to be able to make a change for the footballers. One important way that Fadiga achieves this is through her work as a mother for younger players. Fadiga mothers Isseu, a woman about five years younger than herself, whose father has entrusted Fadiga with taking care of his daughter's school and sports results. Isseu's father travels a lot for his work, which makes him unable to check on Isseu's school results or attend parent-teacher meetings at school. Fadiga attends these, and signs anything that has to do with Isseu's school or sports career. When Isseu's football team won the national championship in 2021, and all players received a prime of 200,000 FCFA (about 300 euros), Isseu's father instructed her to give the entire sum to Fadiga, to thank and compensate her for all the work she has done for Isseu. Another one of Fadiga's daughters, Amy, who is about the same age as Isseu, also offered Fadiga part of a sum that she had received at the end of an international tournament she had played with the national team. Fadiga had refused the money, instead advising Amy on how to spend the money: she should first pay her school fees and buy football cleats, and with the rest of the money she should buy a sheep as a way of saving. If her parents were ever in urgent need of money, Fadiga reasoned, they could sell the sheep. Meanwhile, breeding sheep was a good way of increasing savings.⁸⁹ While both women are only about five years younger than Fadiga, the difference in experience is what makes Fadiga a mother to them. With her years of experience in women's football, first as a player herself and then as a manager, activist, and mother, Fadiga has the awareness of what is currently lacking in women's football, and she showcases a responsibility towards younger players to enhance their experience in this domain. "*Les filles ont besoin d'éducatrices*" (F: The girls need educators), she said to me. "*Les entraîneurs et les dirigeants ne communiquent pas avec les joueuses. Pour eux, il n'y a que le football qui compte, et en fait, ils s'intéressent surtout pour leurs propres titres et l'argent*" (F: The coaches and managers [men], do not communicate with the players. It's only about football for them, and actually, they are mostly interested in their own titles and money).⁹⁰ Filling in the roles that parents and (male) coaches do not perform, Fadiga establishes connections between oddkin and normative kinship bonds. Through her involvement in the players' other social relations and kin networks – following

⁸⁹ Conversation with Fadiga, 20 May 2021.

⁹⁰ Conversation with Fadiga, 17 May 2021.

her daughters' school results and keeping track of their respect for school and football commitments for example – Fadiga acquires credibility as a person, which is essential in order to be taken seriously in public debates about women's sports, and in the domain of women's football particularly. With this credibility, she opens up pathways for young women like Isseu and Amy to pursue a football career, being at once committed to individual women's abilities to pursue this trajectory while also attempting to advance women's football as a serious practice for women, where their bodies, careers, and life choices are respected.

For women who do have the support of their families to pursue a football career, their success still depends largely on the care of football mothers. Poor training facilities and equipment, and a lack of medical care in case of injury, hamper women's chances to pursue a professional football career. Like Fadiga, Meta has been an assistant manager of a women's team in Dakar. In this role, Meta has taken on the responsibility of helping new players integrate into the team, convincing parents to let their child play, and advising players on combining sports with studies. Because of her proximity to the players, she is well-informed about any problems that arise. In the summer of 2020, Sophie, a player on the team that Meta was also playing for, broke her leg during a practice on their usual sandy and rocky pitch. Sophie had come to Senegal in 2014 from a neighbouring country with her sister, both looking for better work opportunities in and beyond Senegal. When Sophie broke her leg, the team's managers and coaches did not consider it their responsibility to take care of Sophie. Instead, they ignored her requests for financial support, and Meta and others had to take care of her. Because this had occurred during and in between COVID-19 lockdowns, when the football competition had been halted, Sophie had returned home to her parents to recover while being with her family. In January 2022, she returned to Dakar, after the steel pins had got infected. Meta had collected money for the surgery in her vast network of friends, most of whom were football players and supporters. In March 2022, Meta and I visited Sophie when she was in the hospital. As we walked back to the bus together, Meta said that it was through her experience in Morocco that she had learned the importance of community. She had spent some years in Morocco playing for a (semi-) professional football team a decade earlier, where she had experienced great care and support from other, more experienced players and team coaches. In Sophie's case, she realised again how essential such a community of care is, as the football teams and the Football Federation dodge their responsibilities to look after their players. Through the care Meta gives to players like Sophie, she at once reveals what's wrong with women's football in Senegal and re-shapes its practices, providing opportunities for the women she has taken under her wings, on and off the field. The care for women's futures in football and beyond, which Meta and Fadiga show through their work, conveys the values of kinship bonds, motherhood, and the social obligations to share resources.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown a range of modalities of motherhood that so-called wicked women develop as they seek to secure liveable lives. Above all, they demonstrate the importance of strong social ties and collective responses to precarity and gender panic. “*Si tu es pauvre, tu ne peux pas être gouïne. C’est ça ma philosophie*” (F: If you’re poor, you can’t be a dyke. That’s my philosophy),⁹¹ argued Adjì when I asked her, a year after I first met her, how her friends were doing. Financial autonomy, and contributing to the family income, yields social recognition, and gives women more freedom to choose their own paths in life (Aduayi-Diop 2010). But poverty is broader than a lack of money, and it refers to the absence of both economic and social capital. One of the commonly used Wolof words for poverty, *baadoolo*, conveys this simultaneous lack of financial means and social relations to make ends meet. In fact, a combination of economic means, physical appearance, moral values, and social relations determine someone’s social standing (ibid.). In order to be able to make your own life choices, regardless of family expectations and societal norms, you need some degree of financial autonomy. Because this is difficult to obtain for most Senegalese, and certainly for most of my interlocutors, the social dependency on others is high. If you have a strong support network of women who can support you not only financially, but also spatially and socially, then living a dissident life becomes a possibility. Like the previous chapter, this chapter has shown how dependency on others paradoxically brings women freedom.

To understand what networks women create, and how these networks allow for the sustenance of supposedly wicked lives, I asked how so-called wicked women create and transmit *savoir vivre* together in a challenging urban context. Amid sometimes violent exclusion from networks of societal and family support, practices of oddkin and mothering have been crucial for the survival and flourishing of relationships, friendships, and networks among *lesbiennes* and *ñi génn guddi*. Oddkin bonds unfold in places like “the house of *kóoba*” and at the football field, which are important sites where women are initiated and integrate into a network of *lesbiennes*, *ñi génn guddi*, and other *kóoba*. What emerges from the encounters in these places is *savoir vivre*, a know-how to live together in a challenging urban context. Through practices of mothering, women teach each other how to navigate and balance societal expectations and personal desires. The ways in which so-called wicked women share time, resources, and knowledge with each other, does more than just respond to precarity. They are not only stuck with each other, as in being condemned to each other as social outcasts, but they also stick to each other, by showing different practices of care and mentoring that lead to the cultivation of particular forms of sociality. Drawing upon conventional kin lexicon to name their relationships with others, they develop ideas about responsibility, care, and reciprocity

⁹¹ Conversation with Adjì, 12 January 2022.

with each other. Their practices of kinship expand notions of what kinship can be and do, rethinking reproduction by reimagining the people they need around them to transmit their *savoir vivre* to build liveable lives. If, as Serena Dankwa (2023, 171) argues, “we think of mothering as an act of laying the grounds for new lives and future generations,” then these mother-child relationships constitute the foundations from which so-called wicked women develop the *savoir vivre* that is necessary to live their dissident lives in Senegal.

By showing a variety of modalities of motherhood among so-called wicked women, this chapter built on the work of Serawit Debele and the contributors to the 2023 special issue of the *Journal of African Cultural Studies* on “Revolutionary Mothering” (Debele 2023a), by arguing how mothering in an unconventional way (i.e. beyond the context of heteronormative marriage) allows women to form close bonds with other dissident women, while simultaneously maintaining relationships, and conforming to responsibilities with normative kin. Moreover, this chapter provides another perspective on the effects of anti-queer sentiments in Senegal, by showing how a context of precarity and vulnerability also leads to particular modes of action that bring women freedom, without ever relieving them of the constraints that they face (Diabate 2020a). This challenges a monolithic representation of gender and sexual dissidents as merely victims, and it questions the opposition between dissidence and normativity that often characterises depictions of gender and sexual dissidence in African societies (Andrikopoulos and Spronk 2023; Hendriks 2021; Miller 2024).

Despite the importance of kinship bonds, these are not free from conflict. These forms of sociality are fragile, affected by the broader societal context that criminalises and stigmatises women’s relationships, and an economic context of scarcity of jobs and resources. The fragility of women’s oddkin bonds is, on the one hand, part of the ambivalence that characterises kinship bonds in general (Geschiere 2013), while also being the result of this scarcity of social recognition and material precarity. Such conflicts are at the heart of the next chapter, in which I analyse a particular form of violence and violent outing, which is called *wacce*, between *lesbiennes*. An analysis of this destructive side of *lesbienne* relations is important for our understanding of women’s agency in Senegal, so it is to this analysis that we now turn.